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**SAVE OUR COAST SAVE OUR LAKE**

## **Why the April 20 Gulf Oil Spill Anniversary Is Important**

### **Key Facts**

- On April 20, 2010, the Deepwater Horizon drilling platform exploded and oil began leaking from the Macondo well into the Gulf.
- The Deepwater Horizon was located 50 miles southeast of the Mississippi River Delta.
- 205.8 million gallons (4.9 million barrels) of oil spilled, nearly 20 times larger than the Exxon Valdez spill of [11 million gallons](#).
- July 15, 2010: Wellhead capped, after multiple failed attempts, 87 days after the start of the spill.
- More than 1,050 linear miles of shoreline oiled.

### **Resources**

#### **Archives, photo & video libraries**

- National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
  - [Deepwater Horizon Archives](#)
  - [Deepwater Horizon Response Image Gallery](#)
- National Aeronautics and Space Administration
  - [Oil spill image and video library](#)
- United States Geological Survey
  - [USGS Oil Spill Response](#)
- US Fish and Wildlife Service
  - [Fact sheets, maps, links, video](#)
- National Wildlife Federation
  - [Photos for use](#)

#### **Important reports**

- [Gulf of Mexico Regional Ecosystem Restoration Strategy](#)
- Navy [Secretary Ray Mabus' report on the spill](#)
- [Answering 10 Fundamental Questions about the Mississippi River Delta](#)
- [Deep Water: The Gulf Oil Disaster and the Future of Offshore Drilling](#)
- [The Central Role of the Mississippi River and Delta in Restoration of the Northern Gulf of Mexico](#)
- [Beyond Recovery, Moving the Gulf Coast Toward a Sustainable Future](#)

## Key Issues

### **Continuing Impact of the spill**

Even before the spill began, the Gulf region had been compromised by decades of man-made development and natural disasters like Hurricane Katrina. Scientists and others are still working to understand the long-term impact of the spill on the region's environment:

- [Recent reports](#) of oil-soiled wetlands and wildlife continue to appear, but the most disturbing damage could be the less visible, long-term impacts scientists don't yet fully understand.
- Last week, National Wildlife Federation released its second [annual report on the status of wildlife in the Gulf after the spill](#).
- A [new report documents fish deformities](#) and life-threatening reproductive problems, and National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration is currently investigating the correlation between [severely ill dolphins in the gulf and the BP oil spill](#).

### **BP Lawsuit**

The [United States government has filed suit](#) against BP and other responsible parties for violating environmental laws, including the Clean Water Act, and causing billions of dollars in natural resource damages. When the case is resolved, the billions of dollars in penalties to be paid by BP and others responsible for the spill should be used to help restore the Gulf region.

Please note that the recent out of court settlement between BP and private plaintiffs -- consisting of shrimpers, fishermen, business owners and response workers who lost revenue or became sick as a result of the spill -- does not affect the case that the government is making against BP for environmental damages.

### **The RESTORE Act**

The RESTORE Act will ensure that 80 percent of the fines for violating the Clean Water Act to be paid by BP and the other parties responsible for the Gulf oil spill – ordered by the federal judge overseeing the case or determined by a settlement with the Justice Department – are dedicated to restoring the environmental and economic health of Gulf.

The House and Senate both have made a decisive commitment, through amendments each recently approved as part of the transportation bill, to restore the Gulf Coast. In a historic vote, 76 senators – including all the Senate Democrats and half the Republicans – supported the RESTORE Act. The House also had a strong vote to dedicate oil spill Clean Water Act fines to Gulf restoration. The House now needs to pass a final version of the transportation bill, including the RESTORE Act, and send this critical legislation to the President's desk in order for it to be enacted into law.

[Bipartisan polling](#) shows that 83 percent of voters nationwide support efforts to dedicate the Gulf oil spill penalties to restoring the Gulf ecosystem, including 90 percent of Democrats; 84 percent of independents; 76 percent of Republicans; and 78 percent of Tea Party supporters.

### **Louisiana Wetlands**

Rebuilding the Mississippi River Delta is one example of the large-scale, critical environmental restoration that could be funded as a result of the RESTORE Act or the government's lawsuit.

Since the 1930s, almost 1,900 square miles of wetlands – an area nearly the size of Delaware – has disappeared from the Louisiana coast. Every hour, an area of coastal land the size of a football field vanishes under water.

This land loss largely is the result of nearly a century of channelizing and controlling the Mississippi River, canal-building in the delta, and drilling thousands of miles of oil pipelines through the delta wetlands.

These actions cut off the wetlands from the river sediment that built and nourished them for centuries, while altering natural water flows and bringing in damaging salt water to freshwater wetlands. Without swift action to reverse this loss, the Mississippi River Delta will collapse.

The ongoing loss and degradation of the delta and its habitats threatens key populations of wildlife and seafood species. It also has put coastal communities and infrastructure at increased storm and flood risk. A healthy Gulf ecosystem is critical to several of our nation's vital industries, according to the [final report by the Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Task Force](#).

- The Gulf region provides:
  - 1) More than 90 percent of the nation's offshore oil and natural gas production,
  - 2) 33 percent of the nation's seafood,
  - 3) 13 of the top 20 ports by tonnage in the United States in 2009, and
  - 4) Significant recreation and tourism benefits.
- The five U.S. Gulf Coast states — Alabama, Florida, Louisiana, Mississippi and Texas — if considered an individual country, would rank seventh in global gross domestic product.