



Charles Robertson



National Wildlife Federation Gulf Oil Disaster Response

December 2010



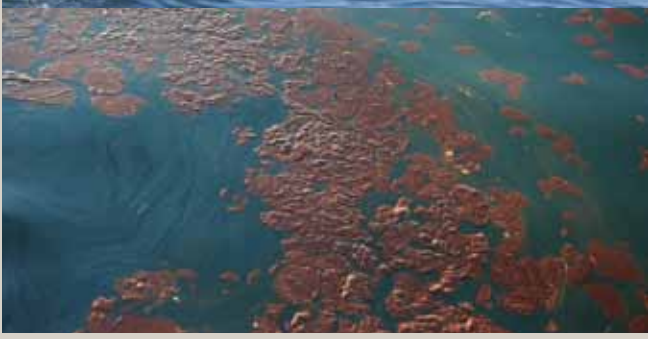
Stacey M. Hull



International Bird Rescue



Stephen Lehmann/Marine Photobank



On April 20, 2010, BP's Deepwater Horizon drilling platform exploded, killing 11 workers and causing what would become the **largest environmental disaster** in U.S. history.

Throughout the crisis, National Wildlife Federation's **swift action**, on-the-ground presence and focused response made us a **leader** and trusted **voice for wildlife**. From enhancing independent understanding of the spill to **engaging volunteers**, the National Wildlife Federation played a critical role in holding the government and BP accountable, exposing abuse and mismanagement, pushing for important wildlife and habitat protections, and demanding full **cleanup and restoration** of the Gulf Coast.

This report details the **actions and successes** of the National Wildlife Federation over the past eight months in **response to the oil spill** disaster. While much has been accomplished, the damage and recovery needs of the Gulf will likely go on for **decades**.



Oil Spill Crisis

When the Deepwater Horizon drilling platform exploded on April 20, 2010, no one was prepared for what lay ahead.

For 90 days, the gusher on the sea floor spewed toxic oil and methane gas into the Gulf of Mexico, putting people, wildlife and the entire Gulf Coast ecosystem at risk. Three months later, when the well was finally capped, experts estimated that 185 million gallons of crude oil had been dumped into the Gulf of Mexico.

Many of the oil spill's impacts were immediately seen: oiled birds, dead sea turtles and miles of degraded coastline. For the people whose lives depend on the Gulf Coast, from shrimpers to restaurant owners, the economic toll of the spill rose by the hour. For

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communities that had only begun to recover from the devastation of Hurricane Katrina, the oil spill was another devastating blow.

Making a bad situation worse was BP's use of toxic dispersants to combat the oil spill. Sprayed both on the surface and underwater at the wellhead, BP reported using 1.8 million gallons of toxic dispersant before the well was capped. With little to nothing known about the long-term effects of these chemicals on ocean life or people, the aggressive use of dispersants during the oil spill intensified the concerns of scientists.

Today, eight months after the spill began, the Gulf Coast remains broken, beaten and scarred. The number of dead wildlife collected within the oil spill area - 5,686 dead birds, 546 dead sea turtles, and 96 mammals (dolphins and whales) - represent only a fraction of the damage inflicted upon the region. In addition, areas like Bay Jimmy remain covered in oil, tar balls are still washing ashore, and scientists continue to make shocking discoveries of oil on the ocean floor.

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The reality is that large quantities of oil remain in the Gulf today, and scientists are still working to understand the full, long-term impacts of this unprecedented disaster. It is likely that the people, wildlife and habits along the Gulf coast will continue to feel the aftereffects of the spill for decades to come.

The good news is that progress has been made. Commercial fishing and shrimping re-opened, the House passed its version of an oil spill response bill, beaches have been cleaned and hundreds of rescued wildlife have been rehabilitated and released.

However, if we hope to restore the Gulf to full health, more must be done. Success means not only undoing the damage of the spill, but also the damage that came before. For decades, oil and gas exploration, extraction activities, pipeline construction, levees, and sediment blocking locks and dams on the Missouri, Mississippi and Ohio Rivers have led to the rapid erosion of wetlands along Louisiana's coast. Halting and reversing this trend was a priority for NWF before the spill and remains so today.

Thanks to the individuals and businesses who donated their time, money and support during the crisis, NWF is positioned to be a leader in the Gulf restoration effort. We are committed to staying as long as it takes, pushing as hard as we can, and working with local leaders to make sure the right solutions are implemented.

As we begin the next phase of our response, this report looks back on our accomplishments of the last eight months. While each accomplishment on its own is impressive, the sum of these efforts is truly remarkable.

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NWF Staff on the Front Lines

Even before the explosion of the Deepwater Horizon oil rig in the Gulf of Mexico, the National Wildlife Federation was on the ground working to protect wildlife in the Gulf Coast and restore the rapidly-disappearing Louisiana coast.

After the spill, we quickly mobilized NWF staff throughout the organization to respond. Here are a few of their reactions captured during the crisis.



"The Gulf of Mexico is a crime scene and the perpetrator cannot be left in charge of assessing the damage. The government needs to make sure that the right testing is done and that all data is disclosed to the public."

*- Larry Schweiger, President and CEO,
on May 19, 2010*

"As we boated through Barataria Bay towards Cat Island, the sounds from the rookery were the first thing to catch our attention...On the island we saw several oiled brown pelicans, two yellowed egrets and another two oil stained spoonbills."

*- Jaime Matyas, Executive Vice
President and Chief Operating Officer,
on June 25, 2010*



Accomplishments

The National Wildlife Federation, its Gulf state affiliates, partners, and volunteer network have been on the front lines since shortly after the spill began - working for the recovery of Gulf wildlife, waters, and communities.

Once the National Wildlife Federation recognized the oil spill disaster's unprecedented impact on wildlife, wetlands, water quality, fisheries, and Gulf communities, we sprang into action.

Within 10 days of the initial explosion, NWF put into effect a comprehensive response plan. A central base of operations was quickly set up in the heart of the impact zone in Venice, LA. We then mobilized all institutional elements across the organization behind the plan.

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The following highlights NWF actions and accomplishments to date in each of our five key focus areas:

Enhancing Independent Understanding and Assessment of the Disaster

- ▶ **For more than 180 days, NWF served as a “witness for wildlife.” Staff staged more than 60 boat tours of the Gulf impact zone from our Venice, LA, base, bringing waves of scientists, news reporters, wildlife professionals, community and conservation leaders, and national, state and local elected officials to the impact zone to experience the nature of the disaster, the effectiveness of the spill response, and the environmental and public health issues in play.**

Key Result: Many scientific professionals, decision makers and journalists gained first hand critical understanding of the Gulf disaster, what it meant, where it was happening, how it evolved, how it was affecting wildlife, food chains and natural systems, and how effective various response activities were.

NWF was among the first to challenge the extent to which certain toxic dispersants were being used by BP.

- ▶ **NWF provided independent assessment of the nature of the Gulf disaster and clean-up response in more than 7000 documented news stories.**

Key Result: Tens of millions of individual readers, viewers and listeners obtained objective information about the disaster's impact on wildlife and nature, and on the adequacy or inadequacy of both BP's and the government's response activities.

- ▶ **NWF succeeded in forcing the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to begin releasing to the public detailed information on the number and species of birds impacted by the spill. NWF pressed USFWS for this information by filing a Freedom of Information Act request.**

Key Result: Important information about the spill's impacts on migratory bird species was finally provided to the public. This data continues to inform public assessment of the adequacy and scope of government wildlife response plans, and are critical to accurately conducting the upcoming official natural resource damage assessment.

- ▶ **NWF was the first to publicly label the BP oil disaster as “a crime scene,” debunking the BP corporate spin that it was an “accident.”**

Key Result: Soon after, U.S. Attorney General Holder announced there would be a criminal investigation of BP and corporate partners on possible law-breaking.

- ▶ **NWF was among the first to publicly challenge the extent to which certain toxic dispersants were being used by BP to control the oil slicks.**

Key Result: EPA initiated extensive testing and monitoring and ordered BP to use less toxic dispersants.



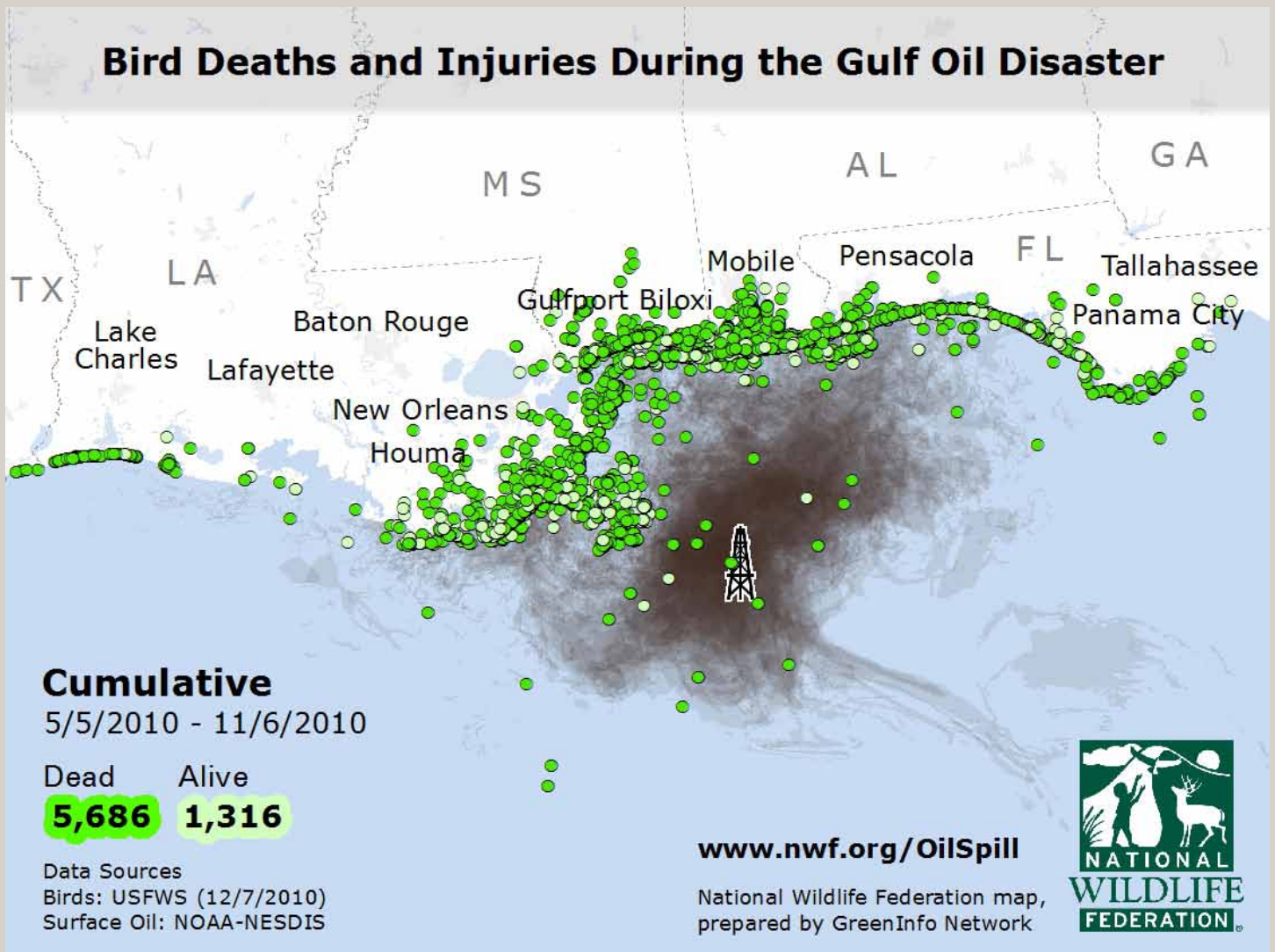
“I had thought I understood the dangers that fish and wildlife faced, but I wasn't prepared for what we found. The first thing that hit us 18 miles from the Biloxi wetlands was the nauseating smell, like spilled gasoline at a gas station, but stronger.”

- Jeremy Symons, Senior Vice President, on May 5, 2010



“To see these birds covered in oil was really hard. Watching them struggle as the workers tried to clean them and knowing the fear they must be feeling was heart-breaking.”

- David Mizejewski, Naturalist, on July 16, 2010

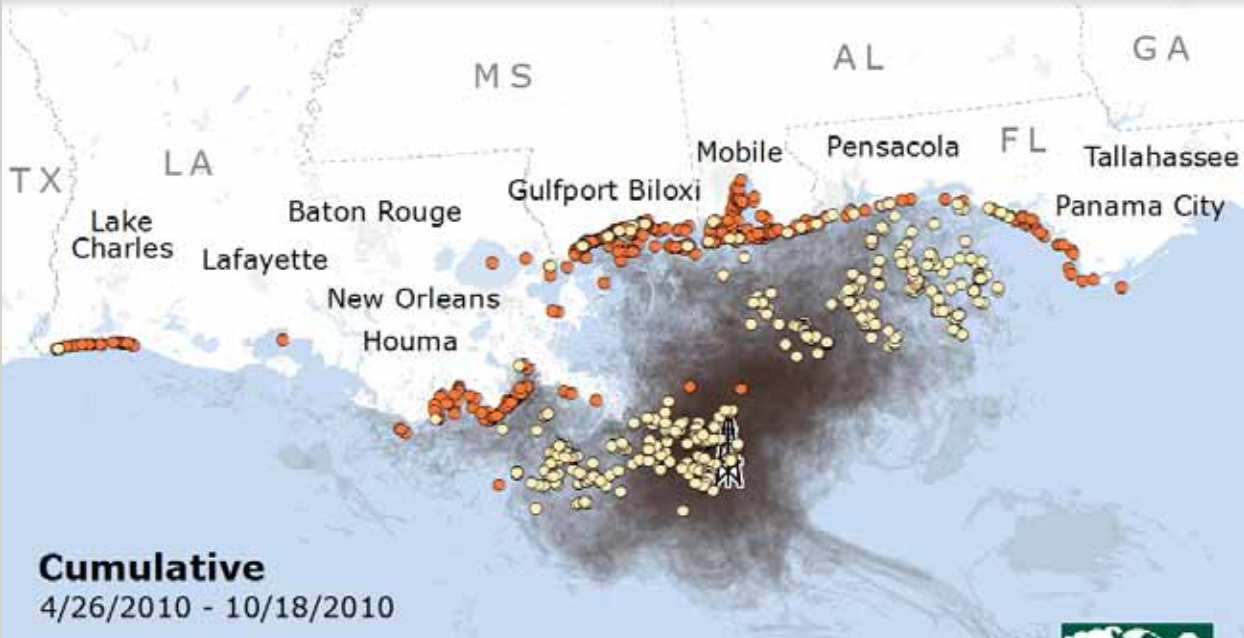


New maps published by National Wildlife Federation show the widespread devastation to wildlife resulting from the Gulf Oil Disaster. The maps were created using official data from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

We cannot say definitively that each of these animals died or became ill as a result of the oil because testing has not been completed. But basic common sense tells us that this disaster was directly responsible for most of the distressed and dead wildlife found.

The science bears out this conclusion too. When you compare this year's rate of found distressed and dead wildlife in the Gulf with those of previous years without an oil spill disaster, it's obvious that the numbers this year are far, far higher than years without an oil spill. Furthermore, many animals impacted by the oil spill were never found.

Sea Turtle Deaths and Injuries During the Gulf Oil Disaster



Cumulative

4/26/2010 - 10/18/2010

Dead Alive

546 **520**

Data Sources

Sea Turtles: NOAA (10/19/2010)

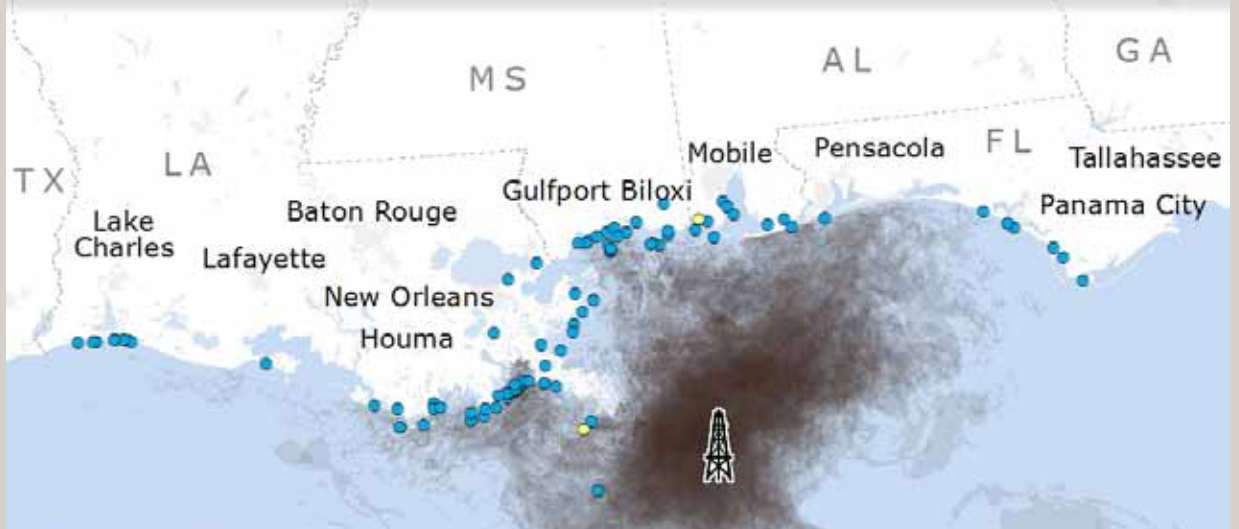
Surface Oil: NOAA-NESDIS

www.nwf.org/OilSpill

National Wildlife Federation map,
prepared by GreenInfo Network



Dolphin and Whale Deaths During the Gulf Oil Disaster



Cumulative

5/6/2010 - 10/1/2010

Dolphins Whales

93 **3**

Data Sources

Dolphins and Whales: NOAA (10/19/2010)

Surface Oil: NOAA-NESDIS

www.nwf.org/OilSpill

National Wildlife Federation map,
prepared by GreenInfo Network



Engaging People to Help

- ▶ During the first phase of the uncapped spill, NWF trained more than 300 volunteers in 25 teams to help with wildlife distress surveillance throughout the Gulf region. Volunteers filed more than 5,000 reports with NWF on wildlife sightings, oil slick impacts and problems the public encountered with BP's distressed wildlife help line.

Key Result: Volunteers expanded the government's wildlife surveillance capabilities during the early phase of the spill, and identified early breakdowns in the BP Wildlife Rescue Hotline that were eventually corrected.

- ▶ More than 53,000 citizens and 21 companies donated funds to NWF Gulf Disaster response efforts. Additionally, more than 200 individual, personal fundraising events for NWF were staged (auctions, lemonade stands, etc).

Key Result: The public reaction to the Gulf disaster was deep and wide. People wanted to help in whatever way they could. These donations helped NWF accomplish many of the actions outlined here, and gave us the capacity to continue working on the long-term problems that will last many years to come.



Improving and Expanding Wildlife Rescue and Protection

- ▶ NWF pushed the U.S. Department of the Interior to press BP to correct chronic problems and breakdowns with the BP Wildlife Rescue Hotline that hindered rapid response.

Key Result: The government prevailed upon BP to expand its wildlife hotline capabilities and correct the failures.

- ▶ NWF helped bring public attention to sea turtle deaths caused by BP's methods of burning oil slicks without first surveying the ringed areas for wildlife. We generated 8,500 public signatures on a petition calling for BP to employ safer oil slick burns to protect marine life.

Key Result: Soon after our petition, the government directed BP to begin ensuring that trained wildlife professionals were on board their boats to conduct wildlife surveillance prior to oil slick burns, thus preventing needless other marine wildlife deaths.

NWF pushed the Department of the Interior to press BP to correct chronic problems and breakdowns with the BP Wildlife Rescue Hotline.



Christine Matthews

- ▶ **NWF generated 21,000 public comments calling for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to reclassify the loggerhead sea turtle from “threatened” to “endangered” under the Endangered Species Act.**

Key Result: While loggerhead sea turtles were already being considered for reclassification, in light of the spill, NWF-generated comments provided a powerful voice for taking action to increase protection for the species.

- ▶ **NWF provided critical funding to the Sea Turtle Conservancy in Florida to enhance its capabilities to relocate sea turtle eggs away from the impact zone.**

Key Result: Sea turtle hatchlings, at risk of death from entering the oiled waters of the Gulf, were saved by this multi-institutional effort to relocate eggs to the east coast of Florida. Since July 10th, more than 13,000 hatchlings – from nests collected from Northwest Florida and Alabama beaches – have been released into the Atlantic Ocean. Most of the nests are from loggerhead sea turtles, which is a threatened species. A few endangered Kemp’s ridley turtle and green sea turtle nests also have been translocated.

Advancing the Restoration of the Gulf Coast Ecosystem

- ▶ **NWF sent to President Obama a letter co-signed by the National Audubon Society and the Environmental Defense Fund urging him to include coastal restoration among the immediate recovery needs to be covered by a proposed BP escrow fund designed to mitigate damages in the short term.**

Key Result: In his June 15th address to the nation on the oil spill, the President made prominent mention of the need to address not only the immediate visible impacts of the oil spill, but also the long term restoration needs of the Gulf Coast, which had been neglected for many years prior to the spill. He used this opportunity to appoint the Mabus Commission to develop a long term recovery plan for the Gulf Coast in the wake of the oil spill.

“Right now is nesting season for brown pelicans, roseate spoonbills and a host of other birds. Knowing that it only takes a drop or two of oil to kill the developing chick in an egg, I could not help but feel a great sense of loss as I watched birds return to their nests after diving for food in the oily waters of the Gulf.”

- Doug Inkley, Senior Scientist, on May 26, 2010



“The Gulf region is a cornerstone of our national economy, environment and culture that has been sacrificed for national priorities, as evidenced by this summer’s oil spill. Bold, aggressive action is needed to ensure this area is preserved for coastal wildlife, businesses and communities.”

- Karla Raettig, Campaign Director for Coastal Louisiana, on September 28, 2010

- ▶ On July 28th NWF released (in partnership with National Audubon Society and the Environmental Defense Fund) the report *Common Ground: A Shared Vision for Restoring the Mississippi River Delta*. NWF hosted a congressional staff briefing on the report and engaged members of Congress to address Gulf Coast restoration and funding in oil spill reform legislation.

Key Result: The paper and the briefing were instrumental in the House of Representatives approving a provision in HR 3534 that dedicates \$1.2 billion in BP Clean Water Act penalties to Gulf Coast restoration.

- ▶ NWF invested in a Mobile Bay restoration project that will provide critical un-oiled nursery habitat for numerous finfish and shellfish stocks, while more affected areas are being cleaned.

Key Result: This project will not only help in the recovery of populations impacted by the oil spill, but it will also serve as an investment in the establishment of long-term habitat needs, providing areas for resting, forage and shelter into the future (0.2 miles of vertical oyster reef, 2.0 acres of sea grass/marsh).

- ▶ NWF generated 85,000 public comments calling on Congress to fund Gulf Coast restoration.

Key Result: Provided strong public support that aided the House of Representatives to include a provision in HR 3534 that dedicates \$1.2 billion in BP Clean Water Act penalties to be spent on Gulf Coast restoration. It is hoped that the Senate will pass its version of a comprehensive oil spill reform legislation next year.

Advocating Policy Reforms

- ▶ NWF President and CEO, Larry Schweiger, testified before the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee on May 19th at one of the first congressional hearings on the Gulf disaster, where he called for government commitment to Gulf restoration, expanded wildlife protection efforts and a national transition to clean energy.

Key Result: NWF provided members of Congress with first-hand objective information about the scope of damages from the spill and highlighted key inadequacies in BP's disaster response during the early phase of the disaster. We also offered a meaningful analysis of the spill's ramifications on the nation's approach to energy exploration in general.



- ▶ **NWF generated 170,000 public comments calling on Congress to remove the current oil company spill financial liability limits so that oil companies, not the public, are financially responsible in total for accidents and misdeeds.**

Key Result: As a result of strong public support, the House of Representatives included a provision in HR 3534 to remove the oil industry liability cap on oil companies. It is hoped that the Senate will pass its version of comprehensive oil spill reform legislation next year.

- ▶ **NWF joined a coalition of conservation organizations to urge the administration to suspend leasing summer exploratory drilling activities in the Arctic Ocean until more was learned about what went wrong with the Gulf drilling operations.**

Key Result: Secretary Salazar put the brakes on pending permit application by Shell Oil, requiring further scientific studies and assessments, including analysis of potential spill response plans.

- ▶ **NWF launched an aggressive campaign for reform of oil and gas leasing practices in the wake of the spill. We held Capitol Hill briefings featuring prominent scientists, generated thousands of calls and e-mails, and garnered editorial support in favor of comprehensive oil spill legislation. NWF also partnered with leaders in the Gulf Coast commercial and recreational fishing communities to ensure their voices were heard on Capitol Hill.**

Key Result: The House passed the Consolidated Land, Energy and Aquatic Resources (CLEAR) Act July 30, by a vote of 216-195. The bill has a number of important provisions that will prevent future offshore spills by increasing oil company accountability, liability and penalties for spills; improving safety standards and regulatory activities; and removing certain exemptions the oil and gas industry enjoys from key environmental laws.



Maximiliano

"In Venice, LA, I had a guy down there tell me our town is dependent on two things, fishing and oil. And one is about to kill the other."

- Miles Grant, Communications Manager, on May 14, 2010

"It will likely take years to recover from this catastrophe. People need to know that we still need their support to help restore the Gulf Coast to health."

- Maura Wood, Senior Outreach Coordinator, on August 25, 2010



These examples of our work over the first eight months of the Gulf oil spill disaster are only the beginning.

National Wildlife Federation is committed to its long term goals of ensuring that the oil spill is cleaned up, wildlife populations are on a pathway to recovery and that the environmental health and integrity of the Gulf ecosystem are fully restored, beyond just the oil pollution damage.

Moving forward, our oil spill response effort is focused on four key areas:

- **Helping Wildlife Recover**
- **Restoring Gulf Ecosystems**
- **Holding BP Accountable**
- **Reforming Offshore Drilling Policy**

With the right steps, National Wildlife Federation believes we can restore this rich natural resource back to full health.

Without restoration, each new disaster will sow the seeds of more destruction -- of wetlands, wildlife and communities -- and Louisiana's coastal region will remain on a path to eventual destruction.

To keep up to date on all of NWF's latest oil spill response efforts, visit:

www.nwf.org/OilSpill





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