



National Commission on the
BP DEEPWATER HORIZON OIL SPILL
AND OFFSHORE DRILLING

National Commission on the Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill and Offshore Drilling

Staff Presentation: Impacts and Assessment

Ecological, Economic, and Human Health

Presented on
December 3, 2010



Outline

- **Overview**
 - Impacts
- **Four Proposed Recommendations**
 - Issues
 - Proposed Staff Recommendation
 - Outcome of Recommendation





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BP DEEPWATER HORIZON OIL SPILL
AND OFFSHORE DRILLING

Impacts Overview

- The Commission staff have focused on **three primary areas of impact**:
 1. Environmental
 2. Economic
 3. Human Health





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AND OFFSHORE DRILLING

Impacts Overview

- The **Deepwater Horizon oil spill** inflicted **great harm** on humans, animals, plants, and economies.





Impacts Overview

- The oil spill **compounded existing regional hardships.**



Photo credit: NOAA



Impacts Overview

- The spill created ***unprecedented and unforeseen issues*** that the current regulatory framework for compensation is not equipped to deal with.



Banner hung from a vendor's booth during A Taste of Chicago – July 2010



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AND OFFSHORE DRILLING

Proposed Staff Recommendation

#1

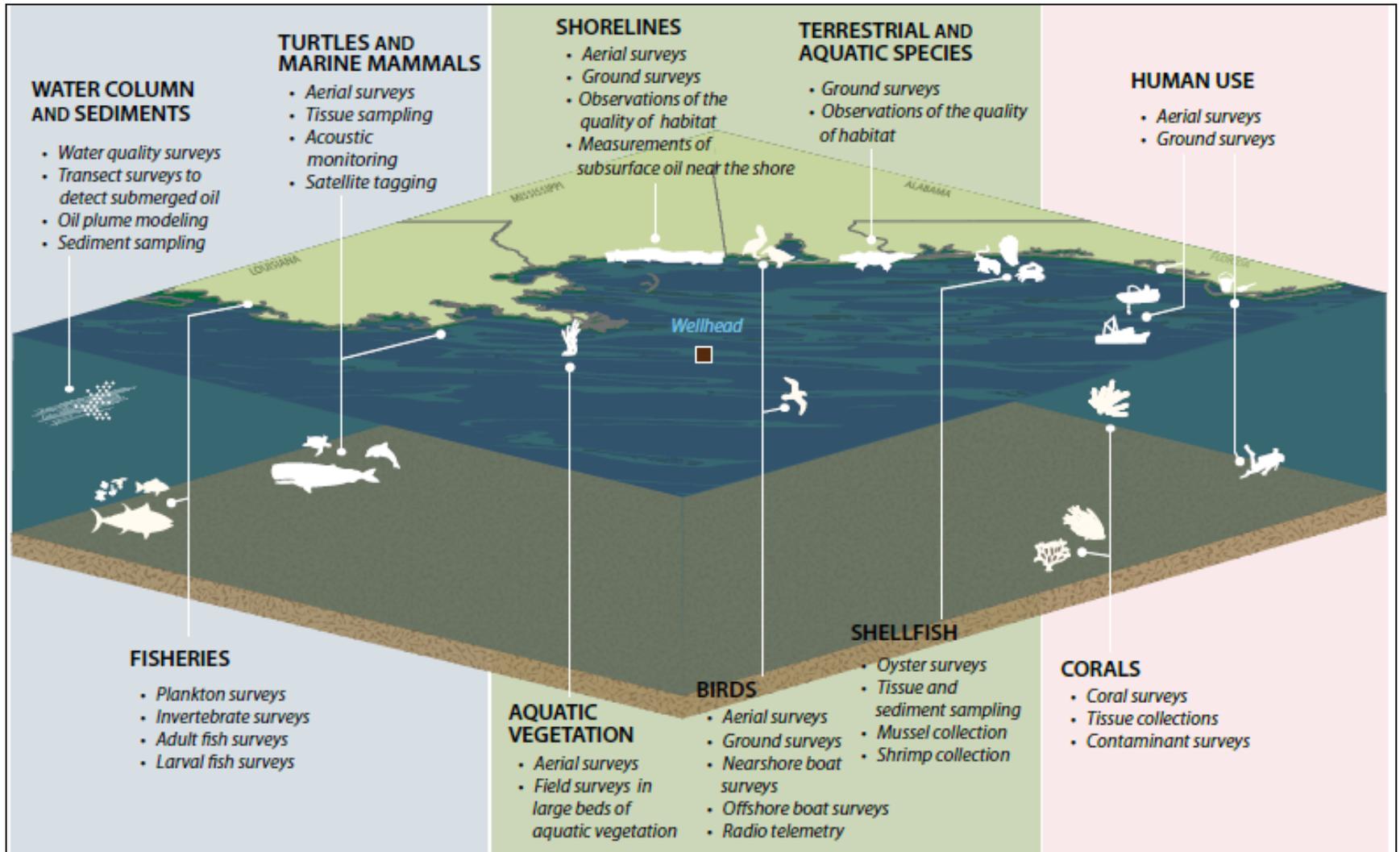
- **Damage Assessment** -



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AND OFFSHORE DRILLING



Photo Credit: Tyrone Turner, National Geographic





Damage Assessment Issues

- Natural Resource Damage Assessment regulation requires restoration for injury to - and lost use of - public resources.
- In the spirit of the regulation, restoration following the oil spill should be “in-place” and “in-kind” wherever possible.
- Special care must be taken to thoroughly assess poorly understood and understudied marine impacts.



Proposed Staff Recommendation #1

- Damage Assessment -

- The Natural Resource Damage Assessment process should ensure that adequate restoration funds are invested in areas directly impacted by the oil spill, including the off-shore marine environment.

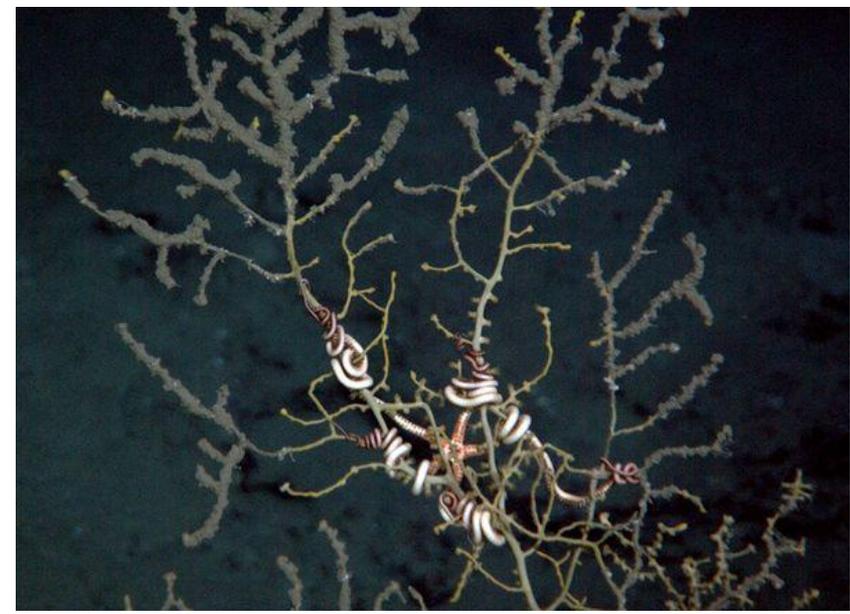


Photo Credit: BOEMRE and NOAA OER *Lophelia* II expedition



Damage Assessment Improvements

- Honoring the spirit of the regulation will ensure that injured resources are fully restored, thus bolstering the strength and resiliency of the Gulf of Mexico and its coast.
- Gaining a clear understanding of the deep sea impacts and effectively restoring them will better inform the public when thinking about the pros and cons of off-shore drilling.



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BP DEEPWATER HORIZON OIL SPILL
AND OFFSHORE DRILLING

Proposed Staff Recommendation

#2

- Oil Spill Science -



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AND OFFSHORE DRILLING

Coordination and Integration of Science During Spill Response





Science Issue

- Field study of oil spills and their environmental, economic and human impact is largely opportunistic.
- The scientific community was eager to help but lacked adequate access to funding, access, and resources.



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AND OFFSHORE DRILLING

Proposed Recommendation from Staff #2

- Science-

- Funding for **scientists should be provided** to promote sustained independent and coordinated scientific research of oil spill impacts during emergency responses.



Science Improvement

- Improve our knowledge of oil spill science, encourage innovation, and maximize the potential for effective recovery .
- In turn, this knowledge gap impedes our ability to make fully informed decisions regarding the trade-offs and risks associated with the future of off-shore drilling.



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BP DEEPWATER HORIZON OIL SPILL
AND OFFSHORE DRILLING

Proposed Staff Recommendation

#3

- Economic -



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AND OFFSHORE DRILLING

The oil spill directly
and indirectly
impacted the
region's economy.



Fishing boats sit idle in Venice, LA
Photo Credit: NOAA



Economic Issues

- Direct claims for economic losses are being assessed through the Gulf Coast Claim Facility
- What remains is a sizable loss of consumer confidence in Gulf seafood and in Gulf tourism. This indirect economic loss, if quantifiable, is not legally compensable under OPA.



Proposed Staff Recommendation #3

- Economic -

- In the aftermath of a Spill of National Significance, government and the responsible party should consider restoration of consumer confidence (i.e. in Gulf tourism and seafood), if deemed necessary, as an appropriate place to allocate funding when calculating fines and settlements.



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AND OFFSHORE DRILLING

Economic Improvements

- Ensure that funds are available for:
 - seafood monitoring
 - seafood and tourism marketing
- Sustainable markets



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BP DEEPWATER HORIZON OIL SPILL
AND OFFSHORE DRILLING

Proposed Staff Recommendation

#4

- Human Health -



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The oil spill mentally
and/or physically
impacted people
around the Gulf

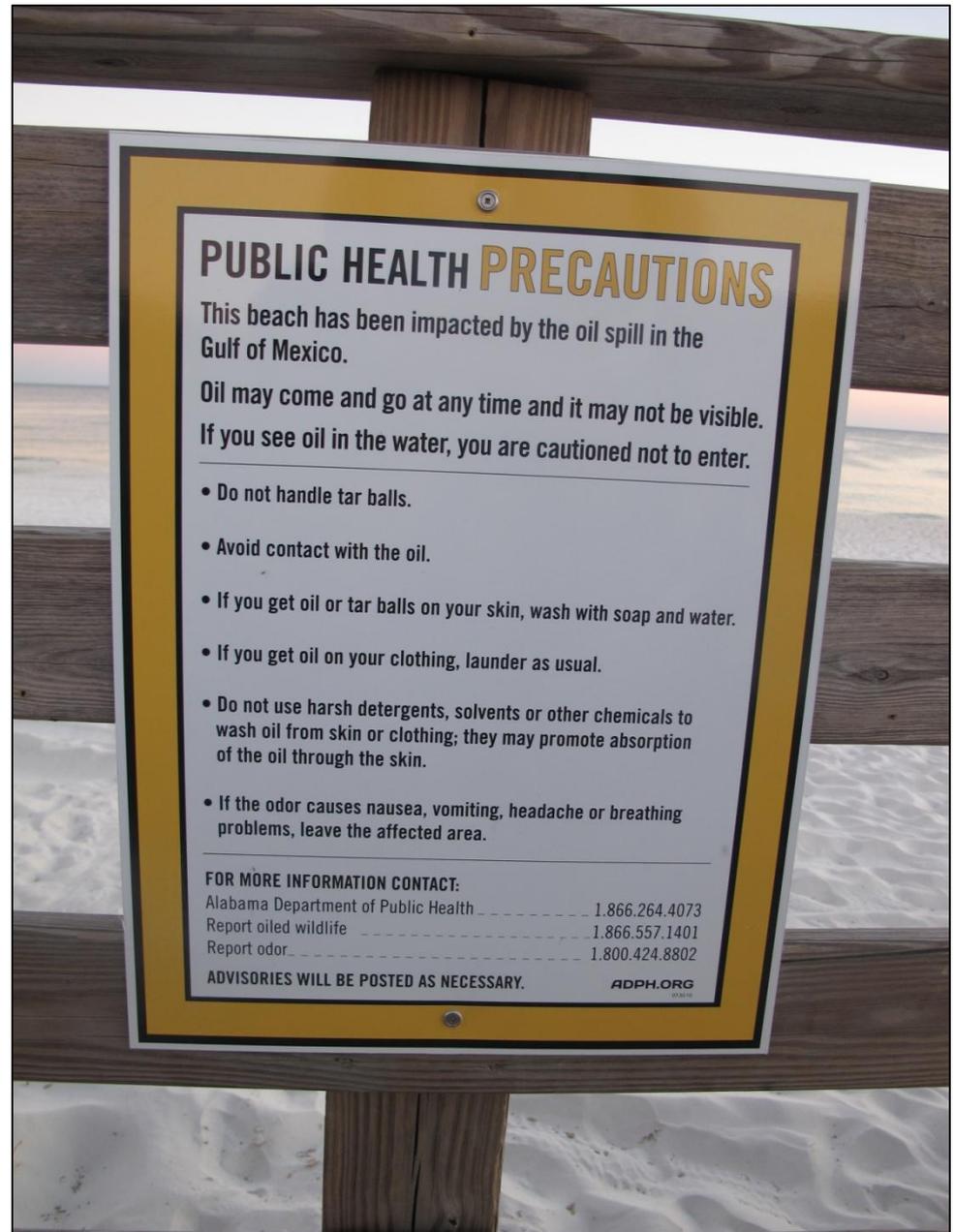


Photo Credit: Rocky Kristner, NRDC



Human Health Issues

- Given the scale of the response and the need to enlist local help, many response workers were not screened for pre-existing conditions before being put to work.
- Insufficient or delayed government action impeded accurate research of potential public health effects.



Human Health Issues (cont'd)

- Adequate funding and resources were not in place to deal with claims of physical and mental illness among Gulf coast residents.
- Whether or not the health concerns are warranted, does not change the perception among some that government is not responsive to such claims.



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BP DEEPWATER HORIZON OIL SPILL
AND OFFSHORE DRILLING

Proposed Recommendation from Staff #4

- Human Health -

- EPA should amend the National Contingency Plan to add distinct plans and procedures to address human health impacts during a Spill of National Significance.



Human Health Improvement

- Timely collection of crucial human health baseline data.
- Create a prepared and integrated public health response mechanism.
- Ensure that citizens physically or mentally affected by an oil spill disaster receives adequate attention, diagnosis, and treatment.



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AND OFFSHORE DRILLING

Thank You



by Tom MacKenzie, USFWS, May 3, 2010