



National Environmental Health Association (NEHA)

Position on Offshore Oil Drilling July 12, 2010

Background and Vision

The destructive explosions at the Gulf of Mexico in 2010 have caused the largest oil spill in US history. Deepwater Horizon is gushing almost 1.5 million gallons per day (gpd)

BP's own worst case scenario assessment admits leak volume could exceed 2.5 million gpd. To bring perspective to volume of the current spill, the 1989 Exxon Valdez disaster in Alaska was the worst spill in US history. The Valdez spilled 258,000 barrels, 10.8 million gallons of oil ⁽¹⁾, the effects of which linger in Alaska's Prince William Sound more than two decades after the disaster. Two bird species show little or no recovery from the oil spill while others are still recovering. Human resources linked to the Sound are also in differing states of recovery from the decades old spill. ⁽³⁾⁽⁴⁾

While oil (and other leak by products such as methane) from the disaster has largely coalesced in waters off the coast, product has found its way to shore, oiling over 170 miles of shoreline in four states. Impact on the Gulf is already severe through loss of fisheries, impact on marine wildlife, impact on local economies and reduction in tourism.

Each day in the United States approximately 818 million gallons of oil are used ⁽⁵⁾. Worldwide use is almost 3.5 billion gallons ⁽⁵⁾. Oil is used to fuel vehicles, heat homes, lubricate machinery ranging from bicycles to printing presses, make asphalt to pave our roads, and make plastics, medicines, ink, fertilizers, pesticides, paints, varnishes, and electricity.

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References

1. Ray Henry (June 15, 2010), Scientists: Oil leaking up to 2.52M gallons daily: Associated Press
2. State of Alaska Exxon Valdez Oil Spill Trustee Council: from <http://www.evostc.state.ak.us/facts/qanda.cfm>
3. State of Alaska. Report on Recent Lingering Oil Studies, Exxon Valdez Oil Spill Trustee Council
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