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Contact: David Guest, Earthjustice, (850) 681-0031, ext. 103
Cynthia Sarthou, Gulf Restoration Network, (504) 525-1528 ext. 202
Kristina Johnson, Sierra Club, (415) 977-5619

Gulf Conservationists Challenge Phony BP Oil Disaster Cleanup Plan

BP said it could clean up 20 million gallons of spilled oil a day

New Orleans, LA -- Earthjustice filed suit today in federal court against the U.S. Minerals Management Service challenging the agency's arbitrary approval of BP's oil spill clean-up plan. The clean up plan was approved in July 2009 prior to the approval of the exploratory drilling plan. If successful, this legal challenge will result in a court ruling that Minerals Management Service's approval of BP's spill cleanup plan was illegal and a new plan needs to be crafted and approved before BP can do any more exploratory oil drilling.

In its spill plan, BP claimed it could contain any possible spill by vacuuming up over 20 million gallons of oil per day. BP's actual recovery rate since the Deepwater Horizon explosion has turned out to be about two percent of that.

"Other BP rigs in the Gulf are relying on the same deceptive response plan," said Earthjustice attorney David Guest. "BP's clean-up story was as phony as a three dollar bill."

Earthjustice is representing the Gulf Restoration Network and Sierra Club in the lawsuit.

"BP promised they could drill safely. Their plan for cleaning up a spill turned out to be complete make-believe," said Sierra Club executive director Michael Brune. "We're now looking at the largest environmental disaster in American history, with no end in sight. BP cheated on safety plans, and the Minerals Management Service stood by and let them. We need to make sure the oil industry doesn't get away with this again."

BP's uncontrolled spill in the Gulf of Mexico now covers over 10,000 square miles, stretching from Louisiana to the Florida Panhandle. The spill is approaching twice the size of the Exxon Valdez spill and could continue spewing crude into the Gulf of Mexico until August.

"To watch this disaster move along the Gulf coast, devastating marshes and beaches and fishing grounds, is truly horrifying," said Cynthia Sarthou of the Gulf Restoration Network. "Our federal regulators failed to watch out for all of us who depend on the Gulf of Mexico. If Minerals Management Service had done its job, and rejected BP's unrealistic oil spill response projections, it would have compelled BP to prepare for the nightmare that is plaguing the Gulf today."

Earthjustice filed six other federal suits against Minerals Management Service last month. The first challenges the federal agency's illegal exemption of oil drilling companies from critical safety and environmental requirements. The others challenge five deepwater exploratory drilling plans that were approved using the illegal exemption. Additionally, Earthjustice has filed a Freedom of Information Act petition aimed at uncovering what chemicals are in the dispersants being used to break up the oil spill.

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