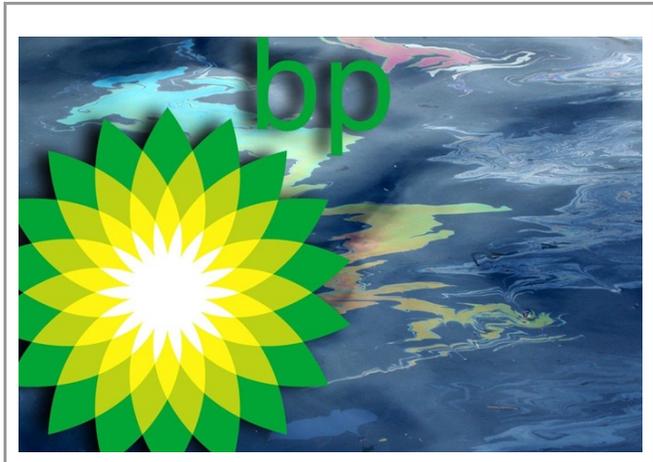


Gulf Groups Mark Fourth Year Since BP Disaster



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Citizens and representatives of organizations gathered at the shore of Biloxi's Back Bay to mark four years since the beginning of the BP drilling disaster, which started on April 20th, 2010. This was one of three concurrent events across the Gulf, with the others located in New Orleans, Louisiana and St. Petersburg, Florida. At the gathering, they demanded that BP and other oil and gas companies be held accountable for their actions, made note of the ongoing impacts of the spill and called for transparency and genuine public participation as restoration efforts begin to move forward in the Gulf.

"We are standing here today to remind the nation that Gulf residents are still struggling with the environmental and economic consequences of the BP disaster," said Roberta Avila, Executive Director of the Steps Coalition. "BP needs to clean up the oil and pay for the damage. And, we need to make sure that a disaster like this never happens again."

Despite BP declaring an end to active recovery and clean up this week, oil continues to wash up on the Gulf's shore. On an April 9th monitoring trip to Barataria Bay and Grand Isle, Louisiana, Gulf Restoration Network documented fresh tar balls on the beaches and a dead dolphin in the surf. One recent study linked BP's oil to problems with heart health in bluefin tuna and amberjack. Similar results have been found after other oil spills, including the Exxon-Valdez disaster.

"As we mark the fourth observance of BP's well blowout, it is important to note the resilience of the communities of the Gulf Coast, especially in light of the fact that so little has been done to protect us from future accidents," said Helen Rose Patterson, Gulf Restoration Network. "This isn't just about BP, this is about an industry that has been given permission to police itself; it's an industry that holds profits above people and here in Mississippi, our leaders are pushing to bring that industry closer to our shores by opening state waters to oil and gas drilling."

As BP spends million on ads to downplay their damage to the Gulf, residents from impacted communities are standing up to BP's misinformation, telling the true story of how their lives have been impacted, and calling for genuine community participation and transparency in Gulf restoration efforts.

"For restoration efforts to succeed, they need to fully involve the people who call the Gulf home - including the Vietnamese-American fisherfolk who make their livings on the water," said Thao Vu of Mississippi Coalition for Vietnamese-American Fisherfolks and Families. "The knowledge and insights of the people who were most impacted by the BP disaster are essential to making sure restoration efforts are effective."

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