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Environmental, civic leaders still worried 4 years after BP spill

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Just two days after BP announced the end of shoreline cleanup operations from the 2010 oil spill, leaders of civic and environmental groups said the recovery is far from over.

"BP wanted to take the victory lap and declare that the active cleanup of the Gulf is over," said Steve Murchie of the Gulf Restoration Network. "But what you've heard is

that communities around the Gulf are still waiting for BP to be held fully accountable for their actions."

A civic leader from New Orleans East said members of the Vietnamese fishing community are still feeling the impact.

"My parents are shrimpers and crabbers, and still today they are still suffering," said Minh Nguyen of the Vietnamese American Young Leaders Association.

In lower Terrebonne Parish, the Isle Jean Charles tribal chief said fishermen avoid oyster beds that were affected by the oil, saying they haven't recovered.

"The oil where it's been contaminated, basically all you catch are shells," said Chief Albert Naquin. "Oysters don't grow there."

"We are hopeful that BP, other companies at fault and the claims administrator will honor the livelihoods and people of the Gulf Coast by swiftly paying the thousands of claims still pending," said Colette Pichon Battle of the Gulf Coast Center For Law & Policy.

The environmental groups say they are concerned about attempts by the governor and legislature to derail the lawsuit filed by the levee board against the oil companies.

"I think it is pretty clear that the oil and gas industry has exerted influence with the governor's office and with the Senate," Murchie said. "Hopefully we'll be able to hold the line in the house."

They want transparency and public participation as the recovery continues.

BP issued the following statement:

"From the outset, BP stepped up, acknowledged its role in the accident, and worked to meet its commitment to help economic and environmental restoration efforts in the Gulf, and for the past four years we have worked hard to make good on that commitment. To date, BP has spent more than \$14 billion on response and clean-up and paid more than \$12 billion in claims to individuals, businesses and government entities. We remain committed to paying all legitimate claims due to the Deepwater Horizon accident, but at the same time, the company will continue to work hard to return the settlement agreement to its express language and original intent: the compensation of claimants that suffered actual losses as a result of the spill.

"As to cleanup and environmental restoration, while the end of active cleanup is a significant milestone, BP has not left the Gulf, and we will keep resources in place to respond quickly at the Coast Guard's direction if potential Macondo oil is identified

through the National Response Center process and requires removal. Further, BP is working with state and federal Trustees to assess and restore natural resources injured as a result of the accident. BP has paid around \$1 billion to date to support the Natural Resource Damage Assessment (NRDA) process and to evaluate potential injuries and restoration options. Even as the injury assessment is ongoing, restoration work has already begun. In April 2011, BP committed to provide up to \$1 billion in early restoration funding to expedite recovery of natural resources injured as a result of the accident and has reached agreement or agreement-in-principle with state and federal Trustees on projects that will cost nearly \$700 million.”