

**GULF
RESTORATION
NETWORK**

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GULF CURRENTS

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DIRTY ENERGY ON THE GULF COAST

As a region and a country, we are dependent on fossil fuels for energy and have been for generations. However, we do not have to look any further than our beaches and marshes to be reminded of the consequences of dirty energy. BP's ads would have us believe that the Gulf is fine now, but the truth is that BP's disaster continues to impact our communities and wildlife every day.

It's not just BP, though. Tar sands investors hope to pipe their product across America to Gulf refineries and ports and then overseas to market, opening our communities to the threat of spills. Faced with opposition to coal terminals and trains in other regions of the country, the coal industry is increasingly shifting to the Gulf region as a hub for exporting this dirty fuel to China and beyond.

Coastal Louisiana is disappearing, and oil and gas production is part of the problem. The industry directly dredges through wetlands, sinks marshes by extracting fluid from underneath the earth, and allows saltwater from the Gulf into places where salt degrades marsh plants. And the burning of that oil, gas and coal over decades is what is to blame for today's global warming, and the subsequent sea level rise that is drowning our wetlands.

"FORTUNATELY, GRN IS WORKING TO CLEAN UP DIRTY ENERGY IN THE GULF, AND PEOPLE ACROSS THE REGION ARE WAKING UP TO THE THREAT AND JOINING THE FIGHT."

We can't continue as we have in the past and expect to prosper. Our economy, quality of life, and culture depend on a healthy and thriving Gulf; one that includes industry, but also has healthy fisheries and wildlife, attractive beaches, and clean air and water.

Fortunately, GRN is working to clean up dirty energy in the Gulf, and people across the region are waking up to the threat and joining the fight. Communities like Ironton, Louisiana, are organizing to block coal export terminals from ruining their health and homes (see page 4). Battles over tar sands and pipelines have sprung up in Alabama and elsewhere (see page 7). GRN is working with citizens in Mississippi and Florida to push back against expanded drilling in their backyards (see page 6 and 7). And in a part of the country where too few politicians are willing to challenge the oil and gas industry, we continue to monitor industry activities, report their violations, and file lawsuits when necessary. It is hard work and we need your help. Learn more in this edition and join us.





Oil on Grand Isle, Louisiana following Tropical Storm Karen, October 8th, 2013. Photo Credit: Jonathan Henderson, GRN.



More oil found on Grand Isle on October 8th, 2013. Photo: GRN.

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A MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



Cynthia Sarthou,
GRN Executive Director

It has been an eventful year for Gulf Restoration Network. With the release of a portion of early Natural Resource Damage Assessment (NRDA) and National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) funding related to the BP disaster, dollars are finally beginning to flow to projects needed to restore the natural resources of the Gulf. There will be challenges ahead over how these restoration dollars are spent. However, if GRN and our community and conservation partners remain diligent, we are confident that a significant amount of the monies that flow to the Gulf through the RESTORE Act, NRDA and NFWF will be used to restore our long abused and neglected natural resources.

2013 was also a year of change for the GRN staff. Our Deputy Director Aaron Viles, Communications Director Dan Favre, and Gulf Future Coordinator Michelle Erenberg left GRN for other pursuits. Although he will no longer be employed at GRN, we are happy to announce that Aaron Viles will continue to help guide GRN as a member of our Board of Directors. Several employees have shifted to fill positions this year. Raleigh Hoke, once our Mississippi Organizer, is now GRN's Communications Director, and Helen Rose Patterson, who led GRN's Outreach Team, has taken over as Mississippi Organizer. We are also glad to welcome Steve Murchie, our new Campaign Director; Jordan Macha, our Gulf Policy Analyst; Jayeesha Dutta, who replaces Michelle as our new Gulf Future Coordinator; Grace Morris, our Coal Campaign Organizer; Sarah Holtz, our Development Associate; Anna Dvorak, our Outreach Team Manager; and Casey McGowan, our Outreach Team Organizer. They each bring expertise and experience that will strengthen GRN's work moving forward.

"WE ARE HAPPY TO ANNOUNCE THAT AARON VILES WILL CONTINUE TO HELP GUIDE GRN AS A MEMBER OF OUR BOARD OF DIRECTORS."

As we enter 2014 — GRN's 20th Anniversary — I am proud of the successes GRN has achieved over the years, and the continued growth in our ability to empower Gulf communities to protect and restore the natural resources of the region.



The GRN staff at Camp Beckwith in Fairhope, AL. Photo: GRN.

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CHALLENGING OIL AND GAS IN COURT

It's generally a foregone conclusion in Louisiana and Texas that the oil and gas industries get what they want, and challenging them is hazardous to one's political future. But politics as usual was what people in Louisiana were trying to change when they voted to reform the levee boards after Hurricane Katrina. Insulated (to a degree) from political pressure, one of those boards began wrestling with the challenges of providing—and paying for—flood protection for their communities: the Southeast Louisiana Flood Protection Authority – East (SLFPA-E). Under the leadership of Board president Tim Doody and then Vice President John Barry, they concluded that the oil and gas industry was partly to blame for increasing the risk of flooding by destroying wetlands, and therefore should pay to restore what they destroyed. Accordingly, they filed suit against 97 oil, gas, and pipeline companies on July 24, 2013.



GRN's Cyn Sarthou speaks in support of lawsuit at meeting of SLFPA-E. Photo: GRN.

GRN supported the lawsuit from the outset, and worked with partners such as Levees.org to build more public backing. The litigation also drew a heated response from defenders of the industry. Louisiana Governor Bobby Jindal made it clear that he would replace flood authority board members with ones opposed to the litigation. Three of Gov. Jindal's appointees, including a replacement for Barry, were seated in November and began attempting to reverse course, but the suit is proceeding. Industry supporters also signaled that they would seek to block the suit in the next state legislative session.



Remnants of oil and gas canals, surrounded by open water. At least 36% of LA's wetlands loss was caused by oil and gas industry activities. Photo: GRN.

Over the years, Gulf Restoration Network has been a consistent (if sometimes lonely) voice calling for the oil and gas industry to fix the coast they broke. It's heartening to see the SLFPA-E take up this call as well. This suit may have finally opened the floodgates (pun intended), as Jefferson and Plaquemines parishes filed separate, more limited suits in November. As more elected officials grapple with how to pay for the state's coastal restoration "Master Plan," they may be more willing to finally challenge the industry. With their jurisdictions washing into the Gulf of Mexico, they are running out of time.

CREATURE FEATURE: LOUISIANA PANCAKE BATFISH

First discovered in 2010, this tiny creature uses its fins like feet to walk across the ocean floor. Its movement has been described as similar to a crawling bat. The pancake batfish catches its prey by covering itself in sand and extending a lure at the end of its snout. Unfortunately, its entire range was impacted by the BP drilling disaster. Let's hope these amazing critters are able to rebound and thrive.



A close-up of the Louisiana Pancake Batfish. Photo: NOAA.

SALONS FOR A HEALTHY GULF FUTURE

The Gulf Future Coalition, a diverse coalition of Gulf residents focused on restoring the Gulf and holding BP accountable in the wake of the drilling disaster, is organizing an exciting series of “Salons” across the five Gulf Coast states leading up to the Coalition’s annual Gulf Gathering. GRN and the Coalition are strategically partnering with arts, cultural and community organizations for each Salon event, including the critically acclaimed production “Cry You One” from Mondo Bizarro and Artspot Productions. The goal: to expand the breadth, depth and diversity of the Gulf Future Coalition. Keep an eye out for more information soon, and we hope you will join us at a Salon near you!



“Cry You One” premiere performance on Saturday, October 26th in St. Bernard Parish, LA. Photo: GRN.



Members of Gulf Future Coalition at Gulf Gathering 2013. Photo: GRN.

DEFEND OUR COAST, DEFEND OUR CULTURE EVENT

In September, GRN hosted another successful fall fundraiser at Susan Spicer’s Mondo restaurant. Guests enjoyed the music of singer-songwriter Sarah Quintana, bid on an array of items in our silent auction, and feasted on the cuisine of Tenney Flynn, Adolfo Garcia, and Susan Spicer. John Barry, whose poignant keynote speech was particularly memorable, addressed the need for increased storm protection, the Southeast Louisiana Flood Protection Authority – East’s lawsuit against 97 oil and gas companies (see page 3), and the future of the Flood Protection Authority. Barry’s speech, along with the fantastic presence of our supporters, made for a great event.



GRN’s Cyn Sarthou presenting award to John Barry for his leadership on holding the oil and gas industry accountable. Photo: GRN.



In Order (left to right): Marianne Murphy, Host Committee member Nancy Adams and Barbara Griffin enjoying the event. Photo: GRN.



Sarah Quintana singing at Mondo. Photo: GRN.

VOODOO 2013

It was all hands on deck at this year's Voodoo Experience, as we participated in our seventh year as official non-profit partner.

Pearl Jam frontman, Eddie Vedder, called our organization "powerful, great, and incredible" from the stage during the show and urged fans to read about the work we're doing throughout the Gulf. Our interactive multiple lines of defense display was an attention-grabber, displaying live components of our critically important barrier islands, marshes, and cypress wetlands.

With the help of dedicated GRN staff, volunteers, and artist friends, this year's festival proved to be a great success.



Voodoo artists and supporters of a healthy Gulf, The Breton Sound.
Photo: GRN.



Pearl Jam frontman Eddie Vedder. Photo: GRN.



Pearl Jam lead guitarist Mike McCready. Photo: GRN.



Our simulated Coastal Lines of Defense display. Photo: GRN.

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PRESERVING THE BEAUTY OF COASTAL MISSISSIPPI

The Mississippi Gulf Coast, home to artists such as Walter Anderson and George Ohr (also known as the mad potter of Biloxi), is a uniquely beautiful cluster of historic beach front communities buffered by pristine barrier islands. For the generations of families who have made their living on the water and the many newcomers who have fallen in love with the bucolic scenery, this is a very special place.



The Mississippi Gulf Coast provides beautiful and unique scenery and attractions that bring visitors year round. Photo: GRN.

However, the Mississippi Development Authority has continued to push for the approval of rules that will lead to drilling rigs marring the horizon along Mississippi's coast. Most recently, they have requested approval from the Mississippi Department of Marine Resources, which they received in December.

If allowed to move forward, these rules will lead to 4 to 6- story tall gas rigs within a mile of the barrier islands, infringing on the Gulf Islands National Seashore and tarnishing the experience of the one million annual visitors to the Mississippi section of the park. As the Mississippi Gulf Coast gains more and more recognition as a prime tourist destination, it is essential that we protect this unique place from the threat of drilling.

GRN and the 12 Miles South Coalition are working to organize and educate the public against opening state waters to oil and gas, and we are fighting the rules in court. The trial is scheduled to begin on January 6th in the Hinds County Chancery Court. We will continue to build public support among the citizens of the coast who value their unique communities and quality of life.

COAST OR COAL?

Louisiana is giving a coal export terminal – RAM Terminal, LLC – permission to pile hills of coal dust and traffic coal at the same location as the coastal master plan's largest restoration project – the Mid-Barataria Sediment Diversion.

Coal export terminals release clouds of coal dust that cover homes, boats, cars, and coastal wetlands with a layer of black soot. Coal-carrying rail cars are uncovered and blow coal into the communities they traverse. Coal-carrying barges dump coal in the river. In short, coal export terminals create public health and environmental impacts every step of the way.

Through a public records request, GRN obtained a technical memorandum that was commissioned by Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority (CPRA) to see if constructing a coal export terminal at the mouth of the planned Mid-Barataria river restoration project would compromise restoration goals. The report found the RAM coal export terminal could reduce sediment, transfer coal pollution to marsh areas, and that the proximity of the coal facility to the river restoration project intake poses navigation, erosion and safety issues.

Unfortunately, CPRA ignored the recommendations and wrote a special memorandum of agreement with RAM Terminal, LLC permitting its devastating coastal activity.

GRN is monitoring pollution from the existing coal export terminals in the area. We've joined with allies to file a lawsuit challenging the coastal use permit issued by the Louisiana Department of Natural Resources (DNR) for



The United Bulk coal export terminal in Plaquemines Parish features a coal-blackened river bank and pollutes the river with coal dust and pet coke. Photo: GRN.



Warren Lawrence of Myrtle Grove and Grace Morris, GRN Campaign Organizer, set up an air monitoring device. Photo: GRN.

the RAM terminal. We're launching a public education and action campaign about the impact the terminal will have on coastal restoration and the impact its railcars will have on communities. Stay tuned!

FLORIDA FRACKING: COMING TO A NEIGHBORHOOD NEAR YOU

As we continue to guard our coastlines against drilling here in Florida, oil companies are quietly drilling for oil and gas onshore, and in the process threatening the health of nearby communities. Over 115,000 acres have been leased for wells in Collier County alone, including parts of Big Cypress National Preserve.



Oil and gas activity in the Big Cypress National Preserve. Photo: NPS.

Though not 'fracking' as we've come to know the term, this "Florida Fracking" involves injecting mass quantities of fresh water, toxic chemicals and even salt water into the limestone – dissolving it to free up these dirty fossil fuels. The chemicals include benzene, toluene, ethylbenzene and xylene. These carcinogenic chemicals are injected in a way that endangers our aquifers and people's lives. In addition, the associated release of toxic hydrogen sulfide gas threatens entire neighborhoods.

Although a recent permit to drill a 16,000+ foot injection well in a neighborhood east of Naples sailed through Florida's Department of Environmental Protection, a local action group, Preserve Our Paradise, filed for administrative relief to stop it. Florida Senator Bill Nelson has called for an EPA field hearing, tentatively scheduled for February 27, 2014 in Golden Gate.

Not restricted to Naples, we've learned from the *Tampa Bay Times* that drilling, mining and groundwater rights have been sold under housing developments elsewhere in Florida. GRN continues to support efforts to protect Florida's water, people and climate from drilling and dirty fuels.



A Florida panther in Big Cypress National Preserve. Photo: Ralph Arwood/NPS.

PIPELINES AND PLAYGROUNDS

Just three miles north of downtown Mobile sits Africatown, a community founded by the last known group of enslaved Africans brought to the United States. They were illegally transported to Alabama's shores in 1860, and subsequently freed by federal authorities. For decades, this group and their descendants continued to practice tribal traditions, and speak their native language. Their incredible story and the strong community that formed there have led to recognition from the National Historic Register and other bodies. However, due to its location on the Tensaw River and its proximity to Mobile Bay, Africatown is now adjacent to industrial development on all sides — including an oil pipeline owned by Plains Southcap that runs from one of their terminals to a nearby tank farm.



Mobile River at its confluence with Chickasaw Creek. Photo: Wikipedia user Altairisfair.

To make matters worse, Plains Mobile Pipeline is now proposing the construction of a new pipeline that will run directly through Africatown. Instead of replacing the existing pipeline, Plains plans to build this pipeline in the backyard of the Mobile Training School (built circa 1880), the middle school that serves Africatown. Understandably, members of the community don't want a pipeline right next to the schoolyard where their children play.

"PLAINS MOBILE PIPELINE IS NOW PROPOSING THE CONSTRUCTION OF A NEW PIPELINE THAT WILL RUN DIRECTLY THROUGH AFRICATOWN."

In just the past few months, numerous incidents across the Gulf region have occurred involving the transportation of petroleum products, both on railways and through pipelines. This is our wake-up call. Do we continue to put our communities and environment at tremendous risk for industrial gain? Or do we prioritize our need for clean drinking water, safe havens, and healthy air quality? This is our choice across the Gulf Coast. What will we decide?



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UNITED FOR A HEALTHY GULF

SUPPORT US

As 2013 comes to a close, we at GRN want to thank you for your support. We couldn't achieve these victories for the Gulf without your actions, voices, and contributions.

This year, you helped us to:

- Protect Gulf whales and dolphins against disruptive seismic exploration while we advocate for stronger permanent protections
- Postpone the RAM "open air" coal terminal near Ironton, LA
- File over 50 reports of oil and chemical leaks, tar balls and oiled marsh with the National Response Center
- Ensure that over two thirds of early restoration dollars from the BP disaster will be spent on environmental restoration



A pair of sperm whales in the Gulf of Mexico. Photo: GRN.

Your donations enable us to respond quickly to emerging threats in the Gulf as well as continue our ongoing campaigns. Make an end of year donation today and commit to helping us make 2014 even more successful for the Gulf.



Image courtesy of Charity Navigator.

P.S. This year, GRN was awarded with Charity Navigator's 4-star rating, showing that we put your donations directly towards saving the Gulf!