

**GULF  
RESTORATION  
NETWORK**

healthygulf.org

# GULF CURRENTS

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## BP-FUNDED BOONDOGGLES BEGINNING?

More than three years after one of the world's largest oil companies started the world's largest oil spill, BP has spent billions of dollars on cleanup, claims and commercials which plaster a concerned, yet happy face on their offshore drilling disaster.

Over two years ago, BP agreed to spend \$1 billion for early restoration efforts, getting ahead of a fairly long scientific and legal process called the Natural Resource Damage Assessment (NRDA), utilized for all large, damaging pollution events. In the agreement, natural resource agencies for the 5 affected states, the federal government and BP committed to selecting projects and funding restoration within a two year timeline ahead of a final NRDA.



Cormorants in Alabama's Gulf State Park. Photo: Ken Ratcliff

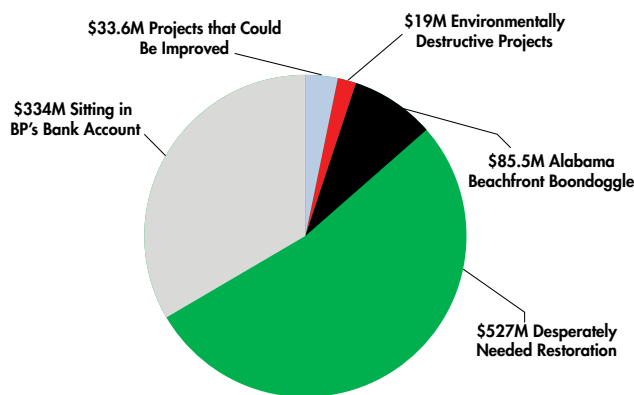
Initial efforts were mostly small-scale, though helpful efforts to repair sea turtle and shorebird nesting habitat, oyster reefs and coastal marsh affected by BP's crude and Corexit.

In the most recent, third stage of announced restoration projects, the effort has lost its credibility. Alabama and Mississippi have shoehorned economic development and tourism projects into the category of 'lost human use' that NRDA does allow.

Instead of the usual fishing piers and boat ramps that actually allow increased use of the once-damaged natural resource, Alabama has proposed a beachfront hotel and conference center to be built in Alabama Gulf State Park. Mississippi would like to add exhibits to a science center/tourism destination over 10 miles from the coast.

## "OVER TWO YEARS AGO, BP AGREED TO SPEND \$1 BILLION FOR EARLY RESTORATION EFFORTS..."

In Alabama, the proposal is even more outrageous because the state park location is critical habitat for the endangered Alabama beach mouse. GRN has effectively stopped development on beach mouse habitat in the past and now will be working to do so again.

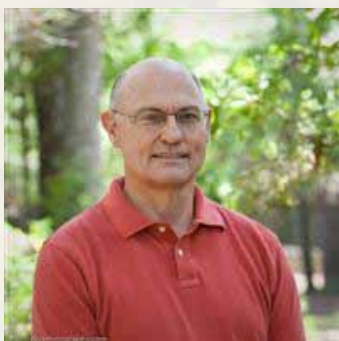


How the \$1B for early restoration is being spent.

While these expenditures aren't guaranteed, the states of Mississippi and Alabama are very committed to building these projects with BP's funds, so we expect a drawn out fight.

The multiple streams of BP dollars that will be available to fund Gulf restoration in the future represent a historic opportunity to put the Gulf on a path towards sustainability, and to help make our communities and the ecosystems they rely upon far more resilient in the face of rising seas and stronger storms. If this opportunity is lost due to parochial, pork-barrel politics, it will not come again.

## CAN WE TALK?



Hank Caddell,  
Chairman of the Board of Directors

Among those of us concerned about the environment and the future of humankind, it is difficult to conceive of a greater challenge than decoupling the issues of climate change from partisan politics. The recent release of the President's *Climate Action Plan* was a welcome step in the right direction, but politicians and individuals from both sides of the aisle need to come together and talk if we're going to have a chance at reversing the impacts of climate change.

Our friends in the fossil fuel economy have come up in arms to assert that the idea of manmade climate change is a gigantic hoax and spent a lot of money convincing politicians to follow their lead. Even armed with the conclusions of 97% or more of the world's climate scientists, it seems we can't have rational discourse about climate change with many whose minds must be changed.

### "CAN WE TALK ABOUT CLIMATE CHANGE WITHOUT BECOMING HOPELESSLY ENTANGLED IN POLITICS AS USUAL?"

Can we talk about climate change without becoming hopelessly entangled in politics as usual? It's not too much of an exaggeration to say we need to do this or die trying. Here are some thoughts:

- Can we try something different? More and more, I try to cultivate relationships with other-minded people, hoping to get into a real conversation.
- Can we focus more on getting through to young people? Older folks may not be around to feel the crunch, but for the young, their fat is truly in the fire.
- Can we focus less on statistics and more on graphic evidence such as the disappearance of the Greenland ice pack?
- Can we target our message more to those most vulnerable to climate change, such as our friends in New Orleans who may be on a rendezvous with the Gulf of Mexico?
- Finally, can we shake off the false label that concern over climate change is "liberal"? What could be more conservative than conserving a livable environment?



Melting ice sheet in Greenland. Photo: Christine Zenino

Anything else? The stakes are high. Please share your thoughts with GRN by emailing [ClimateChange@healthygulf.org](mailto:ClimateChange@healthygulf.org).

Hank Caddell, GRN's Board Chair, is an attorney based out of Mobile, Alabama. From 1971-1978, he served as the Chief of the Environmental Protection Division of the Alabama Attorney General's office. He also founded Save Our Dunes Inc., and the Alabama Coastal Heritage Trust.

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## FLOOD LESS NEW ORLEANS!

Living with water – rather than against it – is how coastal communities must adapt in the face of sea-level rise, subsidence and aging drainage infrastructure. Given this, the Flood Less New Orleans! campaign is urging city leaders to help improve neighborhood flood protection by investing an effective amount of the several hundred million dollars in federal funding under the city's control towards more sustainable storm water management infrastructure and practices. Specifically, the City's \$247 million in federal hazard mitigation funding, along with several hundred million in public-right-of-way related funds from FEMA and the Southeast Louisiana Drainage Program, present a unique, significant, and timely opportunity to harness the city's public and private spaces to create reliable and resilient flood protection.

In his *Flood Protection & Coastal Restoration Mayoral Transition Report*,



*Low-impact development and green infrastructure such as bioswales (pictured) can help ease the burden on the aging stormwater drainage system. Photo: GRN.*

Mayor Landrieu rightly states that “no matter how robust the City's coastal and perimeter defenses are, water management inside the levees will be an essential part of the City's resilience and protection.”

With funding presently under the Mayor's discretion, he could begin designing parks, streets, neutral grounds, greenways, and other public spaces, along with incentivizing best practices on private properties, to safely and affordably retain and absorb storm water, providing a crucial assist to the City's aging and breaking drainage pump and pipe system. Working together, we can seize this opportunity to build a Flood Less New Orleans for future generations. For more information, visit [HealthyGulf.org/FLNOLA](http://HealthyGulf.org/FLNOLA).



*During significant rain events, the antiquated system of pipes and canals buried beneath the ground is often overburdened, which leads to localized street flooding in neighborhoods across New Orleans. Photo: GRN.*

## GULF CREATURE FEATURE: BRYDE'S WHALE

When you think about marine mammals in the Gulf, dolphins, sperm whales and manatees might come to mind. However, not many folks are aware that the Gulf is also home to a small population of Bryde's whales (pronounced “brew-duhs”). Scientists estimate that just 40 to 50 of them reside in the region. These majestic giants average over 42 feet long, and generally weigh around 26,400 pounds!

Bryde's whales, like other members of the baleen family, have hair-like plates in their mouths that they use to filter food out of the surrounding water. Plus, they have special folds of skin between their mouth and navel that allow them to open their mouths to an extraordinary degree. They eat a wide variety of plankton, fish and crustaceans, and researchers believe they consume around 1,400 pounds of food per day!

This summer, GRN and a coalition of conservation groups reached a landmark settlement that will protect the Bryde's whale and other marine mammals in the Gulf from high-intensity airgun surveys. These airguns, which are used to search for oil and gas, produce a noise almost as intense as dynamite, and have been shown to harm and even kill marine mammals. We're proud of this victory to protect the Gulf's amazing marine mammals, and will continue to fight to make sure the Gulf is a hospitable home for the Bryde's whale and its brethren.



*Photo: Wikimedia Commons user Morningdew.*



## ADVENTURES ON THE MIGHTY MISSISSIPPI

On Thursday, June 20th, writer and adventure-seeker Andy Borbely spoke at the Bridge Lounge in New Orleans about his 74 day long canoeing expedition down the Mississippi River with friend Justin Hoest. Borbely wowed the group with a compelling retelling of his story. Much to the amazement of the crowd, Borbely and Hoest paddled into the Gulf of Mexico a mere 11 days before Hurricane Katrina made landfall. Thanks for sharing your stories Andy!



Andy floating on the Mississippi.  
Photo: Justin Hoest.

## EVENTS

### White Linen Night at GRN's Office with work by Pippin Frisbee-Calder

When: Saturday, August 3 from 6-9pm

Where: 541 Julia Street, Suite 300, New Orleans, LA

### GRN's Defend our Coast, Defend our Culture Fundraiser

Sunday, September 22  
6-8pm at Mondo in Lakeview



Food by Susan Spicer, silent auction and live music!

## OUR FIRST FUNDRAISER IN BATON ROUGE!

GRN had a great time with our Baton Rouge supporters who joined us for delicious cocktails and hors d'oeuvres from Chef Wadsworth's Restaurant IPO. In addition to the wonderful food and drinks, GRN's Cynthia Sarthou shared pictures of GRN's watchdogging work and highlighted the importance of constant vigilance in the face of Louisiana's ever-changing landscape. Special thanks to Host Committee members Gretchen Rhodes, and Ruth and Michael Bowman for their essential help in planning the party.



GRN's Executive Director Cynthia Sarthou with the members of the Host Committee (From left: Michael Bowman, Ruth Bowman, Cyn Sarthou, and Gretchen Rhodes). Photo: GRN.



GRN Supporters Loretta Pecchioni, Gary Reeves, and Karen Powell. Photo: GRN.



## AVEDA EARTH MONTH 2013 A BIG SUCCESS

Since 2006, Aveda Salons in Oklahoma, Arkansas, and across the Gulf have partnered with Gulf Restoration Network during Earth Month to raise funds and awareness for GRN's mission. We were honored to once again work with Aveda as an Earth Month partner this April, and on behalf of the GRN staff and supporters want to offer our sincere thanks for their tremendous efforts.

Although there is still a lot of work ahead to restore the Gulf and its waters, we're proud of what we've already achieved this year with the help of Aveda's support.



Staff of Tangerine Salons, TX. Photo: Aubrey Williams.



Children's Art Auction at Paris Parker Salon, New Orleans. Photo: GRN.



Cut-a-thon fundraiser at Avalon Salons/Spa in Dallas, TX. Photos: GRN.

## THANKS, DAN AND AARON!

We are sad to announce the departure of two of GRN's long-time staff.

Dan Favre, GRN's Communications Director, left us in May. Joining the GRN staff in 2006 as a Campaign Organizer, Dan helped organize the successful Save Our Cypress campaign, and was instrumental in organizing Florida's Nature Coast Coalition. In 2012, Dan was elevated to Communications Director where he helped strengthen GRN's website and branding. He is now pursuing his dream of traveling the world for a year.

Aaron Viles, GRN's Deputy Director, is leaving at the end of July. Aaron has been with the GRN since 2004 and was pivotal in guiding GRN's campaign work in the aftermath of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita and in the wake of the BP Disaster. Aaron also helped found and direct some of our most successful collaborative efforts including the Gumbo Alliance for Safe LNG, MRGO Must Go, Save Our Cypress and Gulf Future. His skills and commitment have gone a long way towards protecting and restoring the Gulf's natural resources. Aaron will be moving on to a new role as Deputy Director of Faithful America.

We wish the two of them the best of luck in their new adventures!



Aaron Viles (left) and Dan Favre (right).  
Photo: Dubinsky Photography.

## STAY IN TOUCH

Join GRN on social media for more timely updates and breaking news.



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[www.twitter.com/healthygulf](http://www.twitter.com/healthygulf)



## GRN SPEARHEADS PROTECTION OF THE NATURE COAST FROM SUNWEST DREDGE

In a major victory for the unspoiled coastal ecosystem of Florida's Nature Coast, the permit for a damaging dredge project for the SunWest County Park was denied by the Army Corps of Engineers. On May 10th, the Corps issued its denial, stating: "If constructed, the proposed project...would have impacted nearly four acres of jurisdictional wetlands and nearly 29 acres of seagrass habitat." Kevin O'Kane, chief of the Tampa Regulatory Office said: "We are confident that our decision is based on sound science and a comprehensive, thorough review of...cumulative impacts of the proposed project on the public's interest."

The Corps considered the value of the aquatic ecosystems involved, the views of federal and state agencies and interest groups, and 21 public interest factors including conservation, economics, cumulative environmental impacts, wetlands, fish and wildlife values, flood hazards, navigation, recreation, water quality and safety.

These and other concerns were repeatedly brought to the attention of the Corps through the public outreach work of the Gulf Restoration Network, its organizational partners, and many vocal and dedicated local activists. Our collective work generated 9,000 emails and 40,000 group petition signatures requesting denial of the project. The Corps did the right thing because of the efforts of people who care about Florida's natural treasures and the health of the Gulf. Many thanks to all.



*A brown pelican sits atop a post in Fillman's Bayou.  
Photo: GRN.*



*Fillman's Bayou at the site of Sunwest County Park.  
Photo: GRN.*

## HUGE DEAD ZONE PREDICTED

According to the latest prediction, it looks like we are going to have a whopper of a Dead Zone in the Gulf this year. It is predicted to be approximately the size of New Jersey, barring any hurricanes churning up the Gulf around the end of July, when the folks at the Louisiana Universities Marine Consortium (LUMCON) take the annual measurement.

This prediction comes as Mississippi River states and the feds continue to drag their feet on taking aggressive action to stop the Dead Zone-causing pollution that flows from industrial agriculture, chemical facilities, and sewage treatment plants.

While last year's Dead Zone was relatively small, it's size wasn't smaller due to any action taken by the feds or states. Instead, devastating droughts in the nation's breadbasket meant that there was no rainwater to wash the nitrate and phosphorus pollution into the Mississippi.

So, if you were keeping track, there are three ways to fix the Dead Zone:

- 1) Have more droughts
- 2) Have more hurricanes
- 3) Actually reduce the pollution that causes the Dead Zone

GRN would like to go with number three. Unfortunately, this has been and continues to be a hard fight. EPA is backing off on requiring states to set limits on Dead Zone-causing pollution, and Louisiana is actively fighting any regulations that would reduce the pollution that flows down the Mississippi. Nonetheless, we're keeping up the fight to press EPA and the states to take decisive action to stop this pollution that threatens our communities, fish and the other critters that live in the Gulf.



*Algae bloom in the Gulf on June 11, 2013.  
Photo: GRN & Southwings.*



## PEARL RIVER PAPER MILL FINED FOR SPILL

In the summer of 2011, the Temple-Inland Paper Mill in Bogalusa, LA illegally discharged toxic “black liquor” into the Pearl River. As a result, over half a million fish were killed, including Federally Protected Gulf sturgeon. Since this massive fish kill, the paper mill has become a subsidiary of International Paper, and criminal and civil penalties have been assessed. In total, \$3.3 million of federal and state fines were levied. These will be divided as follows:

- \$1.5 million in criminal fines
- \$900,000 to the Trust for Public Land to buy and protect land in the Pearl River basin
- \$100,000 to the Nature Conservancy of Louisiana to buy and protect land
- \$200,000 to study the Gulf sturgeon recovery
- \$500,000 to the Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality (LDEQ) for spill response and testing activities
- \$50,000 to the Louisiana State Police
- \$50,000 to the Southern Environmental Enforcement Network

We are pleased to see that a substantial fine has been levied for this assault on the Pearl River. One result we hope to see from this is an improvement to the Gulf sturgeon habitat in the Pearl. The \$200,000 going to the Gulf sturgeon should be used to study and implement the removal or modification of the “sills,” or small dams, in the Pearl that impede the natural migration of the sturgeon.

Now that fines have been levied, it falls on LDEQ to issue a new permit to this facility. LDEQ has promised two hearings for this permit—one in Bogalusa and one in Slidell. We will hold LDEQ to this and will work to ensure that the new permit does a better job at protecting the Pearl, the wildlife that depends on it, and the community that surrounds the plant and lives on the River.



*The Wastewater Pond at the Bogalusa Mill  
Photo: GRN & Southwings.*

## AS THE RIVER AND DREDGE WORK TOGETHER, SO LOUISIANA MUST WORK WITH FISHERS

Coastal Louisiana faces a crisis that is both short- and long-term. In the short-term, our historic communities remain vulnerable to each passing storm, because we lack the large landscape that formerly sheltered us from the surge. In the long-term, the sea, swollen from the heat trapped by fossil fuels, rises to swamp what is left of our sinking delta.

The state has committed to a dual strategy of using the natural engine of the river through diversions to build and sustain land long-term, and deploying timely but expensive marsh and island creation via the pumping of dredged materials for the short-term. The patient is terminal, and requires massive surgery. But do we trust the surgeon? Although these tactics can work well together in a restoration strategy, we haven't always seen the state and our fishers work together as well. The state has committed to adaptive management of the river, but the management history shows a pattern of malpractice.

The Caernarvon diversion was designed to flush fresh water into oyster leases to keep oysters free of salt water parasites. Originally, the management of the diversion coincided with the engineering. Over time, the pressure to tinker with the land-building potential of Caernarvon overcame objections that the large amount of fresh water necessary to make a water diversion move sand would starve all the oysters. When the oysters died off, the fishery sued the state, thus beginning a protracted legal battle that remains unresolved.



*At the mouth of the Atchafalaya, the newest landscape in Louisiana was formed by the action of the River and the dredge together. Photo: Google Earth Engine.*

Louisiana desperately needs a large-scale solution to the coastal crisis. But the state needs to show that it is learning. If there is a way to build enough land without over-flooding the estuary, then the state needs to operate the gates that way. If the state cannot meet the land-building goals of a diversion project by these careful measures, or by supplementing the land built with dredged material, then the state has the duty to inform fishers where and when they should move, and assist them in that move.

We are still learning how to build land with the river. If the state commits to a clearly communicated adaptive management strategy, including restoration, monitoring, and operational targets and practices, then we can all work together with the dredge and the river.



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# UNITED FOR A HEALTHY GULF

## KNOCKING FOR A HEALTHY GULF

This summer, as part of GRN's fifth annual Restore the Gulf outreach campaign, our dedicated team of activists will be taking the fight for a healthy Gulf to neighborhoods and events throughout all five Gulf states, and maybe even to your door. We will be working to engage community members in thousands of one-on-one conversations, build public pressure to hold BP and the government accountable, and build our base of members dedicated to protecting and restoring the health of the Gulf of Mexico.

So, if you hear a knock at your door, there's a good chance you'll find a slightly sweaty young adult wearing a Gulf Restoration Network t-shirt waiting patiently. Spend a few minutes getting an update on the ongoing impacts of BP's drilling disaster and how GRN is responding and organizing to ensure a healthy future for the coast and our communities. And, if you haven't already, take the opportunity to act to support all of our hard work by becoming a Gulf Sustainer and making a monthly contribution to GRN. It's membership support like yours that gives GRN the resources to tackle the most pressing threats to the Gulf right now, and every day.



Photo: GRN.