



GULF CURRENTS

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A HEALTHIER GULF FUTURE THROUGH ARTS AND CULTURE

Over the course of Gulf Restoration Network's twenty-year history, we have partnered with a myriad of artists, musicians and cultural workers to organize, educate and empower communities to advocate for a healthy Gulf. In recent years, these partnerships have grown even closer.

GRN recently began a unique and inspiring cultural organizing partnership with the multidisciplinary performing arts production *Cry You One*. As a leader in the Gulf Future Coalition, which is a diverse coalition of groups formed in the wake of the BP disaster to protect and defend the Gulf, we worked with members of *Cry You One* to host a series of Community Visioning Salons across the five Gulf Coast states leading up to the Coalition's annual Gulf Gathering. Integrating art, culture and storytelling has, in the words of Coalition members, "breathed new life into the Coalition" and is "inspiring hope to continue this work" as we mark four years since the country's biggest environmental disaster started.



Citizens participate in Gulf Future visioning salon in New Orleans. Photo: GRN.

GRN HAS REPRESENTED OUR WORK AT A VARIETY OF MUSIC FESTIVALS OVER THE YEARS, INCLUDING THE VOODOO MUSIC + ARTS EXPERIENCE, BAYOU BOOGALOO, AND THE BONNAROO MUSIC AND ARTS FESTIVAL.

From household names such as Pearl Jam and Pete Seeger to artists like The Revivalists, The Breton Sound, Sassafrass, Rising Appalachia and Sarah Quintana, musicians continue to elevate the urgency of the issues we face on the Gulf Coast. GRN has represented our work at a variety of music festivals over the years, including the Voodoo Music + Arts Experience, Bayou Boogaloo and the Bonnaroo Music and Arts Festival.

Our cultural organizing work varies from arts-based daylong community events like the Community Visioning Salons to hosting a simple table at a band's show. Whatever form it takes, cultural engagement through the arts is an essential part of GRN's work. We believe the answer is in our dreams for a healthy, vibrant and sustainable Gulf Coast and our partnerships with artists are helping to bring those dreams into reality.



At Voodoo Music + Arts Experience 2013, Pearl Jam gave GRN a shout-out from the stage. Photo: GRN.

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THE MOSQUITO AND THE MAMMOTH: GRN AND THE OIL INDUSTRY



Aaron Viles,
Board of Directors

Many coastal advocates are reeling after Governor Bobby Jindal and the Louisiana state legislature dealt a blow to a heroic effort to hold the oil industry accountable for the role they have played in destroying Louisiana's coastal wetlands and increasing the vulnerability of New Orleans and other coastal communities to the impacts of powerful storms and floods.

Of course, this is not Gulf Restoration Network's first time supporting accountability for the oil industry.

In 2007, GRN headed up a coalition effort – working with groups from Greenpeace to the Louisiana Shrimp Association – to get Shell to step up and pay for what they had done to Louisiana's coast. Shell would not recognize our efforts, which lead to some very funny satirical videos (search ShellCares on YouTube) and a plane circling the Shell-sponsored Jazz Fest in New Orleans, towing a banner which read: "SHELL: HEAR THE MUSIC – FIX THE COAST YOU BROKE."

We tried to reason with Shell, we tried to shame Shell, but when those efforts failed to work, we realized a legal strategy was going to be the only thing to get them to the table. Simultaneously, BP became our oil industry target, and the effort to hold oil companies accountable for their legacy coastal impacts took a back seat to our efforts in the moment to keep BP from walking away from their deepwater drilling disaster.

Oddly, BP proved that in the right circumstances, Louisiana's politicians are capable of holding an oil company accountable and using their deep pockets to fund the restoration of damaged coastal ecosystems. Passage of the RESTORE Act, which puts BP's Clean Water Act fines to work for the Gulf, remains a proud success for GRN and the entire coastal advocacy community. But beyond BP, it remained politically toxic to support oil industry accountability. Enter John Barry and the Southeast Louisiana Flood Protection Authority-East lawsuit against 97 oil, gas and pipeline companies.

No matter the interference of the Louisiana state legislature, I'm convinced the time has come for accountability from the industry. The outcry of support for the lawsuit and the outrage in response to the Big Oil Bailout from Baton Rouge shows we're on the right track, and GRN will continue to do everything in our power to advance the cause.

Aaron Viles, who served for several years as GRN's Deputy Director, is a member of GRN's board and the Deputy Director of Faithful America, an online community committed to putting faith into action for social justice.



A platform making its way down one of many channels in Terrebonne Parish, LA. Photo: Jonathan Henderson, GRN. Flight provided by Southwings.org.

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GEMS OF THE GULF

Beneath the Gulf's sparkling waters, there lies a largely unseen world made up of hundreds of spectacular, unique ecosystems that are hotbeds of biodiversity. Recently a report by the Marine Conservation Institute, entitled "Gulf Gems: Treasured Places in Troubled Waters," highlighted ten of the most spectacular of these ecological gems. The featured ecosystems include:

- Pulley Ridge, the deepest known photosynthetic coral reef off the continental U.S.—found 200 feet below the ocean surface — which is vibrantly colored and inhabited by more than 60 species of fish;
- Madison Swanson, Steamboat Lumps and The Edges off the Gulf coast of Florida, consisting of limestone cliffs and rocky outcrops that support arrow and hermit crabs, basket stars, sea fans and *Oculina* coral;
- Viosca Knolls, a conglomeration of deep sea coral communities due south of Mobile and 1,640 feet beneath the ocean's surface that support a range of diversity generally only seen in shallow water coral reef ecosystems; and
- South Texas Banks (Southern Bank, Hospital Bank and Mysterious Bank to name a few of the 40 banks discovered so far), "drowned" coral reefs that thrived when sea levels were much lower, but continue to house a wide array of marine life.



A black sponge laying amongst coral in the McGrail Bank region of the Gulf of Mexico. Photo: NURC/UNCW and NOAA/FGBNMS.

Sadly, each of these gems is at risk. However, as discussed in "Gulf Gems," there are ways to protect them if we act soon. For more information, visit Marine-conservation.org.

FLORIDA SPRINGS – STILL DOWN AND STILL DIRTY

In spite of strong organizing by citizens and environmental groups and unanimous support in the State Senate, the Florida Springs and Aquifer Protection Act failed to pass during Florida's 2014 legislative session. Although the bill would have provided water protection that Florida desperately needs today, House Speaker Will Wetherford punted to next year's incoming Speaker, Steve Crisafulli. In a *Tampa Bay Times*' column, Estus Whitfield, an environmental advisor to four Florida governors, summed things up pretty well: "Just be glad the Legislature doesn't control your local fire department or you might be told that your burning house can't be saved because the next shift really wants to fight the fire."



Weeki Wachee Headspring. Photo: GRN.

Despite this setback, key water protections can be implemented now. The Florida Department of Environmental Protection has the power to implement many of the changes in the bill, including septic tank inspections and water use reduction, if Governor Scott chooses to prioritize Florida's waters.

Gulf Restoration Network has been calling for the formation of a broad-based stakeholder group to create and implement a comprehensive long-term water policy for Florida. It's time to work together. Water is precious and finite. It's polluted and it's disappearing. But there is hope for cleaning and protecting Florida springs, rivers, aquifer and estuaries—if we have the faith and the will to see it through.

THANKS, AVEDA!

Every year during the month of April, Aveda salons and institutes demonstrate their laudable environmental stewardship and commitment to sustainability by raising money for clean water and awareness about water pollution issues. We were honored to be included in their campaign for the ninth year in a row.

Aveda's efforts to protect and celebrate the importance

of clean water is indispensable to Gulf Restoration Network's work in the Gulf region, as we continue to face environmental threats from polluters, developers and the ongoing ecological and community impacts of the BP disaster. We extend our deepest gratitude to Aveda for their commitment to our cause.



Aveda Institute students show off their wetlands-themed regalia at the annual Cat Walk for Water fashion show in Houston. Photo: Aveda Institute, Houston.



Paris Parker Salon staff celebrate Kid's Earth Day in Baton Rouge. Photo: GRN.



Aveda salon representatives in Houston pose after a pedal pub race to benefit GRN. Photo: Lauren Roy Nordquist, Neill + TSP Corporation.

HANDS ACROSS THE SAND AND LAND – NATIONAL DAY OF ACTION

Hands Across the Sand and Land joined the Keystone XL National Day of Action on May 17th in a global call to stand against dirty energy and for a clean energy future. Gulf Restoration Network helped organize events in St. Petersburg, FL, New Orleans, LA and Ocean Springs, MS.



Beachgoers join hands for clean energy in Ocean Springs, MS. Photo: GRN.



Groups in Florida pose to show support for a cleaner coast. Photo: GRN.



Joining hands on St. Petersburg Beach in Florida. Photo: GRN.

WE FOUND THE EASTER KEG!

The sixth annual Easter Keg Hunt began at NOLA Brewing's Tap Room, and folks were dressed to impress. The Jelly Beer Bellies, Bunny Rangers and Energizer Bunnies were among the teams searching through the Irish Channel, the Lower Garden District, and ending at the Warehouse Grille where they found the kegs and live music. Special thanks to NOLA Brewing for partnering with Gulf Restoration Network for another great Hunt!



Winners of the best team costume: The Energizer Bunnies. Photo: GRN.



The Breton Sound playing at The Warehouse Grille. Photo: GRN.



The NOLA Brewing Bunny. Photo: GRN.

GRN TURNS TWENTY

As Gulf Restoration Network celebrates our twentieth anniversary, we've been looking back at our history working to empower people to protect and restore the natural resources of the Gulf of Mexico. We've come a long way in that time, from a staff of one (GRN's current Executive Director Cynthia Sarthou) working on just a couple of campaigns in Louisiana and Mississippi, to a staff of twenty with a proven track record of victories and a variety of campaigns throughout the Gulf. Check out these "then and now" pictures:



Founding board members Elaine Giessel, Juan Parras, Heidi Lovett, and Linda Young and Earthjustice liasons Nathalie Walker and Melissa Samet in 1994. Photo: GRN.



Cynthia Sarthou, GRN's current Executive Director and founding staff member in 1994. Photo: GRN.



GRN's staff at Camp Beckwith in Fairhope, AL in December 2013. Photo: GRN.

STAY IN TOUCH

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



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BP TURNS TO THE TOBACCO COMPANY PLAYBOOK

As we observe four years since the BP drilling disaster in the Gulf, and the twenty-fifth year since the Exxon Valdez disaster, BP has taken a more adversarial stance. Instead of focusing on making things right, BP has followed the example of the tobacco companies, challenging the scientific evidence when it is unfavorable to the company, and cherry-picking the data when it suits them.

BP isn't just challenging existing science – it was also recently revealed that the company refused to pay for government-led studies of its impacts for the Natural Resource Damage Assessment (NRDA) process. NRDA is supposed to gather the evidence resulting in the responsible party restoring the environment, and compensating for loss of public use of the environment. That's going to be hard to do if BP continues to fight against paying for the very scientific research needed to evaluate how badly they damaged the Gulf. On top of that, BP is attempting to renege on their agreement on compensation procedures for people harmed economically by the blowout.

All of this is happening as dolphins continue to die at alarming rates, bird deaths have been recalculated at about 800,000, and tarballs and tar mats continue to wash up on Gulf shorelines. Looking ahead, we will need state and federal leaders to respond to the challenge of BP's "tobacco company defense" and hold them fully accountable. And with the final phase of BP's Clean Water Act trial scheduled for January of 2015, Gulf Restoration Network will keep working to tell the truth about how BP's oil is impacting the Gulf, and make sure that BP pays the maximum fines possible under the law.



Biloxi, MS 4-year BP memorial event. Photo: GRN.

ST. TAMMANY UNITES AGAINST FRACKING

In May, St. Tammany Parish residents assembled in Abita Springs, Louisiana against fracking, raising many of the same concerns that Gulf Restoration Network and others have had about fossil fuel development over the years. Impacts to the air, community health and especially water pollution weigh heavily on people's minds in St. Tammany.

Louisiana has seen many residents leave coastal areas in the past decade— fleeing the industry that dominates our coast, as well as the rising waters of the Gulf. Some of these coastal residents have relocated to St. Tammany Parish. But now Helis Oil and Gas is pursuing fracking in one of the last places in Louisiana that has not been drilled.

Citizens young and old did not sit quietly as industry representatives and regulators neglected to answer basic questions about predictable oil and gas pollution—oils, heavy metals and radium all contaminate waters during drilling activity. But Louisiana Oil and Gas Association representatives insisted on obfuscation, stating that toxic drilling muds were less harmful than kitchen chemicals. They impressed no one.

Gulf Restoration Network is proud to be among the many citizens, organizations and local governments challenging Helis Oil and Gas' application to drill in a wetland forest in St. Tammany Parish.

Sadly, this project isn't the only threat to Gulf Coast communities. As dirty energy developers look to expand their operations in the Gulf, GRN will continue to fight for the protection of our communities and environment.



A Covington resident holds a sign at a fracking meeting in Abita Springs, LA in protest of the proposed well. Photo: Julia Dermansky.

MONITORING THE GULF BY LAND, SEA AND AIR

Led by our Coastal Resiliency Organizer, Jonathan Henderson, Gulf Restoration Network is continuing our work to watchdog the impacts of the energy industry on the Gulf's coastal environment. So far in 2014, GRN's monitoring work has been featured on NPR, *PBS Newshour*, the *Washington Post*, *Salon.com*, *Bloomberg News*, *Al Jazeera*, the *Los Angeles Times*, the *New Orleans Times-Picayune*, the *Baton Rouge Advocate*, the *National Journal* and numerous other media outlets.

GRN has filed over 15 reports in 2014 with the National Response Center (NRC) for new leaks and spills discovered on monitoring trips. In fact, the US Coast Guard recently thanked Jonathan for his reports of sheens in Grand Bay and Quarantine Bay, saying that :
 "[b]ecause of the two NRC reports received as a result of your over flight, we were able to take immediate action...Your efforts are very much appreciated and have played an instrumental role in the response actions taken."



Oil leaking from a submerged pipeline in Plaquemines Parish, Louisiana. April 11th, 2014. Photo: Jonathan Henderson, GRN. Flight provided by Southwings.org.

"GRN HAS FILED OVER 15 REPORTS IN 2014 WITH THE NATIONAL RESPONSE CENTER FOR NEW LEAKS AND SPILLS DISCOVERED ON MONITORING TRIPS."



Oil, gas and pipeline canals like these in Cameron Parish have contributed greatly to destruction of Louisiana's wetlands. May 4th, 2014. Photo: Jonathan Henderson, GRN. Flight provided by Southwings.org

Photos of oil, gas and pipeline canals taken on monitoring trips have also been used extensively in the fight to hold the industry accountable for damages – including efforts to defend the Southeast Louisiana Flood Protection Authority - East's lawsuit against 97 oil, gas and pipeline companies for the damages they've caused to Louisiana's natural storm defense system (Read more on Page 2).

GRN thanks members like you for supporting this monitoring work, our partner Southwings.org and their volunteer pilots for making many of the flights possible, and our other partners in the Gulf Monitoring Consortium. If you would like to donate equipment or sponsor a trip, please contact Jonathan at jonathan@healthygulf.org.

GALVESTON BAY TAKES A HIT

This spring, the Gulf took another hit, this time in Galveston Bay. A barge accident—later determined to have been preventable—dumped approximately 170,000 gallons of oil into this critical Texas habitat. While this spill received special attention due to its size, the oil and gas industry averages 285 spills a year in Galveston Bay alone.



A cleanup worker gathers oil on the shore of the Texas City Dike, March 24, 2014. Photo courtesy of USCG/Stephen Lehmann.



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UNITED FOR A HEALTHY GULF

KNOCKING FOR A HEALTHY GULF

It's that time of year again – Gulf Restoration Network has launched our sixth annual Restore the Gulf Summer Outreach Office! This summer, our dedicated team of passionate activists will be fanning out to neighborhoods throughout southeast Louisiana and the Gulf Region to have tens of thousands of one-on-one conversations with residents about protecting and restoring the Gulf of Mexico, and sign up new GRN members.

If you hear a knock on your door and open it to discover a (slightly sweaty) individual wearing a GRN t-shirt and wielding a clipboard, take the opportunity to get the latest on GRN's efforts to hold BP accountable and restore our coast and communities. And don't forget to offer them a glass of water!



Photo: GRN.



Gulf Restoration Network, founded in 1994, is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization committed to uniting and empowering people to protect and restore the natural resources of the Gulf of Mexico region.