

## **The BP Gulf Oil Spill Disaster: What it Means to You**

As we approach the 2 month mark from the Deepwater Horizon explosion and subsequent oil spill, the saga of the Gulf oil spill continues unabated. The efforts to contain the spill seem idiotic on many levels, all the more confounded by the latest in the 'top kill' strategies failing to plug the fissured deep sea well. Shifting strategies but failed response have mutated to an environmental disaster for the Gulf coast, causing thousands to lose their livelihoods and substantially damaging the quality of life of both wildlife and humans alike throughout the gulf coast region and perhaps beyond.

According to U.S. government estimates, some 12,000 to 19,000 barrels per day of oil is continually being jettisoned from the deep sea well into the Gulf of Mexico. The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) has now closed at 25% of the federal Gulf waters for fishing. After weeks of downplaying the environmental impact of the Deepwater Horizon disaster, Tony Hayward, the chief executive of British Petroleum (BP), recently told a TV channel: "This is clearly an environmental catastrophe. There is no two ways about it," adding, "It's clear that we are dealing with a very significant environmental crisis and catastrophe."

The crude oil, even when in contact with water, stays together as a blob known as 'mousse'. This blob floats on water and sticks to anything it comes in contact with, and unfortunately many marine animals mistake the mousse for floating food, and become poisoned when they come into contact with it. Chemical dispersants seem like an effective solution to counteract the continuing spread of this 'sea of mousse', as these dispersants react with crude oil to extract different chemical components from it, much like a refinery does. These dispersants help the oil droplets disintegrate into smaller droplets for easy decomposition.

In reality, these chemical dispersants are far from a panacea, as an oil spill treated with chemical dispersants poses an even greater ecological threat than the oil spill left alone! These dispersants keep the oil underwater and together have created a deadlier mix than oil and water. In fact, the chemical microbes that ingest oil deplete oxygen from the sea, creating 'dead zones' for fish and other marine life, which may lead to the wholesale death or even extinction of marine species in this region.

### **Public Health, Economic and Environmental Impact of the Gulf Oil Spill**

In addition to the thousands of working Americans losing their livelihoods from the closure of fishing grounds, many thousands more will see a long term decline in property values and overall quality of life in and around the Gulf of Mexico, not to mention the thousands and perhaps millions of dead or dying birds, animals and marine life affected by the BP oil spill. The long-term public health impact of this massive oil spill are only beginning to be quantified and assessed but what is indisputable is that prolonged exposure to crude oil and the chemical dispersants being used to "fight" its spread pose a significant danger to public health. This is because the microscopic particles from the crude oil pollute the air, and cause people to become ill with symptoms such as headache, nausea, irritated eyes and even neurological diseases in the long term.

While it is difficult to estimate and quantify the potential economic impact of the Gulf oil spill, an estimated \$1 Billion is attributed to fishing in the Gulf of Mexico, and many Billions of dollars more are attributed to tourism on and around the Gulf coast region, especially in Florida. Because the cleanup of the spill is likely to take decades to complete, the overall economic impact on the Gulf coast over the lifetime of the oil's presence on its beaches, marches, and sea floor where the food chain for marine life in the region begins will surely reach unprecedented totals in the history of man-made environmental disasters. Furthermore, BP and the other companies involved with the spill, Halliburton and Transocean, are not required by US law to pay retribution to people and businesses affected by their actions and neglect.

### **BP Oil Spill Class Action Lawsuits**

According to the [Oil Pollution Act of 1990](#), a \$75 million cap is in place which limits the amount of money to be spent by a company that has caused an oil spill on retribution to private parties, a paltry sum in comparison to the actual monetary damages being incurred by residents of this region and in comparison to the profits made by these same companies from just the Deepwater Horizon well alone. If your livelihood, property or health has been affected by the negligence and mismanagement of BP and their subcontractors, you may be entitled to monetary compensation for your loss and suffering. Contact an attorney or law firm who specializes in oil spill class action lawsuits to evaluate your particular circumstances and fight for your rights!