U. S. Environmental Protection Agency
Blog Round-up
Prepared by the Office of Public Affairs

Friday, February 15, 2013

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Monday, May 03, 2010

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PEOPLE ARE TALKING

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With the internet, blogs, Twitter, forums - people are talking about EPA 24/7
Here's a sampling of what was said on April 30, 2010:

NOTE: To read the entire blog entry, click on underlined URL. To learn more about the blogger, click on the name/link in first line. Notes and headings are from OPA.

Lisa Jackson

@lisapjackson thanks for what you do. Best of luck in NOLA.
Posted by: mireyamayor 6:00 pm Full post:

Being the enviro EPA can be hip and empowering. Kudos to Lisa Jackson!
Posted by: dianneglave: 5:03 pm Full post:

EPA's Lisa Jackson says the gulf oil leak started as a human tragedy with 11 workers lost and turned into environmental challenge.
Posted by: Vicki9News: 4:05 pm Full post:

@LisaJackson @epa Thank you to Lisa Jackson for being the FIRST person to recognize the victims of the explosion in the gulf. 10 DAYS LATER.
Posted by: DragonflyKid: 4:15 pm Full post

"We will work with the states first and foremost," says EPA's Lisa Jackson of #oilspill. Includes air monitoring etc.
Posted by: craigtimes: 4:10 pm Full post:

Gulf Oil Spill & EPA Response

EPA establishes web site with info on BP oil spill http://www.epa.gov/bpspill #oilpocalypse #oilspill As Administrator Jackson tours region…..
Posted by: facingsouth 5:31 pm Full post:

(Note: similar post RTed about 50 times in last hour. Some of the RTers: US CoastGuard, Audubon, person in Brazil, Alabama.com, Am. Lung Association, KATC TV3 (La.), Paramedics Florida, Sierra Club, AllMilitaryNews, Kate_Sheppard)

HuffPost: Fire on the Bayou: River of Oil heads to Mississippi, Alabama, Louisiana, Florida

Posted by: http://www.huffpost.com 5:30 pm Full post: http://www.huffingtonpost.com/bill-quigley/fire-on-the-bayou-non-sto_b_559268.html

An oil spill so large and threatening it garners its own @USEPAgov website. Thanks BP! http://www.**epa**.gov/bpspill

Posted by: fruhwirth 5:51 pm Full post:

Houma chief at New Orleans Jazz Fest prepares for oil spill briefing with EPA director Lisa Jackson

Posted by: NOLAnews 5:58 pm Full post: http://bit.ly/cxXX92

green alert: EPA emergency response staff are responding to the #oilspill, please support their efforts. Region 4 guys going to Ala & Miss

Posted by: melisheath: 5:20 pm Full post:

Alert: Federal EPA calling all certified oil spill technicians for 3 week stint in New Orleans; BIG PAY, paid hotels, food. #jobs

Posted by: Workway: 5:05 pm Full post

ROUND-UP OF MAJOR BLOGS

TOXICS

May 3, 2010

Rubber Ducks, Dancing Cats and Mutagenic Pajamas All In One Book! (Huffington Post)

Not sure what to get your mom for Mother's Day? I have the perfect gift. Now more than ever, mother needs to KNOW BEST, so get her a copy of ***Slow Death by Rubber Duck: The Secret Danger of Everyday Things***. Two wild and crazy Canadian science-policy geeks, Rick Smith and Bruce Lourie, write about the slightly horrific and sometimes hilarious experiment they conducted on themselves. For one week, they lingered in a rented apartment inhaling and ingesting a variety of toxic chemicals which are present in everyday household products. Some examples; personal-care products containing phthalates and triclosan, bisphenol A (BPA) leaching from baby and other plastic bottles, mercury found in tuna and the off-gassing from new carpets. The authors carefully monitored themselves taking urine and blood samples throughout the experiment to send for analysis to a highly respected forensic laboratory. "While we were voluntarily and deliberately exposing ourselves to these substances, thousands of people were unknowingly and involuntarily exposing themselves to the same chemicals," writes Rick Smith. By doing these ordinary things that people do everyday, for one week, Smith increased his urine levels of phthalate (MEP) 22 times, his level of BPA 7.5 times and his levels of triclosan 2,900 times.

A large and growing body of scientific research links exposure to toxic chemicals to many ailments including several forms of cancer, reproductive problems, birth defects, respiratory illnesses such as asthma and neurodevelopmental disorders such as attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD).

Simmer down, now. I promise you won't get depressed when you read this book but you may just get fed up with being a guinea pig to a feral chemical industry who spends millions lobbying publicly elected officials who are either a. oblivious, b. negligent, c. super rich, or d. all of the

above! You just may become an outspoken leader and activist. C'mon already. We need you! "There are 82,000 chemicals in use in the United States with 700 new ones added each year. Of those roughly 82,000, only 650 are monitored through TRI (EPA's Toxic Release Inventory), only 200 have ever been tested for toxicity, and only five have been banned under the Toxic Substances Control Act, " says Bruce Lourie. "Not even asbestos is banned, a known carcinogen that has killed nearly 45,000 Americans over the past 30 years."

If that's not insane, I don't know what is. Well actually, this is also in the Looney Tunes category: 93% of Americans tested have measurable amounts of BPA in their bodies. "What in God's name were they thinking when they started making household plastics out of a chemical that has been known for over 70 years to screw up the human body's hormone system?" writes Smith. Smith ate only canned products and drank out of polycarbonate for one full day during his experiment. His level of PBA increased more than sevenfold as an adult male. Babies are essentially doing that all day, every day.

The authors conclude that we can't completely succeed. The toxins are too widespread. You may eat organic at home but the chairs, bus seats and carpets are coated with toxic stain-resistant chemicals and the air fresheners in the cab, bathroom or office are spewing out phthalates. We need to first, get informed, so that we can make wise, educated choices as consumers. And secondly, we need bona fide government regulation and oversight of toxic chemicals.

Read, weep, and chuckle here and there. Then get active by joining the Environmental Working Group (www.ewg.org) who is working tirelessly to change arbitrary and outdated chemical laws. (Just this month EWG worked with Senator Frank Lautenberg (N.J.) to introduce the '**Safe Chemicals Act'** which would regulate all chemicals and protect consumers.) Also visit www.cosmeticdatabase.com to see how many possibly carcinogenic chemicals you're lathering on to your skin in your favorite cosmetics.

Last, I give you permission to join me in being bitter, jaded and spitting mad. It looks good on you, really. Nothing will change unless companies see their profits decline. Mothers must unite, network and spread the word to support companies who don't hide scientific research on the hidden toxicity of their products, especially their baby products; baby bottles, rubber ducks, baby pajamas. As the League of Maternal Justice bloggers (www.leagueofmaternaljustice.com) write on their home page *"To use the power of the mom internet community to expose the injustices perpetrated against mothers everywhere and to exact vengeance through excessive finger-wagging and online shaming."*
Fire it up, Mothas!
IT IS ON!

Get this book for your friends who are having babies and for your mom who is still spraying all that fake-floral air freshener. Open the window. Let in fresh air.
Never mind.
There is no fresh air anymore.
Go hide under the sheets and don't come out till I text you.

WATER

May 3, 2010

"BP", Star of Stage, Screen, and Radio (*Huffington Post*)

For those of you young enough to remember the expression, "Star of Stage, Screen and Radio" the moniker conveyed upon those in public view who seemed to be here, there and everywhere, forever the focus of the media's eye.

In perverse manner the same now applies to BP, currently viewed as responsible for the Gulf of Mexico oil spill which President Obama has categorized as a "massive and potentially unprecedented catastrophe."It has already claimed eleven lives, destroying the livelihood of thousands and thousands, and causing incalculable environmental damage.

"BP is responsible for this leak and will be paying the bill" Obama made clear. According to Environmental Protection Federal Agency Administrator Lisa P. Jackson who flew over the Gulf oil spill Saturday, would tell people at a meeting in New Orleans that "it's like all five of the Great Lakes and the Great Lakes are oil sheen."

These past years BP has been the central player in a roster of disturbing often lethal oil related catastrophes and dubious policies.
These include not only today's disaster :

-2005: A major explosion at BP'S 440,000 barrel/day Texas City Refinery killing 15 workers and injuring hundreds. According to a report that was issued after the accident identifying numerous failings in equipment, risk management, at the site, as well as failings in a working culture, relating to maintenance, inspection and general health and safety assessments.

- 2007: BP agreed to pay $303 million to settle civil charges and avoid criminal prosecution for allegedly manipulating and cornering the U.S. propane market in 2004. Please see "Energy Trading Oversight Awakens From Its Slumber with Anticipated BP Settlement" 10.25.07.

-2009: The Federal government and the State of Alaska filed a civil lawsuit against a BP PLC unit in Alaska for breaking federal laws during two major oil spills totaling some 200,000 gallons of oil in 2006 at Prudhoe Bay, the country's largest oilfield. The complaint accuses BP of failing "to prepare and implement spill prevention" including not complying in a timely manner with a federal order requiring tests, inspection and repairs. Earlier Thomas J. Barnett then with the Office of Pipeline Safety would comment, "What disappointed me was their failure to maintain these lines in an accepted industry level of care."-Also please see "Bravo BP! Those Record Earnings Really Help. Alaska and the Nation Thank You!" 08.09.06.

While the oil slick spreads we can at least rest assured that BP, perhaps a bit thin with hands on competence in containing oil spills, has ample experience in dealing with federal oversight agencies.

Gulf Oil Spill 2010 EPA Launches Emergency Site (*Huffington Post*)

First Posted: 05- 2-10 10:40 AM | Updated: 05- 2-10 10:45 AM

Mother Nature Network:

The entire world is now looking to the EPA for guidance, explanations and emergency resources for Gulf residents who are bracing for what experts predict will be the worst oil spill in U.S. history. In hasty response, the EPA just put up a "damage control" web page which provides breaking updates and resources for those living in the affected areas.

EPA launches website on oil spill
The Deepwater Horizon incident is set to surpass the Exxon Valdez spill as the worst oil disaster in U.S. history. The EPA, the Coast Guard and Department of Homeland Security are providing breaking updates and resources online.
Fri, Apr 30 2010 at 7:39 PM EST

The entire world is now looking to the EPA for guidance, explanations and emergency resources for Gulf residents who are bracing for what experts predict will be the worst oil spill in U.S. history. In hasty response, the EPA just put up a "damage control" web page which provides breaking updates and resources for those living in the affected areas.

Lisa Jackson, the EPA administrator, just flew over the area a few hours ago (you can follow her updates on Twitter @lisapjackson) and has dispatched two Trace Atmospheric Gas Analyzers or TAGA's to test the impacts on air quality as toxic vapors threaten several densely populated areas, including New Orleans. Here's what Lisa Jackson has to say:
We are taking every possible step to protect the health of the residents and mitigate the environmental impacts of this spill. For several days, EPA has been on the ground evaluating air and water concerns and coordinating with other responding agencies. We are also here to address community members — the people who know these waters and wetlands best. They will be essential to the work ahead.
The EPA site casts a little light on information about water testing and what is being done to curtail the oil slick as it impacts protected wildlife reserves and coastal towns on the Gulf, but an adjunct website called DeepwaterHorizonRepsonse.com has a great photo gallery of tactics being used to capture oil before it hits land — like oil-absorbent pads and underwater booms. It provides recent reports from the Coast Guard, NOAA, the Department of Homeland Security and BP.

The Deepwater website also has some great video, but unfortunately the U.S. government doesn't do YouTube, so video can only be viewed if you have a special plugin which doesn't work on a Mac. Still a great resource though ... check it out.

May 3, 2010

Posted: May 2, 2010 07:35 PM

The Oil Spill From Hell – Why Your Shrimp Will Be Ever More Expensive (*Huffington Post*)

After the massive oil spill off the coast of Louisiana my friend, Stephanie Kovac, an award winning television producer and director of the highly acclaimed documentary "Tide Of Tears: The Collapse of the Cajun Coast" felt compelled to write the following Op-Ed column.
Believe me she knows of what she speaks. For years this daughter of the Gulf Coast has been studying the history of the area and struggling to document how the man-made misuse and natural erosion of the Louisiana Coast is literally destroying an area rich in heritage and fertile in products mankind needs.
Then came the horrific BP oil spill, belching out even more destruction along her beloved home state coast.
Who's to blame for the environmental disaster? Please read this very important piece from Stephanie Kovac. You'll see there's plenty of blame to go around ~ Diane Dimond

The Mississippi Gulf Coast - the place I call home - is staring directly into the face of catastrophic certainty. A man-made disaster the likes of which the world has never seen. And, for weeks, perhaps months on end, nothing can be done to save it.

As British Petroleum's guzzler spews an estimated 210,000 gallons of oil per day into the Gulf, many are already pointing fingers, asking why the oil giant isn't doing more to stop the leak.

However, BP isn't the only entity with blood on its hands. The United States government controls the waters in the Gulf of Mexico - the same government that granted the offshore leases to the drilling giants. The same government that announced last March it was opening areas of the eastern Gulf and the Atlantic to offshore drilling then sheepishly recanted 20 days later, after the BP explosion.

But, the blame doesn't stop there. Every American in this country needs to take a long hard look at the disaster in the Gulf of Mexico because we are all responsible. We are the only species that will destroy what we have in an effort to get what we think we need. No one is more capable of utter destruction in the pursuit of what he wants than man.

Americans want their gas-guzzling sport utility vehicles and one ton trucks and we don't want to be bothered with the details of how we're going to acquire what we need to fill the tank. We only gripe and moan when we have to pay more than two dollars a gallon for it.

So, shouldn't we Americans be damn proud of the find BP made? According to the Washington Times, "BP has not said how much oil is beneath the Gulf seabed Deepwater Horizon was tapping, but a company official speaking on condition of anonymity because he was not authorized to discuss the volume of reserves, confirmed reports that it was tens of millions of barrels."

The Times continues that same tens of millions of barrels is now "a frightening prospect to many." Ask any third generation oysterman who will no longer be raking in those bands of gold what fear is. Ask any shrimper whose boat is now docked at the start of the season what fear is. Ask any wildlife rescue group who will be unable to save hundreds of thousands of migratory birds from certain death what fear is.

The bayou people of south Louisiana have been forced to share the wetlands they depend on for survival with the oil giants for years - sold out by state legislators who were supposed to be "looking out for the little guy" but were bought by big oil along the way.

Today, Louisiana produces 25 percent of the nation's oil and gas. At the same time, more than 300 species of migratory birds seek refuge in the coastal wetlands every spring and fall, stopping to feed, rest and mate. In addition, one third of America's seafood comes from coastal Louisiana. It is also home to one of the largest oyster beds in the world.

But, the ten thousand miles of oil canals that crisscross the fresh water marsh are funneling in lethal salt water from the Gulf and accelerating the end of this fragile freshwater environment. A football field of land is lost every fifty minutes... leaving behind a defenseless coast.

Every 2-point-3 miles of wetland absorbs one foot of storm surge. 1900 square miles of the Louisiana coast have been lost in the last 75 years. The greatest fear after hurricane Katrina was that another 700 would vanish in the next 40 years if nothing was done. And, then came the Deepwater Horizon blast. The greatest fear now is that there will be nothing left to lose.

The bayou people have been engaged in a balancing act with big oil since the 1970s. They have struggled to co-exist while watching the land they love erode away. And, all the while they have shouted on deaf ears that Louisiana was paying too high a price to provide fuel and heat to the rest of the nation.

Since Katrina, more than 50-thousand fishing jobs have been lost. In a sad twist of fate, many fishermen were forced to take jobs with the oil companies. It was a way to make ends meet, working for those who raped the land they loved.

The BP disaster may ultimately change the way of life in south Louisiana forever. And, some believe the oil giant has agreed to hire the local fishermen to help in the clean up only as a means of offering them hush money. After all, big oil is big money. And, no one is going to bite the hand that feeds. They can't afford to, not in one of the poorest states in the country.

So, the next time you dine out only to find seafood is no longer on the menu... or balk at the price at the pump... or turn up the heat to make your home more comfortable... remember, we are all responsible for the disaster in the Gulf. Perhaps it's time Americans stopped believing that exploring any other option will be the end of us. Perhaps it's time we stopped pointing fingers at every other man except the one in the mirror.

Diane Dimond can be reached through her web site: www.DianeDimond.com
Stephanie Kovac can be reached through her production company: skovac@wishcraftproductions.com

I strongly urge a donation to WishCraft Productions so Stephanie can continue the important job of documenting the literal destruction of the Cajun people and the Cajun coastline.

Follow Diane Dimond on Twitter: **www.twitter.com/dianedimond**

May 3, 2010

Posted May 1, 2010 02:50PM

Exxon Lessons for the BP Spill (Huffington Post)

The question after the 1989 Exxon Valdez oil spill was not if another catastrophic spill would hit the United States, but when.

Now we know. Unless BP's mile-deep gusher can be capped or shut off, it may exceed in volume and damage the 11 million gallon spill that occurred in Alaska's Prince William Sound. Estimates are that 1.5 million gallons have already spewed out and it seems to be getting worse, not better.

As an environmental reporter for the *Seattle Times*, I was one of the first on the scene of the Exxon spill and later shared a Pulitzer for its coverage. Twenty-one years later, neither I nor the oil industry have an answer for what to do now.

Corralling an oil spill is like putting fog in a bag.

Based on Alaska's experience, what might we expect in the Gulf as the oil platform disaster worsens?

First, BP, like Exxon, will be properly contrite, determined, and will promise to make restitution. None of this will matter. Exxon said the same things, probably caused as much damage as it prevented in its power-washing of beaches, and spent two decades beating down $5 billion in

civil damages for those harmed by its spill to a little more than 10 percent of that. Watch what they do, not what they say.

Second, cleaning up oil once it escapes its confinement remains an almost impossible task. The technology was not very effective in Alaska, and so far it does not seem very effective in the Gulf. In Alaska, the oil industry tried chemical dispersants such as are being used in the Gulf, booms, burning, hot-water pressure washing of beaches, bio-remediation by culturing bacteria to eat oil, and even wiping rocks with rags. None worked very well. After humans quit, winter storms finally broke up and eroded the surface oil, while subsurface oil still lingers.

Once wind pushes the oil into mangroves and estuaries, forget about it. The damage is hard to imagine until you see it. But to get an idea, dump a quart of dirty motor oil on your driveway and try to clean it up.

There will be immediate photogenic bird kills, but then a much longer and more insidious presence of oily contaminants in Gulf ecosystems. The real damage will play out over years, not days.

While the focus in coming weeks will be on defending the coast from oily tides, lawyers will parachute in ahead of beach workers. At issue will be how much wildlife and seafood was present before the spill, and how much was lost. The inventorying will pit legions of scientists from the Gulf states against legions of scientists from BP. While President Obama is holding BP responsible for restitution, just how much damage occurs? This will be the crucial question in the years of court fights to come. This disaster will mean full employment for a shrimp-bucket-full of attorneys and biologists.

That means the more the Gulf states know about their coastal environment, the more money they will collect at the back end. They'd better hope they haven't gutted their environmental agencies, because they need them right now. Big Time. Count, count, count.

Scoffing at environmentalists is national sport, of course, until pollution hits close to home. Another prediction, based on what happened in Alaska, is that once the oil starts to devastate commercial marine livelihoods, you'll see tree-hugger conversions among redneck resource workers more dramatic than that of Saul on the road to Damascus. Fishermen will howl - but still will lose their livelihoods.

A likely beneficiary of this spill are environmental organizations and their efforts to promote conservation and discourage new drilling. BP has a history of shooting itself in the foot. It allowed corrosion on the Alaska pipeline it managed to trigger a spill that helped derail a campaign to open the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge to drilling, and now has this nightmare right after the Obama Administration proposed opening new swaths of coast to oil leasing. The oil industry is its own worst enemy.

Eventually there will be investigations, some kind of Congressional legislative reform, and -- if the spill is costly enough -- an overhaul of BP management similar to what happened at Exxon,

in which a cowboy company gets (some) religion. Technology will take a stride ahead and things might get a bit safer, for a while.

But the threat will remain, vigilance will relax, and risks will run higher as the world gets more desperate for oil and drills in ever-more-inaccessible places. Petroleum product consumption in the United States has increased about 10 percent since the Exxon Valdez spill, according to the Department of Energy, despite some impressive renewable energy and conservation efforts.

Until we make real strides in weaning from fossil fuels -- which, incidentally, would help save the climate, save the oceans, and get us less entangled in endless wars -- it's almost certain I can recycle this blog post again in ten or twenty years.

But energy conservation is one of those dad-gum socialist ideas, isn't it? Why conserve when it's so American to just let the oil industry do its thing?

May 3, 2010

Oil Spill Worse than Exxon Valdez: Oceanographer (*Huffington Post*)

First Posted: 05- 1-10 05:14 PM | Updated: 05- 2-10 09:19 AM

The Gulf Coast spill will have eclipsed the Exxon Valdez in terms of total gallons of oil before the weekend is over -- making it the largest oil spill in U.S. history -- according to calculations made by oceanographer Ian MacDonald after studying aerial Coast Guard photos taken earlier in the week.

MacDonald, a professor at Florida State University who counts "oil and gas development" among his areas of expertise, stopped short of comparing the Deepwater Horizon spill to that of the Alaskan oil tanker, but said Saturday, "The spill is growing. I'm comfortable saying that the size and extent of this slick is 10 million gallons."

Given that just over a million gallons are leaking into the Gulf per day, according to MacDonald's calculations, the spill will shortly top the Exxon Valdez's estimated 11-million-gallon spill. It is almost certain to cost more than the Exxon spill, which cost $3.5 billion for cleanup and another $5 billion worth of lawsuits and other settlements.

The environmental whistleblowers at SkyTruth, which debunked earlier lowball estimates from the government and BP, said the spill will top the Exxon spill by the end of the day Saturday. Federal point man and Coast Guard Admiral Thad Allen didn't dispute the calculations of MacDonald or SkyTruth, but said "any exact estimate is probably impossible at this point."

Bill Maher Slams Obama, Oil Companies After Gulf Coast Oil Spil (Video) (*Huffington Post*)

First Posted: 05- 1-10 02:27 AM

Bill Maher slammed President Obama Friday for supporting a repeal of the moratorium on offshore oil drilling.

During the panel segment on "Real Time," Maher pointed to the Gulf Coast oil spill and wondered why less than a month ago, President Obama proposed lifting the ban on offshore oil drilling along much of the East Coast.

While the president's proposal was part of a larger climate bill, for Maher, it was an unecessary concession to Republicans.

"I understand politics is the art of the compromise and all that," Maher said. "But you know, when you compromise on something like that, that's a bridge too far to me, as a supporter."

He went on to compare oil companies to banks that were too big to fail and suggested higher taxes for oil companies that will reflect the real cost of oil.

Maher: Oil companies are worse than banks. They're also too big to fail. And their cost to society is also, just like the banks, too great for society to sustain it.

I started to talk about this with John over there. The International Center for Technology Assessment did a study of the hidden cost on a gallon of gasoline. And this was years ago, when gas was about a dollar a gallon. And because of things like defense of the Middle East, regulatory oversight, pollution cleanup, oil industry tax subsidies, it was about $15 a gallon. I don't think people realize that. So 'tax, baby, tax' maybe is what we should do with the oil companies.

But Obama and oil companies weren't the only villains in Maher's debate.