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

Friday, February 15, 2013

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ROUND-UP OF MAJOR BLOGS

BP SPILL

June 28, 2010

BP Oil Spill Cleanup Could Face Complications From Tropical Storm Alex, Weather (*Huffington Post*)

First Posted: 06-26-10 10:44 PM | Updated: 06-27-10 01:06 AM
Alabama, Alex, Barataria Bay, Deepwater Horizon, Florida, Gulf Of Mexico, Gulf Oil Spill, Hurricane, Hurricane Katrina, Louisiana, Mississippi, Oil Spill Cleanup, Oil Spill Response, Oil Well, Tropical Storm Alex, Weather, Wetlands, Green News
NEW ORLEANS (AP)-- The logistics of containing the oil spewing into the Gulf of Mexico are mind-boggling even in ideal conditions. Add a tropical storm like the one swirling in the Caribbean and things get even more complicated.

Any system with winds over 46 mph could force BP to abandon efforts to contain the flow for up to two weeks and delay the drilling of two relief wells that are the best hope of stopping it, Coast Guard Admiral Thad Allen said Saturday, shortly after Alex became the first tropical storm of the Atlantic hurricane season.

Forecasts show Alex churning toward Mexico and missing the northern Gulf Coast and the spill, but officials are watching closely anyway.

"We all know the weather is unpredictable and we could have a sudden, last-minute change," Allen said.

Emergency plans call for moving workers and equipment five days before gale-force winds are forecast to arrive at the half-square mile containment operation surrounding the blown-out well. Oil has been gushing since the offshore drilling rig Deepwater Horizon exploded 50 miles off the coast of Louisiana on April 20, killing 11 workers.

Nearly 39,000 people and more than 6,000 boats are working there, in other parts of the Gulf and on land to skim and corral the oil, protect hundreds of miles of coastline and clean fouled beaches. All of those efforts would have to be suspended if a storm threatened.

At the well, the two systems that have been capturing anywhere from 840,000 to 1.2 million gallons of oil a day would be unhooked, leaving oil to gush freely into the Gulf again. No one

knows exactly how much is flowing, but worst-case estimates indicate it could be as much as 2.5 million gallons a day.

Work would also stop on the two relief wells being drilled to take the pressure off the blown-out well, considered the only permanent solution. The first is on target for completion by mid-August, but there could be a significant delay if people and ships come ashore to ride out a storm.

Despite the setback a suspension would represent, "the safety of life is number one priority," Allen said.

Out in the Gulf, there is also concern about the thousands of feet of protective boom ringing numerous islands and beachfronts. Winds and waves could hurl the material, much of it soaked with oil, deep into marshes and woodlands.

"What boom they don't pick up - and there's miles and miles of it, so there's no way they can pick it all up - will end up back in the marsh," said Ivor van Heerden, former deputy director of Louisiana State University's Hurricane Center.

Once a storm's expected direction is determined, barges and crews plan to remove as much boom in its path as possible, said Sam Phillips, solid waste permits administrator with the Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality. The boom would be stored on barges so it could be put back in place quickly.

"Obviously, it wouldn't withstand a hurricane," Phillips said.

Workers probably would have enough time to retrieve most of the exposed boom, he said.

"You can move a lot of boom in 48 hours, if that were your sole endeavor," he said. "Can they get all of it? Probably not."

The spill - and the prospect of a hurricane whipping oily water into bayous and coastal communities - is also complicating the already complex hurricane planning that takes place each summer.

After all, this is a region that's no stranger to big storms. In 2005, the devastating Hurricane Katrina was followed immediately by Hurricane Rita. Three years later, Hurricanes Gustav and Ivan hit back-to-back.

BP, the Coast Guard and the state of Louisiana have already been talking about how to coordinate evacuations so workers and equipment involved in the oil spill response don't clog highway escape routes.

Officials in coastal St. Bernard Parish gave local agencies a deadline for outlining evacuation plans, said parish spokeswoman Jennifer Belsom. She acknowledged uncertainties posed by the spill could flummox even the best laid plans.

"There are all kinds of what ifs," she said.

Thousands of families that lost jobs due to the spill may have fewer resources for a storm evacuation, said Mark Cooper, director of the Louisiana governor's Office of Homeland Security and Emergency Preparedness.

Pete Gerica says fishermen like him who typically ride out storms in their boats also might have second thoughts this year because of the spill. Oily water carried by the storm surge could be difficult to clean.

"How would you clean it up?" he said. "You will have to clean up mud and oil. Can you clean that out of the walls? Who knows."

It's also unclear what a storm would do to oil floating in the Gulf.

Some fear high winds and large waves could push it deeper into estuaries and wetlands. A storm surge of several feet could bring it inland, creating a mess. But a storm also could help disperse and break up some of the oil.

No matter what happens with Tropical Storm Alex, it's likely just the beginning. Forecasters are predicting a busy hurricane season with powerful storms.

Jeff Masters, director of meteorology for forecasting service Weather Underground, said spill responders may need to rethink their five-day window for suspending containment efforts because storms often change more quickly than that.

If they don't develop a more nuanced plan, he said, "it means they are going to be having lots of false alarms where they are unnecessarily taking down their operation or they are going to be putting lives at risk, one or the other."

Bluestein reported from Atlanta. Associated Press Writers Cain Burdeau, John Flesher and Michael Kunzelman contributed in New Orleans and Pauline Arrillaga in Houma, La., contributed to this report.

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June 28, 2010

Media Contributes to Victim Mentality as Gulf Struggles (*Huffington Post*)

Air Quality , Atapaka , Barataria Bay , Benzene , Bp , BP Oil Spill , Environment , Epa , Media , Niosh , Oscha , Science , Superfund , TAGA Route , Toluene , Toxic-Waste , Youtube , Media News

We have no idea how much oil is flowing into the Gulf of Mexico as result of the April 20 explosion of the BP Transocean/Deepwater Horizon. We do know eleven men died there. There is no doubt that the environmental devastation is the worst this country has ever experienced, and there is no end in sight. There is much hype, fear, hyperbole, wrongful statements, panic and YOUTUBE hysteria as the river of oil spreads across the water and flows into sensitive marshlands. We hear stories of turtles being burned alive at sea, oiled dolphins, bubbling dipersants, and blackened beaches following the spread of the catastrophic BP oil disaster in the Gulf of Mexico. There is also truth. Lies and collusion have been exposed, and fear is ramping up.

Fear and hysteria will be our undoing if the general public does not abandon a victim mentality and begin to be proactive about the actions we can take to become informed. This will require work, it will require learning more about science, and it will require discipline. We all have to learn how we can be effective and what is completely out of our control. Citizens want the protection of government and regulatory agencies, but resent the "big brother" implications. We can't have it both ways.

Journalists have a responsibility to examine the science and it will not be easy. The public has a responsibility to learn more about their environment. It is obvious that government is not looking out for Gulf Coast residents. Communities will be forced to step in and do independent monitoring.

One of the most important issues facing coastal residents is air quality.

There is good, solid information available, but sorting it out and getting answers to legitimate concerns about air quality and human health impacts is difficult. Part of the problem certainly lies in the bureaucratic structure surrounding air quality monitoring and data sets, as well as disagreement among the organizations set in place to protect the public as to acceptable limits of exposure to volatile organic compounds such as benzene, toluene and xylene (VOCs), as well as the unknown effects of the dispersant COREXIT. Add Internet hysteria to the equation, possible data altering, poor sampling methods--and sifting fact from fiction becomes very difficult.

Grand Bayou, LA at risk

As someone who was exposed to significant amounts of benzene (it is an easily recognizable odor, similar to gasoline) while working on Gulf waters in and around Barataria Bay, I learned firsthand that it makes one feel ill. You feel as if someone is holding you upside down in a gas tank. Headaches, nausea and lingering vertigo are concerning symptoms and the first thing you want to know is how much exposure is "acceptable," and whether or not the symptoms will mitigate on their own. In my case, only the vertigo remains--almost two weeks post exposure.

This writer was able to leave the area. Residents and clean-up workers do not have that option. They need clear answers and solid guidance. I am not sure that is possible.

There is no doubt, and experts agree, that benzene is carcinogenic, and induces health problems ranging from death in extreme acute exposure to central nervous system disorders, confusion, nausea and dizziness at the other end of the spectrum. Of the above-listed toxins, benzene is one of the most toxic, as long-term exposure to benzene has been proven to cause a variety of potentially fatal health problems.

Benzene has not been ignored in the public health arena. The sweet smelling by-product of crude petroleum is very commonly used in the industrial processes. It is toxic when inhaled or ingested. There are well- circulated studies from cities across the US in which data collected from air quality monitoring has revealed problems with varying limits of benzene in air and soil samples. It is not as if the scientific community has not studied benzene exposure. The problem is that there is no regulatory consensus as to what constitutes acceptable exposure at "lower" levels.

Who Recommends and Who Regulates?

Laws can enforce regulations, but lawsuits require proof and expensive monitoring. The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) can develop enforceable regulations for VOCs.

Law cannot enforce recommendations. The Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR), formed to assess health risks at toxic superfund sites and part of the CDC, and the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) are two federal organizations that recommend levels of exposure.

The EPA has determined that benzene is carcinogenic to humans.

Brief exposure (5-10 minutes) to very high levels of benzene in air (10,000-20,000 ppm) can result in death. Lower levels (700-3,000 ppm) can cause drowsiness, dizziness, rapid heart rate, headaches, tremors, confusion, and unconsciousness.

OSHA regulates levels of benzene in the work place. The maximum allowable amount of benzene in workroom air during an 8-hour workday, 40-hour work week is 1 ppm (part per million). NIOSH recommends that all workers wear special breathing equipment when they are likely to be exposed to benzene at levels exceeding the recommended (8-hour) exposure limit of 0.1 ppm. The EPA says an exposure of .0004 ppm in air over a lifetime could cause a risk of one additional cancer case for every 100,000 exposed persons.

There is no baseline standard of comparison for exposure time among agencies.

So, benzene is clearly of concern and exposure should be limited. What, exactly, are the levels currently experienced by Gulf coast residents and cleanup crews working on the seas?

Often, benzene exposure gets lumped into a total data set of VOCs, which further confuses the issue.

The majority of samples (128 out of 187) had measurable levels of total hydrocarbons and 28 had levels greater than 10 ppm, which is the level of concern EPA is using for Volatile Organic Compounds (VOCs). In contrast, the BP summary cites an "action limit" of greater than 100 ppm -- a level that would be fairly certain to make people sick.

Eleven samples had measurable levels of the known carcinogen benzene, with measurements up to 0.5 ppm. This range encompasses the National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) Recommended Exposure Limit (REL) for occupational exposure to benzene of 0.1 ppm. From the data presented it is impossible to ascertain how many of the samples exceeded this health-based level.

The BP document contained no data at all on hydrogen sulfide, naphthalene, dispersant chemicals, and other air pollutants that are harmful to health and that workers are likely to be exposed to.

What do you do when the levels exceed the "recommended" exposure by NIOSH, but remain below the EPA threshold? Sometimes comparative studies list exposure in mg/cubic meter, and while a simple mathematical conversion is required to convert to ppm, it is not something the general public or journalists will undertake.

Instead of solid answers as to acceptable limits of benzene exposures, we are left with comparisons. We can look at numbers derived on the Gulf and say they may be higher or lower than what is permissible for exposure at a gas pump (after we complete the conversion), or higher or lower than numbers permissible for BP workers on the rigs, on cleanup, or in their offices, but it is all numbers that have no relation to each other. OSHA numbers are higher than the NIOSH limits and EPA numbers target specific locations and don't take atmospheric conditions, distance from the main source, or have rigid controls in place. It is hit or miss sampling and hit or miss evaluations by the regulatory agencies that were put in place to protect us.

In a study of air quality, "Alabama Air Polluted with Benzene," researchers found that levels of benzene and other VOCs were present in "concentrations well above air safety standards set by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). In some cases, levels of toxins exceeded federal standards by over 9,000 percent."

In "Regulation of Occupational Carcinogens Under OSHA's Air Contaminants Standard," authors Dalton G. Paxmana and James C. Robinson of the School of Public Health at the University of California, Berkeley criticize the exclusion of stricter NIOSH data in establishing regulations in the workplace.

We compare the information used by the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) to regulate carcinogens under its 1989 Air Contaminants Standard to publicly available information on substances with potential carcinogenic activity. Carcinogenicity evaluations were obtained from the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH), the American Conference of Governmental Industrial Hygienists (ACGIH), the National Toxicology Program (NTP), the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), and the International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC). We focus on three sets of substances: those which were regulated as carcinogens by OSHA in the Standard, those which were included in the Standard but whose exposure limits are based on noncarcinogenic effects, and those substances designated as potential carcinogens by NIOSH, ACGIH, and/or NTP but which were excluded from the Standard. The data indicate that OSHA relied almost exclusively upon the recommendations of the nongovernmental ACGIH to the exclusion of IARC and the three governmental bodies. Given their statutory authority to evaluate chemical carcinogenicity for regulatory agencies such as OSHA, the exclusion of NIOSH and NTP is particularly striking.

Along the Gulf Coast, the EPA is using a mobile trace atmospheric gas analyzer to evaluate benzene, toluene, and xylene levels. You can go to the site and download comma-delineated files that compare levels at any given date, time and location.

The TAGA bus monitors for two chemicals found in the COREXIT dispersants: EGBE (2-butoxyethanol), and dipropylene glycol mono butyl ether, "which have the highest potential to get into the air in any significant amounts." But, for simplicity we are leaving COREXIT out of the discussion. You may read about the EPA monitoring technique here.

Of course, dispersants require a separate discussion as to legality and toxicity.

The first caveat is that this site is partnered with the "unified joint command," which includes BP, but the information is fascinating to watch. Whether it is entirely reliable is not a question I am prepared to answer, and I welcome experts to weigh in on this.

For one example, if you go to the TAGA site and click on the monitoring results for June 25, there are a wide range of readings in parts per billion. (multiply parts per billion by .001 to obtain parts per million) The highest is 72 ppb (volume) or .072 ppm, which is higher than the EPA exposure limit of .0004 ppm in air over a lifetime, and smaller than the NIOSH level of .1 ppm for an eight-hour work week.

Gina Solomon's report for OFFSHORE measurements showed benzene up to .5 ppm, far above the NIOSH standard and less than the EPA limit for lifetime exposure. Eleven samples had measurable levels of the known carcinogen benzene, with measurements up to 0.5 ppm

The difficulty in drawing conclusions is obvious.

There are two areas of concern that journalists should address, and it will take some digging.

Are the TAGA results reliable, can they be doctored, and what do they mean for ONSHORE health?

Secondly, how do Gulf coast residents take control of their own monitoring?

One of the most interesting blogs offered screenshots indicating that the EPA had altered posted data. If this proves to be true, independent oversite is imperative. Screen scrubbing is common and we have seen this is the past with the Coast Guard's PR firm in New Orleans as one example.

A simple solution would be for local communities to establish their own water and air quality monitoring. It is expensive. We looked into getting some equipment for the Atapaka, an indigenous People living on Grand Bayou, who have been continually marginalized. Their entire culture and way of life is in a precarious situation as the BP catastrophe unfolds. Cost for basic monitoring equipment? $20,000. Any takers? The Atapaka need help.

We will be writing more about the Atapaka and their fight for survival in the coming week.

In the meantime, here are some links that may be helpful. As a caveat, I ran this article past a lawyer and a doctor who told me it might be above the "average reader's" head. That is a sad commentary. It is time for everyone to become an expert in understanding their environment.

http://www.epa.gov/iris/subst/0276.htm
http://www.atsdr.cdc.gov/toxprofiles/phs3.html

June 28, 2010
Josh Nelson
Publisher EnviroKnow
Posted: June 28, 2010

What Role Will Senator Murkowski Play In Climate An Energy Negotiations? (*Huffington Post*)

Speaking at a sparsely-attended luncheon in Fairbanks, AK on Friday, Senator Murkowski (R-AL) touted her failed effort to block the EPA from regulating greenhouse gas emissions as a 'badge of honor.' She went on to explain why she considered the maneuver, which went down by a 53-47 margin on June 10th, a qualified success. "We made our point. Forty-seven members of the Senate said they do not want to allow the agency to set climate change policy," she said.

As luck would have it, another institution has plans to 'set climate change policy' in the weeks ahead -- the United States Senate. And fortunately for Senator Murkowski, as a United States Senator, she has the power to influence that process as it plays out. By all indications, Senator Murkowski should be a leading Republican in these negotiations. In response to the announcement of a new Climate Science Center at the University of Alaska earlier this year, she

rightly called the state 'ground zero for climate change.' Last September Murkowski told reporters that Congress needs to work on climate change but should take its time considering options. And by all accounts, the Senate has done just that in the past nine months, trying and giving up on a variety of approaches deemed too controversial to attract significant Republican support.

But now there are a several proposals and a handful of standalone measures on the table. A group of seventeen Senators -- which includes Senator Murkowski -- will be meeting with President Obama Tuesday to discuss a path forward. Majority Leader Reid has indicated he'll be moving the legislation immediately after July recess.

If Senator Murkowski intends to play a constructive role in this process, her opportunity is now. Robert Dillon, a spokesman for Senator Murkowski, claims she intends to play such a role, citing her support of Senator Lugar's energy legislation. According to Dillon, Murkowski supports "Sen. Lugar's latest efforts to address climate." Perhaps sensing the angle I was pursuing, he added, "so any accusation that she opposes dealing with emissions is completely false."

But Dillon also made it clear that Murkowski remains firmly opposed to including a cap on carbon in the legislation. "There's not 60 votes for cap and trade now nor has there ever been. A great number of Democrats remain opposed to a cap for economic reasons - concerns shared by many Republicans as well," he said. When asked how Senator Murkowski would like to see the Senate move forward on energy reform, Mr. Dillon was quite specific. "Sen. Murkowski believes the Senate should immediately focus on passing standalone oil spill compensation legislation to assist the victims of the oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico. Then it should take up the bipartisan energy bill approved by the energy committee last summer, which would address many of the president's stated goals for a clean energy bill but would not include a cap on carbon." Curiously, he did not mention Senator Lugar's proposal in response to this question.

The 'bipartisan energy bill' Dillon refers to is the American Clean Energy Leadership Act, which, as David Roberts explains, amounts to 'a minor deviation from the awful energy status quo.' I followed up with Mr. Dillon, asking if Senator Murkowski considers ACELA sufficient to properly address climate change. I also asked how Senator Murkowski reconciles her self-professed belief in climate change with her refusal to do anything serious to address it. While he didn't respond to either question directly, he offered this response. "The energy bill would make a real difference in our energy policy without harming the economy. The other proposals introduced this Congress do not strike the appropriate balance between environmental and economic protection. Sen. Murkowski has done more than any other Republican to improve the nation's energy policy. She's passed bipartisan energy policy through the committee. But she won't support bad legislation that threatens the economy and does nothing to improve our energy policy."

It is clear that Senator Murkowski wants the Senate to pursue an extremely limited approach on climate and energy policy. Even in the face of the worst environmental disaster in American history, her opposition to taking serious steps to reduce oil consumption remains unchanged. Senators who claim to be concerned about climate change should take steps to address it in a meaningful way. Senator Murkowski's refusal to do so puts her credibility on the issue into

question. If Senator Murkowski wants to present herself as someone who is actually concerned with addressing climate change, she'll have to do a lot better than she has so far in her career.

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Weekly Mulch: As risks for oil and gas grow, USSF offers change (*Talking Points Memo)*

BP oil has been spilling into the Gulf of Mexico for more than two months, and while attention has focused there, deepwater oil drilling is just one of many risky methods of energy extraction that industry is pursuing. Gasland, Josh Fox's documentary about the effects of hydrofracking, a new technique for extracting natural gas, was broadcast this week on HBO. In the film, Fox travels across the country visiting families whose water has turned toxic since gas companies began drilling in their area.

"So many people were quick to respond to our requests to be interviewed about fracking that I could tell instantly that this was a national problem--and nobody had really talked enough about it," Fox told The Nation this week.

Natural gas

In Washington, even green groups like the Sierra Club have been pushing natural gas as a clean alternative to fuels like coal; reports like Fox's suggest that the environmental costs of obtaining that gas are not yet clear. Besides water contamination, natural gas opponents are also documenting environmental damage to air quality. Like the problems with deepwater oil drilling, which became apparent after the Deepwater Horizon rig exploded, the dangers of hydrofracking could go unchecked until disaster strikes.

And both deepwater drilling and hydrofracking are symptoms of the greater crisis threatening the country: as energy resources become harder to extract, energy companies are taking greater risks to get at the valuable fuels.

Drilling on government land

As Fox documents, new gas wells are popping up like gopher holes all over the country, on private and public lands. Just this week, Earthjustice, an environmental advocacy law group, challenged the Bureau of Land Management's decision to allow drilling in a southwestern Colorado mountain range,the Colorado Independent reports.

"The HD Mountains are the last tiny, little corner of the San Juan Basin not yet drilled for natural gas development," Jim Fitzgerald, a farmer, told Earthjustice. "This whole area depends on the HD Mountains watersheds. Drilling could have disastrous effects upon them."

From coast to coast

Coloradans are not the only ones pushing back against drilling. In The Nation, Kara Cusolito writes about the problems Dimock, PA, has faced:

After a stray drill bit banged four wells in 2008...weird things started happening to people's water: some flushed black, some orange, some turned bubbly. One well exploded, the result of methane migration, and residents say elevated metal and toluene levels have ruined twelve others. Then, in September 2009, about 8,000 gallons of hazardous drilling fluids spilled into nearby fields and creeks.

After that second incident, fifteen families began a lawsuit against Cabot Oil and Gas, the gas company that's dominating that area. In The American Prospect, Alex Halperin wrote a couple of months back about efforts to fight back against natural gas drilling in Ithaca, NY.

Regulation

One of the problems with hydrofracking is that it's poorly regulated right now. No one except the natural gas companies know what goes into the "fracking fluid" that they pour into wells to help bubble the gas up to the surface. A loophole in the Safe Water Drinking Act also exempted the practice from regulation.

That situation could be changing, however. As Amy Westervelt writes at Earth Island Journal:

"Thanks in large part to the work done by a handful of journalists and angry residents over the past couple of years, the EPA is finally looking into fracking more seriously. In fact, they're looking into it so comprehensively the energy companies are getting worried. It's worth noting here that all the big oil guys have a big stake in natural gas drilling, and many of them have contractual loopholes with the smaller companies that own the gas drilling leases that if fracking is taken off the table as a legitimate drilling process, they're out."

Like deepwater oil drilling, fracking is a relatively new endeavor, the risks of which are not fully understood. Unlike that type of drilling, though, the opportunity still exists to create a framework in which the companies will have some accountability to the environments and communities that they threaten.

Future present

Besides regulating the industries who are providing energy now, the environmental community needs to keep pressing towards a future where the country does not depend on fossil fuels like oil and gas to run our world. This week, at the U.S. Social Forum in Detroit, thousands of people are considering how to fight against problems like these.

Ahmina Maxey, for instance, is a member of the Zero Waste Detroit Coalition. "We are planning, next Saturday, the Clean Air, Good Jobs, Justice march to the incinerator to demand that the city of Detroit clean up its air," she told Democracy Now!

Green Detroit

As Elizabeth DiNovella writes for The Progressive, Detroit is working towards green solutions to some of its problems. DiNovella reports:

"Detroit's population has shrunk to about a quarter of what it was forty or fifty years ago, leaving lots of open green space. But neighborhood groups are transforming these vacant lots into community gardens. Seven years ago there were 8o community gardens, consisting of neighborhood gardens, backyard patches, and school gardens. By 2009, there were 800 community gardens. This year there are 1200, including some urban farms."

"As far as I'm concerned, Detroit is ground zero for the sustainability movement," writes Ron Williams for Free Speech TV. He explains:

"What we need now is a collaborative effort that could echo around the world. An Urban Green Lab. What possible better stage than the 11th largest city in the United States which is experiencing Depression-level economic conditions? Let's take sustainability home. Collectively we have everything the people of Detroit need to build their city anew. Their solutions are likely to be the very same solutions every community will need in some form in the years ahead."

Here's hoping ideas like this take root.

CLIMATE

What Role Will Senator Murkowski Play in Climate and Energy Negotiations? (*Grist*)

by Josh Nelson
28 Jun 2010 5:33 AM
ACELA, BP Oil Disaster, Cap and Trade, Climate & Energy, Climate Change, Climate Policy, Energy, Oil, Politics, President Obama, Robert Dillon, Senate, Senator Bingaman, Senator Murkowski, Senator Reid

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Senator, she has the power to influence that process as it plays out. By all indications, Senator Murkowski should be a leading Republican in these negotiations. In response to the announcement of a new Climate Science Center at the University of Alaska earlier this year, she rightly called the state 'ground zero for climate change.' Last September Murkowski told reporters that Congress needs to work on climate change but should take its time considering options. And by all accounts, the Senate has done just that in the past nine months, trying and giving up on a variety of approaches deemed too controversial to attract significant Republican support.

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