

US EPA'S OIL SPILL CLEAN UP PROTOCOLS MAKE OIL SPILLS MORE TOXIC

Gulf of Mexico is Slowly Dying

As of January 2012, reports continue to stream in from those living in the US Gulf state coastal regions exclaiming new oil slicks appearing off their shores. Public understanding and media coverage of the Deepwater Horizon aftermath is seemingly blind to a very important point: [Oil is still leaking*](#) from the seabed floor (at the Macondo zone) and millions of gallons are still submerged and residing in the water column. HOW WILL THE TOXIC GULF BE CLEANED UP?

With nearly 21 months past, this spill is still a 'fire alarm screaming' disaster. How do we disturb the silence blanketing mainstream media?

Worst of all, in the silence, nothing effective is being done to clean up the unaccounted for oil-plus- toxic-dispersants (Corexit®) still flowing in the Gulf of Mexico. Moreover, with the region still suffering from huge economic and environmental health impacts, the US Environmental Protection Agency's actions during this disaster must undergo a serious review. Their behavior in overseeing the management of the largest oil spill in history (by statistics and science now surfacing) amounted to wholly ineffective emergency response escaping any real accountability for results.

Between July - Dec, 2011 credible reports (including [aerial photos](#)) on recurring sightings of [new oil slicks](#) in the Gulf with lab tests showing it to be BP oil, finally forced the admittance by the responsible oil company (BP) that leakage was taking place in the vicinity of the Macondo well area. But, this admittance took place only after repeated denials by BP, the Coast Guard and other officials and included no real details. Clean ups are [still ongoing](#) with tons of oil and tar balls still washing up.

That BP themselves report they have had a large fleet of exploratory vessels in the area studying 'natural seepage' from the seabed floor in light of the hundreds of miles of slicks being reported, begs for further explanation. [Chilling reports by several scientists](#) early on during the spill would indicate there is still a major situation on the seabed floor that has had no further mention in media reports since the celebrated well capping except the recent mention of it being a "[study of natural seepage](#)".

Independent Scientists and oil clean up technology experts say the EPA's 'enforced' response cycle of new oil surfacing and repeatedly spraying Corexit to disperse it, has proven to [compound environmental damage](#) in the Gulf region for which BP and government agencies (enforcing these destructive protocols) should be held financially accountable.

Sadly, this and other significant spills in 2011 that were ineffectively treated using EPA's prescribed emergency cleanup protocols [*Exxon/oil industry invented precedential cleanup methods in place for the past 25 years*], did not bring to light the most crucial issue:

Use of [dispersants](#) (a longstanding EPA oil spill response protocol) which [do not remediate the oil](#) and do not relieve but [worsen](#) the ongoing toxic stress on ecosystems, have in effect, become the 'Berlin Wall' block to the application of science-proven non-toxic remediation methods available since the 1980s.

In the apt words of Henry I. Miller, a physician and molecular biologist and fellow at Stanford University's Hoover Institution: "Unscientific and regressive regulatory policies have already left a legacy of environmental damage and reliance on inferior methods for the cleanup of wastes. These policies are yet another example of the contempt in which federal environmental regulators hold science, technology and the public interest." Miller's comments and observations written at the beginning of the Gulf disaster in Forbes-[EPA Slips on Oil Spills](#)- still aptly describe the situation today.

One case in point example, a corporation battling with EPA regulators for 23 years, [*Oil Spill Eater International (OSEI)*], despite complying with all scientific requirements, testing, and other regulatory hurdles, has been repeatedly denied pre-approval and usage permits by the agency and never given a science based or any other based reason why. Since 1989, over 200 oil spill response products have come and gone on the EPA's National Contingency Plan list (oil spill emergency response authorized products) but only ONE product was ever given pre approval resulting in actual usage on a 'US Navigable Waters' spill = Corexit® dispersant.

Although OSEI's bioremediation oil clean up product has been on the EPA NCP list for many years, its use for the BP spill was road blocked. This story matches up with Millers observations: "At the time of the catastrophic 1989 Exxon Valdez spill in Alaska, there were great expectations for modern biotechnology applied to "bioremediation," the biological cleanup of toxic wastes, including oil.

"Innovation had been stymied by the EPA's hostile policies...In 1997 the EPA issued the regulation in final form, ensuring that biotech researchers in several industrial sectors, including bio-cleanup, would continue to be intimidated and inhibited by regulatory barriers."

In the case of the BP Spill, this monopolized and enforced protocol (Corexit) has brought [unprecedented adverse economic and health effects](#) to Gulf Coast States and its residents.

(The EPA admits there are "[trade-offs](#)" to using Corexit, however their explanation of these and why they favor its use on their website, are absurd. [See EPA Link](#))

SCIENCE AND SELF EVIDENT TRUTHS PROVE LASTING TOXIC AFFECTS

The combined events of the BP Oil Spill and the application of this outmoded cleanup method (millions of gallons of Corexit^(R)) resulted in deadly toxicity levels persisting in the GOM region until as recent as March 2011* - levels well above earlier official safety threshold standards set in 1999 which, for some unexplained reason, were raised by much higher percentiles within a few months after the beginning of the Deepwater Horizon blowout. [a means of blinding people from identifying potential public health and seafood contamination risks?] These toxicity levels are still adversely affecting human health and marine life in the region.

Case in point-according to Barbara Wiseman, President of The Earth Organization (TEO):

"Prior to British Petroleum's oil blowout in the Gulf of Mexico, over 30% of the shrimp sold in the U.S. came through Dean Blanchard's seafood processing company in Louisiana. Marine life was abundant. Dolphins played around his docks, and he took great pleasure swimming with them. You can see Dean interviewed in TEO's documentary [Hidden Crisis in the Gulf](#).

"In November 2011, Dean told me that, prior to the disaster, there were over 1,500 fishing boats that brought their catch to his docks every week, with an average of 2000 to 4000 pounds of seafood per catch. Now, only 2 to 3 fishing boats a week bring their catch, averaging between 50 to 100 pounds of catch. They simply can't find the seafood. He presumes that the former abundance of marine life has been severely impacted by the incredibly toxic dispersant being used to sink out of sight the ongoing leaking oil. The seafood industry is being devastated."

She further stated: "He rarely sees any dolphins now, and this crusty Cajun said his heart broke when, a few months ago, a mother dolphin pushed her dead baby on her nose up to the dock where he was standing and Dean felt certain that she was begging for his help."

EPA and other federal agency statements announcing the clean up was successful, assuring the public that seafood was safe to consume and that the environment was safe to use were clearly premature and misrepresentative to the public, further suggesting ineffective clean-up protocols and potential negligence on the part of the EPA. The most recent scientific data on this issue are irrefutably fact-based, and those facts are now being reported in scientific literature.

EPA's CONTINUED DENIAL OF SCIENCE AND FACTS

[Gulf Rescue Alliance](#) (GRA) has [voluminous documentation](#) indicating the EPA arbitrarily blocked and continues to prevent the use of eco friendly bioremediation clean up technology in favor of Corexit despite ample science indicating it is fatally toxic to marine life and even humans.

Notably, BP had even made formal requests to use bioremediation clean up technology to avoid these toxic trade-offs and initiated testing on the product called [Oil Spill Eater II*](#) (already approved and listed on EPA's National Contingency Plan for Oil Spill Response) to replace Corexit. BP's requests, along with those from Gulf state officials, including Governor Jindal of Louisiana, were [denied by EPA](#) and Regional Response Team officials. One EPA denial letter cited science that erroneously [grouped](#) this ready-to-deploy, proven clean up product with "questionable" remediation products examined. In a June 2010 EPA letter, BP's official request was also denied. Per Gulf Rescue Alliance sources BP America's General Counsel referenced that letter and stated in a recent meeting that their hands were tied where the use of bioremediation (OSE II) was concerned – "BP is bound by it"—bound by the EPA mandate [to keep using Corexit]. Consequently it is estimated that BP could have saved an estimated \$36 billion in clean up costs if they had deployed the EPA approved alternative to Corexit.*

The Department of Interior independently tested * other products including OSE II in an effort to find more eco friendly solutions and found it effective.

Bottom line: Use of bioremediation could have saved BILLIONS in clean up costs and resulted in an end point to the disaster. (See [Economic Comparison](#) article) BP's attempt to use an alternative is a significant point and the resultant damage caused by Corexit is proving to be quite concerning for escalating clean up costs.

Further, other countries are no longer following EPA's lead---In the UK, while allowing [Nalco Holding Company](#), the manufacturer of Corexit, to use up their existing stockpiles in the country, it has banned the product from further subsequent use. In the recent [Chevron oil spill](#) off the Coast of Brazil attempts to use dispersants brought on public protests resulting in the government

stopping the use of dispersants on the spill.

We applaud Surfrider Foundation and the Center for Biological Diversity for its recent action of filing [suit against the EPA](#) over the use of dispersants reinforcing the case that EPA oil spill cleanup response protocols are wholly inadequate.

While the EPA, NOAA and the Coast Guard remain in denial continuing to reinforce their roadblock on the use of Bioremediation, perhaps this suit and others like it in 2012 will open the door for permitting the deployment of safe and effective cleanup methods to stop the killing the Gulf and our oceans. And if one had no regard for the marine life and saving the ecosystem, possibly the continued real and future threat of economic loss will incite action.

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See Endnotes, next items down.

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