



Photo by: David Ringer

We, the living resources of the Gulf of Mexico, need you, the oil companies, the federal and state governments, and the American public, to focus on prevention of oil spills and to be able to implement immediate well containment in the event of a blowout if you are to move forward with deepwater drilling.



We, the islands and marshes, the mammals, birds, reptiles, fish, and plants of deep and shallow-water environments, need you to protect us before you protect your profit margins.



We need you, the federal government, to create and enforce strict regulations to ensure that deepwater drilling can be conducted with a greater degree of safety. We need the gas and oil companies to follow and respect those regulations, to change the batteries, to complete safety tests, to take the test results seriously, and to spend the money to troubleshoot every time there is a sign of a problem with a well. Because once the well blows, it is too late to avoid damage, there will be harm. There will be deaths, human and animal, and there will be economic damage to communities and the American public. This can no longer be acceptable business practice.



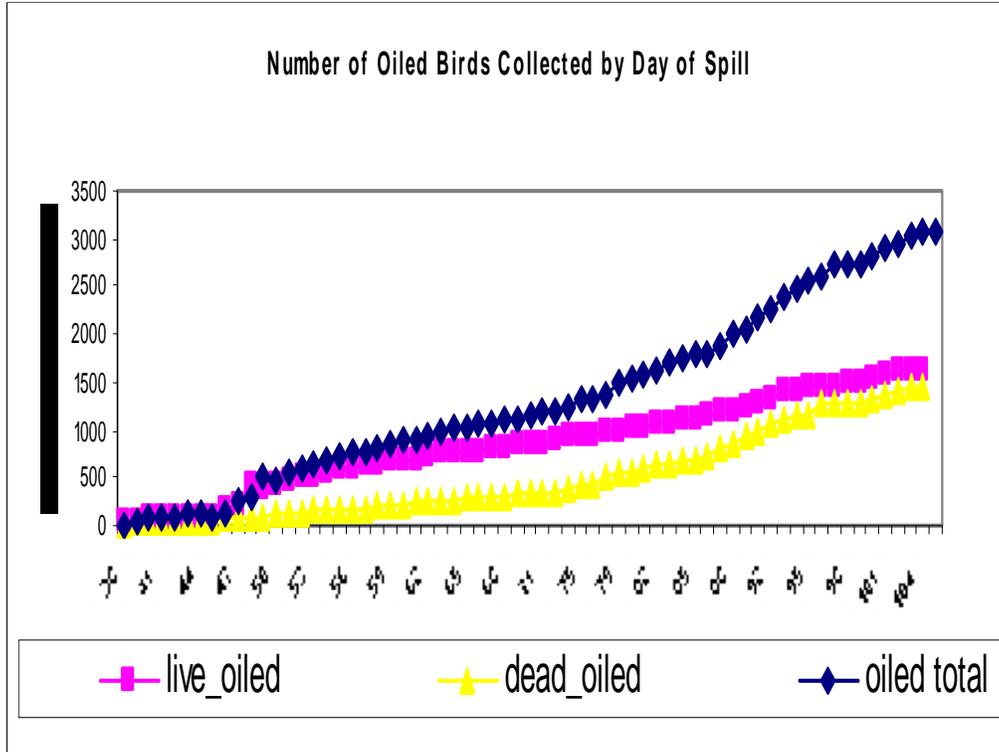
We need you to put as much money, creativity, and effort into research and development of blowout prevention and well containment as you put into methods to drill faster and deeper, and more money than you put into cleaning up those few of us that you can capture and rehabilitate.



We need you to employ the best solutions suggested from input by the world's best scientists and engineers. You must listen to those experts and implement their solutions to protect the living resources. Whether these strategies include duplicate blowout preventers, relief wells that are dug to within feet of a well, not miles, before oil is ever tapped, or new technologies such as the ones suggested this morning, we need you to have backup strategies in place.



Because several of the technologies used during the initial weeks after the well blew out were used during the Ixtoc spill of 1979, and they failed in 400 feet of water. You were inventing new technology while tens of thousands of barrels of oil were gushing into the Gulf per day. Invent the new technology now and field test it before the next blow out, not during. Just as new products and technologies are lab-tested before being used to clean wildlife during an oil spill, we need you to test the new products and technologies for well containment, not during the next blowout, but beforehand.



Because once the blowout happens, and the best solution lies several months down the road, the harm is done. Deaths have already happened, counted or not.

Day 1: 2 attempts to shut down blowout preventers with ROVS failed

Day 6: Blowout preventer repairs fail

Day 10: First oiled bird rescued

Day 18: Containment dome failed

Day 39: Top Kill fails, junk shot fails

Day 46: Spike in collection of live, oiled birds

Day 47: plan to close vents on containment cap abandoned

Day 66: Hurricane Alex approaches, well gushes unchecked

Day 78: Marked increase in collection of dead, oiled birds

Day 81: Old containment cap removed

Day 86: Well thought to be completely contained

Day 87: Supertanker skimming test considered failure



You turn our home into a war zone.



You disturb our peaceful nesting islands in your attempts to help us.



You protect us after the fact, with imperfect protection, imperfectly managed.



It must never again be acceptable to perform a massive chemical experiment on our Gulf or ocean waters and the living resources within. Without the technology in place to stop a leak, and without access to a sufficient workforce of vessels to skim the oil near the well site, we came under assault from the chemical dispersants you employed to keep oil from our shores.

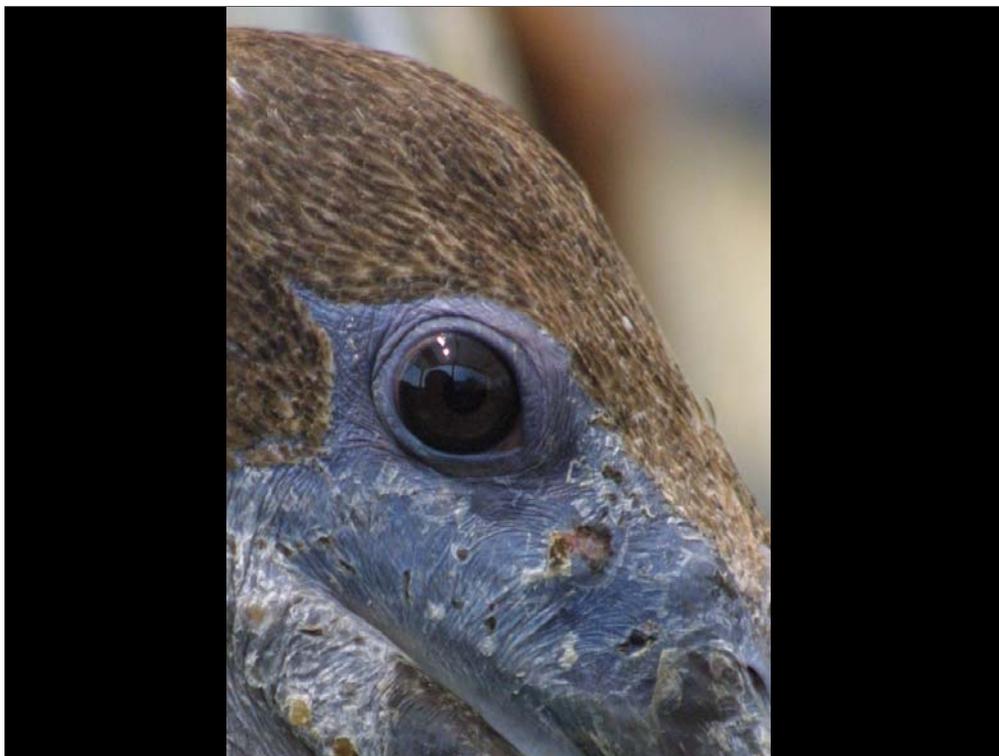


You must realize that we are your indicator of the harm you are causing your food source, your environment, and yourselves. After the 11 workers killed during the rig explosion, we were the next to die from the oil. But our deaths only foreshadow the potential deaths of the workers exposed during cleanup, though their deaths may lag by years. We represent the reproductive failures that your children may experience in 10 years. We, the living resources, include those children, their parents working with hazardous chemicals, the residents of the Gulf Coast out of work and losing hope as their livelihoods depend on living resources.



Photo by: Kim Hubbard

There is no escaping the law of reciprocals. When you fail to contain a well for 3 months, you fail to protect all of us, birds, dolphins, fiddler crabs, shrimp, crabs, oysters. When you focus on profit, not prevention, you fail fishermen, oystermen, crabbers, captains, guides, and their wives and husbands, their children.



You must enforce and respect strong regulations, you must create and field test effective technologies, and you must place those solutions at well sites before any additional deepwater drilling occurs, for all our sakes. Thank you.