

HM 363 – Deepwater Horizon Oil Disaster/Penalties

Memorial proposes to urge the United States Congress to dedicate penalties collected from responsible parties for the Deepwater Horizon oil disaster to repairing environmental and economic damage caused by the disaster.

Support For HM363:

- The Deepwater Horizon oil disaster caused unprecedented environmental damage to the Gulf of Mexico with an estimated 4.2 million barrels of crude oil spilled from the well and closure of 88,522 square miles of federal waters.
- Based on provisions in the Oil Pollution Act of 1990 and the Clean Water Act, the United States federal government sought penalties from the responsible parties (estimates near \$10 to \$15 billion USD).

HM363 urges Congress to utilize the civil penalties (estimated \$5 billion) to:

1. Deposit funds into the Gulf Coast Recovery Fund to provide long-term environmental and economic recovery of the Gulf Coast.
2. Allow the five Gulf States to manage their recovery process.
3. Deposit remaining funds in the Oil Spill Liability Trust Fund for future recovery uses.



Deepwater Horizon drilling rig. Image Credit: www.deepwater.com (TransOcean)



Deepwater reef at the Florida Middle Grounds. Image Credit: CIOERT Florida Shelf Edge Exploration Expedition

Corals Reefs and Environmental Change (Why Monitor?):

- The Florida reef tract is the third largest continuous reef system in the world and is one of many ecologically important environments in Florida state waters.
- Over the past several decades, the health of coral reef ecosystems worldwide have been compromised by several factors such as coral bleaching.
- Coral bleaching can be triggered by changes in light intensity, salinity, and sea surface temperature and causes corals to be more susceptible to disease and erosion.
- These conditions can be exacerbated by other factors such as changes in ocean pH (ocean acidification) due to the burning of fossil fuels.

Unhealthy Corals → Stress → Weaker Structure → Erosion, Weathering (Decreased Shoreline Protection From Storms) → Less habitat for fishes (Economic Losses for the State of Florida)

Long-Term Management Grounded in Sound Science

Gulf of Mexico Ecosystems and Ocean Observing System (GOS):

The GOS will consist of a network of land-based facilities and oceanographic monitoring platforms which will enable integrated observations of the Gulf of Mexico ecosystem.

- Aid in the establishment of baseline data for management and/or restoration purposes
- Improved capacity to predict hurricane pathways and intensities in addition to pollutant trajectories
- Long-term monitoring will aid in determining climate change and sea level rise impacts
- Habitat and marine resource characterization (Marine Spatial Planning)
- Water quality assessments (Pollutants, harmful algal blooms, and nutrient cycling “dead zones”)