



Bulk Rate
U.S. Postage Paid
Permit No. 13
Lillian, AL 36549

Friends of Perdido Bay
10738 Lillian Highway
Pensacola, FL 32506
850-453-5488

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

Tidings The Newsletter of the Friends of Perdido Bay

July 2010

Volume 23 Number 4
www.friendsofperdidobay.com

Jackie Lane -Editor

We Hope Your Summer Has Been Oil Free

We sent out our last newsletter just about the time the oil spill was beginning. At that time, we did not know what to expect. We did not know if there would be a chance for volunteers to help with the clean up or not. Since that time, it has become clear that BP has been hiring people to clean beaches and wildlife. Boat captains have also been hired to run booms and oil skimmers. Probably because of the liability and the need for trained people, volunteers are not being used. Oil and the volatile organic compounds which are released from the oil are toxic. So if you should encounter oil, it is best to call BP and report the oil to them. They will send out people to clean up the oil.

Volunteers are being used as spotters to report oil or look for oil. There are two web sites you can go to find volunteer opportunities - www.volunteerfloridadisaster.org/ (for Florida) and www.servealabama.gov/2010/default.aspx (for Alabama). The telephone number to call for volunteering in Alabama is 1-888-421-1266. Our website, given above, also has web links and information concerning the oil spill. If you want to follow the daily forecast of the oil along the beaches in the Gulf go to this website -

<http://map.floridadisaster.org/gator/> . Thanks to Linda Young for sending us this site.

The effect of the oil itself on Perdido Bay appears to depend on where you live. We saw a light sheen on a sample of bay water taken June 22 in the upper bay. Properties in the lower bay have experienced some degree of oil contamination. We have reports of oil contaminating properties on the north side of Ono Island and across Bayou St. John on the western shores of Perdido Bay. One of our board members who lives near Emmanuel Bayou reports he has seen no oil there.

What the oil has done is dampened peoples' spirits and out door recreation. There has been a noticeable decline in boats and recreational activity in the upper bay. During the summer, we do see occasional water skiers, fisherman, etc. This summer, it has been dead. Part of the reason is because there is a boom across the mouth of Heron Bayou,

which has the only public boat ramp on the upper bay. So having a boom across the mouth has definitely put a damper on boat traffic.

Our family has been to the national seashore beach on Perdido Key on several weekends. We see an occasional tar ball, but the water has been pretty nice and we swim in it. There are little cleaning stations at the end of each dune walkover where you can wash tar off. There are fewer people at the beach than normal, and many of them are BP workers cleaning the oil off the beach.

As for the environmental damage from the oil spill, no one knows. It will be many years before we know the true extent of the damage. We have seen very few mullet and crabs in the past several years, so their absence now can not be blamed on the oil. The same is true of other animals. The bay has been nearly dead for many years. At the seashore beach, there also appears to be less life. Normally by this time in the summer, there are lots of jelly fish. We haven't seen many of those. There seem to be fewer birds. While the visible oil itself may be cleaned up, water soluble pollutants and oil chemicals may be in the water - invisible. The oil dispersants which have been used, are known to be toxic to marine life and to cause oil to dissolve into tiny particles.

Local universities have been trying to monitor the impact of the oil spill on our local waters. According to Dr. Dick Snyder from the University of West Florida's Center for Environmental Diagnostics and Bioremediation, money to do any research has been very slow in coming. Dr. Snyder did say that UWF has been monitoring dissolved oil in water. UWF has found very low levels of dissolved oil except for times when large amounts of oil come ashore. They have not done any biological sampling because funds for research have not been made available. Dr. George Crozier from the Dauphin Island Marine Lab reports that local effects on marine life appear to be minimal so far. The EPA has been doing both air and water sampling for petroleum chemicals. Unfortunately these chemicals are not nice. They include a group of chemicals known as polyaromatic hydrocarbons (PAH) and volatile organic carbons (VOC). Chemicals in this group include toluene, benzene, xylene, cyclohexane, fluorene. All these chemicals can be toxic and cause cancer. Nickel and vanadium are two heavy metals which are associated with petroleum. The EPA has a web site which lists the concentration of these chemicals in air and water in Louisiana, Alabama, and Florida for recent weeks. The website is: www.epa.gov/bpspill/air.html. It is not particularly user friendly and the data given is difficult to interpret. I do not know what the detection level is for these chemicals; however it appears that xylene and fluorene are showing up at times in the water samples from our beaches. The levels appear to be low; however if oil isn't in the water, these chemicals would not be in the water either.

Oil can also cause depletion of dissolved oxygen. Much like the high organic material discharged by the paper mill, oil is mostly an organic material. Bacteria that eat the oil and break it down use up the oxygen in the water. However, for bacteria to effectively clean up the oil and for bioremediation to be useful, nitrogen and phosphates must be added to the water. Besides oil as a source of food, bacteria also need the

nutrients to grow. These nutrients have a bad side effect. They will stimulate plant growth. Just think of all the algae we saw during the 1990's in Perdido Bay. This algae was the result of the nutrients being added to paper mill ponds to stimulate the break down of the carbon compounds in the paper mill effluent. Since algae is probably as much a nuisance as the oil, fertilizing the water with nutrients to stimulate bacterial growth and the break down of oil is probably not a good idea. One thing the oil probably will do is use up any fertilizers which are in the water. This will probably cut down on any algae blooms we see this summer.

What can we do? Obviously, prevention of oil spills is most important. Once the oil is gushing out (BP has plugged the leak as I am writing this newsletter), it is too late. Banning drilling in the eastern Gulf of Mexico also seems a little late. We already have a ban in the eastern Gulf and yet our beaches are being impacted greatly by oil gushing out in the central Gulf. There are already 4000 rigs in the central and western Gulf of Mexico which are not going to shut down. One of our members sent us slides which promote legislation, HR 5626, which increases protection against blowout explosions. I think this looks like promising legislation. Basically what the legislation does is call for a redesign of the blowout preventers and "independent" certification of the installation and operation of blowout preventers. Yes, there is a problem with the word "independent". If your likelihood depends on oil business, you are not independent. However, I think this legislation is a step in the right direction. We have inserted a flier for you to read about the bill (the member paid for the flier). Also, if everyone can just remember, the minute you step into your automobile, you are part of the problem. Yes, feel guilty about driving so much.

Our website, www.friendsofperdidobay.com, has oil spill information, and links to other web sites.

The Illusion of Protection

From our years of disappointments fighting the paper mill in Cantoment, Florida we have become aware of the realities of government enforcement and environmental protection. It was certainly no surprise to us, and it shouldn't have been a surprise to you, that the regulators of the oil industry (the mineral management service) were in bed with the oil industry. Practically every government agency which regulates business is, if not in bed, friendly to business. Look at the banking scandal. Maybe years ago when environmental regulation started (mid-1970's), regulators were tough. I have read legal cases from the 70's where environmental regulators in Florida actually turned down marinas, developments, permits for small businesses, etc. But over the years, things have changed. It is not that people are less interested in the environment. It is just that corporations have spent more money to elect government officials who are sympathetic to lax regulation. Lobbyists, paid for by big business, have weakened environmental rules. People who were hired by the regulatory agencies in the 1970's were good and serious about their jobs. That was a problem to polluters and developers. A news article which

appeared in the April 22, 2010 in the St. Pete Times illustrates the influence of political money on science - Florida panther science. According to the article written by Craig Pitman (whose hometown is Pensacola), the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service convened a panel of experts in 1999 to delineate land which should be set aside as 'critical' panther habitat in Southwest Florida. Unfortunately much of the land that the scientific panel delineated as critical panther habitat was also planned for development, shopping malls, etc. By 2002, the report had been buried. It was replaced by a report written by a group backed by developers. One of the scientists who had been on the panel defected and went to work for developers. His science was accepted as God's truth until a whistle blower, another scientist, showed that the developer's science was flawed. Of course, the whistle blower was fired. It seems as if those who are dishonest and play the game rise to the top.

Does this remind you of our story? Dr. Livingston who took pay from the paper companies was termed an "independent" scientist. He found that the major problem in Perdido Bay was the dredging of Perdido Pass allowing more salt water to enter the bay. He totally ignored the 15,000 pounds per day of carbonaceous solids the mill was discharging. Livingston claimed that everybody else's science was junk except his. He documented the precipitous decline in life in the bay and blamed it on toxic algal blooms. As a result of Livingston's "science", the mill has not been fined or made to come into compliance with state law. The regulators have just allowed it to operate since the last valid permit - 1983 for the federal permit and 1989 for the state permit!

The Initial Brief Has Been Filed

Our appeal of the latest court ruling against us is continuing. Our legal Brief was submitted July 16th. IP now has 20 days to answer and we have 20 days to answer their answer. The new IP permit will not go into effect until all legal issues have been cleared.

Membership and Renewals	
<p>Tidings is published six times a year by Friends of Perdido Bay and is mailed to members. To keep up with the latest news of happenings on Perdido Bay, become a member or renew your membership. For present members, your date for renewal is printed on your mailing label.</p> <p>Membership is \$10.00 per year per voting member. To join or renew, fill out the coupon to the right and mail with your check to the address on the front.</p> <p>Friends is a not-for-profit corporation and all contributions are tax-deductible. Funds received are all used for projects to improve Perdido Bay. No money is paid to the Board of Directors, all of whom volunteer their time and effort.</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> New</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Renewal</p> <p>Amt. Enclosed \$ _____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>Name</p> <p>_____</p> <p>Address</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>Phone (_____) _____</p> <p>e-mail _____</p>