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[Gulf Oil Spill: Preventing Another Disaster](#)

BP responsible for harm to ecosystem and species in the Gulf

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Washington, D. C. –

Summary:

- Conservation groups today filed suit against oil giant BP under the Endangered Species Act (ESA) for the ongoing unlawful harm or killing of endangered and threatened wildlife caused by the company's massive Deepwater Horizon blowout in the Gulf of Mexico.
- At least 27 endangered or threatened animal species are known to inhabit the Gulf region, including five species of endangered sea turtles, four species of endangered whales, threatened and endangered birds and Florida manatees.
- Testimony during the President's National Oil Spill Commission on September 27, 2010, revealed that more than 50% of the total discharge of oil from the Deepwater Horizon blowout remains in the Gulf ecosystem, much of it in coastal and marine sediments.
- Conservation groups are asking the court to order BP to mitigate the ongoing harm from the oil disaster to endangered and threatened wildlife that are part of the web of life in the Gulf of Mexico.

WASHINGTON (Oct. 20, 2010) –The following are statements from Defenders of Wildlife, the Southern

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Environmental Law Center and Save the Manatee Club:

"The harmful effects of the BP oil well blowout on endangered and threatened wildlife will continue for many years," said Gregory Buppert, attorney for Defenders of Wildlife. "Through this lawsuit, we ask the court to compel BP to provide the resources necessary to ensure imperiled species in the Gulf recover from this disaster."

"Restitution for the harm done by BP to sensitive wildlife and their habitat will help protect the Gulf ecosystem and rich web of life upon which so many depend," said Catherine Wannamaker, senior attorney at the Southern Environmental Law Center. "From nesting birds on Gulf beaches to turtles and sperm whales in offshore waters, an entire ecosystem is damaged, and BP must be forced to take steps to restore the Gulf's health for current and future generations."

"Having spent nearly 40 years studying aquatic ecosystems, I know that they are made up of a complex interrelated and diverse assemblage of organisms- whose collective health depends upon each part to survive as a whole," said Patrick Rose, Aquatic Biologist and Executive Director of Save the Manatee Club. "Having been dealt such an unprecedented insult from the oil, dispersants, and other byproducts of the clean-up effort, we must insist that the Gulf ecosystem is both restored and protected against future threats."

Background:

- The Endangered Species Act prohibits the "take" of endangered species. The ESA defines "take" to include - among other actions - harassing, harming, pursuing, wounding, killing or trapping such species.
- Among the concerns for wildlife affected by the spill are immediate effects of exposure to oil and chemicals as well as long-term effects on reproduction and future generations and potential domino effects through the Gulf's food chain.
- The cumulative oil-slick footprint from the Deepwater Horizon blowout covered thousands of square miles in the Gulf. At least 650 miles of Gulf Coast shoreline has been impacted by oil, including more than 380 miles in Louisiana, 110 miles in Mississippi, 75 miles in Alabama and 90 miles in Florida.
- The volume of oil discharged to the Gulf of Mexico as a result of the BP Deepwater Horizon blowout dwarfs the approximately 12 million gallons spilled in the 1989 Exxon Valdez accident. The much smaller Exxon Valdez spill produced long-term devastating impacts on the wildlife of Prince William Sound, including species listed under the ESA. Despite the cleanup and restoration efforts, oil has persisted on beaches and in sediments in Prince William Sound for more than twenty years.
- The plaintiffs, Defenders of Wildlife, the Gulf Restoration Network and Save the Manatee Club, are represented by lawyers from Defenders of Wildlife and the Southern Environmental Law Center.

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