



Workers sift through sand at Barrancas Beach, Florida, to remove oil that has washed onto the shore.
(BP America)

The Gulf Oil Spill: One Year Later



The Gulf Coast is still trying to recover from last year's disaster
By Laura Modigliani | April 20, 2011

Today is the one-year anniversary of the worst environmental disaster in U.S. history. On April 20, 2010, an oil rig called the Deepwater Horizon caught fire and blew up in the Gulf of Mexico. The explosion killed 11 oil workers. For almost five months, more than 200 million gallons of oil gushed into the Gulf. BP, the oil company that rented the rig, wasn't able to plug the leak until September 19.

A year after the spill, many of the residents in the area are still feeling its impact.

"It is still a story on the local news almost every day," says 15-year-old *Scholastic News* Kid Reporter Abigayle Lista. She lives in Metairie (*meh-tuh-ree*), Louisiana, near New Orleans.

Though most beaches in the area have reopened, people are still working to remove leftover oil from areas along the coast. The oil is no longer visible on the water's surface. However, on the ocean floor, scientists have found dead crabs and other sea creatures covered in oil.

The Obama administration suspended deepwater drilling after the explosion but lifted the ban in October 2010. Rig operators could not go back to work right away, however. They must first comply with new safety regulations. The administration recently began issuing permits to operators who could prove they have those safety measures in place.

However, the spill devastated many businesses in the Gulf, especially those in tourism and fishing. Gulf fishermen weren't allowed to do their jobs for months after the spill.

Fishing has resumed, and shrimp season began this month. But fishermen are concerned that business will still be tough this year. Many people are still **wary** (nervous and cautious) about buying and eating seafood from the Gulf.



TOP: Louisiana's Cat Island looked healthy when the disaster began last year.

CENTER: This is what Cat Island looked like one year later. (Gerald Herbert / AP Images)

BOTTOM: The oil spill hurt many businesses throughout the Gulf Coast states. (MAP: Jim McMahon; IMAGE BELOW: Gerald Herbert / AP Images)

BP has agreed to pay a total of \$20 billion to businesses affected by the spill. But many people say they haven't received enough aid.

It may take years for things to return to the way they used to be. "Life in my area has turned back to normal," Abigayle says. "But I think that it will take a lot more time for most things to recover."

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