



The Weeks Bay Principles for Gulf Recovery

On October 4-6, 2010, ninety-five people representing forty-six community, local, regional, national and international environmental, social justice, and fishermen's groups met at the Beckwith Camp and Conference Center on Weeks Bay, Alabama. Together, we drafted the following set of goals and principles that we believe must guide the recovery and restoration of the Gulf of Mexico, our coast and our communities in the wake of the BP drilling disaster.



Our Collective Goal

Six months after the BP oil disaster began, the diverse communities that live, work, and derive benefit from the Gulf call on government to take responsibility to:

- Make coastal communities whole again;
- Commit to cleaning up and restoring the Gulf;
- Hold BP accountable;
- Ensure local participation in decision-making;
- Conduct short and long-term monitoring; and
- Invest in economic opportunities to support locally-driven, sustainable recovery that restores and enhances America's Gulf coast.

**The oil is
still here and
so are we.**



*Oil in coastal Louisiana on October 3, 2010.
Photo by Gulf Restoration Network.*

Fundamental Guidelines

In all of our work together we will be guided by the following axioms:

- Build confidence and trust
- Be inclusive
- Act and communicate with full transparency
- Ground decisions in science

Community Recovery

1. Growing and diverse constituencies of Gulf residents and organizations recognize that the future of their livelihoods depends on Gulf restoration. Seventy-three percent of voters in Gulf coast states support comprehensive coastal restoration*.
2. The people of the Gulf coast whose way of life and livelihood has been most affected by the BP disaster must have a seat at the decision-making table.
3. Recovery and restoration efforts must create tens of thousands of new jobs and provide economic opportunities to local communities, particularly disadvantaged and distressed communities.
4. Recovery must put our communities to work restoring the Gulf and building a healthy economy – leading America into a renewable energy future.

* Lake Research Partners poll, Septembers 2010

Public Health

1. Tens of thousands of response workers, community members and tourists have been exposed to oil and dispersants. There is a lack of health care providers who are trained to identify and treat chemical illnesses. We need the Center for Disease Control and National Institute of Health to provide our local health care departments with the training and resources to provide the needed health care.
2. There are still millions of gallons of oil and dispersants in the environment – while officials tell us that the water and air are fine, people continue to be concerned and report health symptoms. We need federal funding for independent, ongoing and long-term monitoring of our water, soil and air across all affected areas so we can be assured if and when the environment is clean.
3. The Gulf Coast provides 86% of the U.S. shrimp harvest, and 56% of the U.S. oyster harvest* – and we need better evidence that it's safe. Current monitoring is inadequate and does not test for toxic heavy metals or dispersants. It does not protect our children or our most vulnerable populations. We need the Food and Drug Administration to set monitoring standards that can guarantee the safety of the food we harvest and eat.

* http://gulfofmexicoalliance.org/pdfs/gulf_glance_1008.pdf

Coastal Restoration

1. The BP disaster is only the latest, most visible evidence of environmental destruction that has been ongoing in the Gulf for decades.
2. The government must act now to restore our coastal wetlands. A healthy Gulf is a prosperous Gulf crucial to storm protection, fishing, recreation, seafood and tourism – the cornerstones of the Gulf culture and economy.
3. Eighty percent of the coastal wetlands lost in our country are lost in the Gulf coast*. For example, Louisiana loses a football field of wetlands every 45 minutes**, and 40% to 60% of that is attributed to oil and gas activity***. BP and the oil and gas industry must pay their fair share for coastal restoration.

* Turner, R.E. 1997. Wetland loss in the Northern Gulf of Mexico: Multiple working hypotheses. *Estuaries*. 20:1-13

** Dahl, T.E. 2006. Status and trends of wetlands in the conterminous United States 1998 to 2004. U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. p 54, Table 4.

*** Ko, Jae-Young, *Impacts of Oil and Gas Activities on Coastal Wetlands Loss in the Mississippi Delta*, Harter Research Institute. Also Penland, Shea, et al., *Process Classification of Coastal Land Loss Between 1932 and 1990 in the Mississippi River Delta Plain, Southeastern Louisiana*. (1990). U.S. Geological Survey, Open File Report 00-418.

Marine Recovery and Resiliency

1. The first step to recovery of the Gulf marine ecosystem is to identify all sources of past, present and future environmental degradation, including fully understanding the long-term impacts of the BP oil disaster. Specific restoration initiatives, both short and long-term, must be implemented to address all sources of marine injury.
2. Robust monitoring programs that fully disclose process and results, as well as access to impacted areas, are critical for ensuring effective restoration.
3. In order to restore the entire Gulf ecosystem, it is essential that the off-shore environment receive its fair share of attention and funding for recovery. Specific funding sources for this work must be provided immediately.
4. Everything possible must be done to prevent offshore drilling disasters. Reforms in policy, regulations, oversight, and enforcement are urgently needed to prevent more drilling disasters and to guarantee rapid, non-toxic and non-destructive response and cleanup when accidents do occur. Policies must be implemented that transition the Gulf region to a clean, renewable energy economy.

Conclusion

The Weeks Bay Principles for Gulf Recovery present a unified vision that will guide our work towards restored and healthy natural resources in the Gulf of Mexico region that support Gulf communities and wildlife, the region's unique cultures, and the nation.

Drafting Organizations

Alabama Chapter, Sierra Club	Louisiana Environmental Action Network
Apalachicola Riverkeeper	Louisiana Shrimpers Association
Asian Americans for Change— Gulf Coast Angels	Lower Mississippi Riverkeeper
Bayou Interfaith Shared Community Organizing (BISCO)	Mississippi Center for Justice
Delta Chapter (Louisiana), Sierra Club	Mississippi Chapter, Sierra Club
Emerald Coastkeeper	Mobile Baykeeper
Environment America	National Wildlife Federation
Equity and Inclusion Campaign	Natural Resources Defense Council
Galveston Baykeeper	Oceana
Grand Bayou Community United	Oxfam America
Greenpeace	Sassafrass
Guardians of the Gulf	Sierra Club Environmental Justice and Community Partnership Program
Gulf Islands Conservancy	South Bay Communities Alliance
Gulf Restoration Network	South Walton Community Council
Joe Yerkes, Florida Fisherman	Southwings
Lake Pontchartrain Basin Foundation	Surfrider Foundation
Louisiana Association of Family Fishermen	Turkey Creek Community Initiative
Louisiana Bayoukeeper	Waterkeeper Alliance / Save Our Gulf



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