

**FACT SHEET**

## Oil Spill Bill

Congress should dedicate BP fines to Gulf restoration

**The National Audubon Society strongly urges the Senate to pass legislation directing BP's Clean Water Act penalties to Gulf Coast environmental recovery and to do so during the 2010 lame-duck congressional session.**

This year, BP's Deepwater Horizon disaster poured 4.9 million barrels of crude oil into the Gulf of Mexico. Oil washed ashore across hundreds of miles of America's Gulf Coast, and even more oil sank into the Gulf of Mexico, where it will continue to harm wildlife and intricate food webs for decades to come. The disaster's full toll on human communities, birds, other wildlife and marine life will take years to assess. See Audubon's report: <http://gulfoils spill.audubon.org/oil-and-birds-too-close-comfort>.

The lame-duck congressional session in November and December offers the Senate a final window of opportunity to pass laws that hold BP and other polluters accountable, put safeguards in place to prevent a disaster like this from happening again, and set the Gulf Coast on a path toward healing and renewal.

Under an important U.S. law – the Clean Water Act – BP and other responsible parties will be required to pay fines for the damage they have caused to the environment. The fines are assessed based on the number of barrels spilled and could reach \$21 billion.

However, U.S. law does not specify that the fine dollars be used to repair or mitigate environmental damage caused by the disaster that triggered the fines. The White House's long-term Gulf Coast recovery plan, developed under the guidance of U.S. Navy Secretary Ray Mabus, recommends that Congress "dedicate a significant amount of any Clean Water Act penalties to the Gulf Coast's recovery."

**The U.S. Senate must pass legislation during this year's lame-duck session dedicating BP's Clean Water Act penalties to environmental restoration of America's beautiful, vibrant, and vital Gulf Coast. America depends on a healthy Gulf.**

This disaster was just the latest blow to ecosystems already reeling from decades of abuse, overconsumption, river mismanagement, greedy development, and pollution.

A recent poll confirms that most Americans living in Gulf Coast states are aware of the riches we are squandering in this beautiful and productive region.

- Two in three gulf state voters say they know their region's environmental health had been in decline due to human activities even before BP's oil started gushing in April.
- Nearly nine in 10 say they understand the link between their state's environmental health and their state's economic health.
- More than three quarters say it is "very" or "extremely" important that the federal government take steps to restore the region's health.

### The Gulf of Mexico

- Tens of millions of migratory waterfowl, songbirds, and other birds depend on Gulf Coast habitats during their journeys.
- Gulf of Mexico waters and estuaries support commercially important fish and shellfish species and a wealth of other marine life.
- Threatened and endangered species including manatees, sea turtles, and Piping Plovers rely on Gulf of Mexico habitats.
- The Gulf Coast helps sustain the nation's economy through seafood production, tourism, shipping, and energy.

### Protect, Restore, Renew

Senators can help restore and safeguard America's living coast:

- Dedicate BP's penalty money toward Gulf Coast ecosystem restoration.
- Establish a strong Gulf Coast restoration authority.
- Develop critical safeguards to prevent future disasters.

Learn how to speak out at [www.AudubonAction.org/SpillBill](http://www.AudubonAction.org/SpillBill)