



## MEMORANDUM

*Tallahassee-Leon County  
Planning Department*

**To:** Parwez Alam, County Administrator

**From:** Jeri Bush, Director, VolunteerLEON  
Lee Daniels, Executive Director, Visit Tallahassee  
Stephen Hodges, Senior Planner  
Vince Long, Deputy County Administrator  
Kevin Peters, Emergency Management Coordinator  
Scott Ross, Director, Office of Management and Budget  
Wayne Tedder, Director, Planning Department  
Richard Smith, Director, Emergency Management  
Candice Wilson, Director, Health and Human Services

**Date:** July 5, 2010

**Subject:** Status Report for BP/Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill Planning Exercise

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Based on concerns expressed by County Commissioner Cliff Thaell, the Leon County Board of County Commissioners at their regular meeting on June 8, 2010, voted unanimously to direct the Tallahassee – Leon County Planning Department (TLCPD) and the County’s Division of Emergency Management (DEM) to coordinate on a planning exercise to address any potential environmental impacts and associated population increases on Leon County due to the British Petroleum (BP)/Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill. As part of this action, the Board requested the Science Advisory Committee assist in determining the environmental impact, including any effects on Wakulla Springs, and to have Leon County offer assistance to Wakulla and Franklin counties.

On June 28, 2010, a technical working group composed of County staff met to discuss the oil spill and its potential effects on Leon County. Staff included (alphabetically): Jeri Bush, Director, VolunteerLEON; Lee Daniels, Executive Director, Visit Tallahassee; Stephen Hodges, Senior Planner; Vince Long, Deputy County Administrator; Kevin Peters, Emergency Management Coordinator; Scott Ross, Director, Office of Management and Budget; Wayne Tedder, Director, Planning Department; Richard Smith, Director, Emergency Management; and Candice Wilson, Director, Health and Human Services.

At this time, based mainly on information provided by the State of Florida, augmented by information provided by BP and the federal Unified Command, Planning and Emergency Management staff agree that it is unlikely at this time that a significant exodus of workers or residents will migrate to the Tallahassee area to escape or avoid this spill. However, if significant and immediate health and safety issues were to occur and this scenario materialized, existing emergency management and hazard mitigation planning documents would be utilized by local

government to address any impacts brought by these evacuees.

## **History**

On April 22, 2010, the Deepwater Horizon drilling rig, which was located approximately 41 miles south of the coast of Louisiana, was drilling an exploratory well 5,000 feet below the surface of the Gulf of Mexico. For various reasons that are still being reviewed by drilling experts, the rig exploded, burned, and ultimately sank. The deepwater wellhead was compromised and has been leaking approximately 35,000 to 60,000 barrels (1,500,000 to 2,500,000 US gallons) of crude oil per day. The resulting oil slick, designated by the federal government as a Spill of National Significance, covers a surface area of at least 2,500 square miles (6,500 km<sup>2</sup>), with the exact size and location of the slick fluctuating from day to day depending on weather conditions. Federal and academic scientists (the latter based at the University of South Florida, have also reported very large suspended underwater plumes of oil not visible at the surface. The oil spill has surpassed in volume the 1989 Exxon Valdez oil spill as the largest ever to originate in U.S.-controlled waters.

## **Mitigation**

### Federal

A federalized "Unified Command" (UC) has been established to manage response operations to the Deepwater Horizon/BP oil spill incident. The Unified Command links the organizations responding to an incident and provides a forum for those organizations to make consensus decisions. The major private and federal agencies that comprise the Unified Command include Transocean, Inc., the U.S. Coast Guard, the Minerals Management Service, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, the U.S. Department of the Interior and the National Park Service, the U.S. Department of Defense, the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, the U.S. Department of State, the U.S. Geological Survey, the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and the federal Occupation Safety and Health Administration.

BP has agreed to set aside a package of measures to meet its obligations as a responsible party arising from the Deepwater Horizon spill. These include the creation of a \$20 billion claims fund (secured by BP's U.S. assets) over the next three and a half years to satisfy legitimate claims including natural resource damages and state and local response costs. Fines and penalties will be excluded from the fund and paid separately. Payments from the fund will be made as they are adjudicated, whether by the Independent Claims Facility (ICF) referred to below, or by a court, or as agreed by BP. The ICF will adjudicate on all Oil Pollution Act and tort claims excluding all federal and state claims.

### State

On April 30, 2010, the Florida Governor declared a State of Emergency for Escambia, Santa Rosa, Okaloosa, Walton, Bay and Gulf Counties. On May 3, 2010, the Governor extended a State of Emergency declaration for the coastal counties of Franklin, Wakulla, Jefferson, Taylor, Dixie, Levy, Citrus, Hernando, Pasco, Pinellas, Hillsborough, Manatee and Sarasota. And on May 20, 2010, the Governor extended a declaration of a State of Emergency to include

Charlotte, Lee, Collier, Monroe, Miami-Dade, Broward and Palm Beach counties.

The Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP) is the lead agency in Florida's response. The FDEP Office of Coastal and Aquatic Managed Areas (CAMA) has been charged with leading the Florida preparation and response.

The Governor also created the Gulf Oil Spill Economic Recovery Task Force by Executive Order 10-101 to facilitate efforts by Florida businesses and industries in recovering from lost business and revenues due to the Deepwater Horizon oil spill. Goals of the Task Force include the following:

- Gather all appropriate State of Florida resources and leadership to ensure a coordinated response;
- Make certain the world is accurately informed on the status of Florida's beaches and waters;
- Assess, measure and report on all economic loss data and trends in economic indicators related to the event; and
- Provide information to the greater public in a timely and effective manner.

British Petroleum, the owner of the mineral rights in the area where the oil well is located, has provided the State of Florida over \$75 million in funds for public relations activities related to tourism and to help accelerate the implementation of the State's existing Area Contingency Plans (Sector St. Petersburg and Sector Key West) for those areas that may be affected by the oil spill. Area Contingency Plans (ACPs) are prepared by the U.S. Coast Guard to address removal of oil and hazardous substances through an effective and coordinated planning process. The purpose of these plans is to define roles, responsibilities, resources and procedures necessary to respond to various petroleum spill scenarios.

Physical mitigation include efforts to cap the oil well and capture oil emissions; burning of heavy concentrations of surface oil; the use of chemical dispersants below and above the surface of the ocean; the use of absorbent and other physical booms to try to prevent oil from affecting sensitive marshes, beaches, inlets, and passes; skimming oil from the surface of the water; and picking up tar balls on affected coasts. The efficacy of these efforts vary, as well as the effects of weathering, bacterial consumption and degradation.

### **Environmental Effects**

Tar balls of varying size, oil "sheen," odors, and patchy, light to heavy drifts of mostly weathered oil have affected in varying degrees portions of the Gulf of Mexico coastline from south of Abbeville, Louisiana east to Panama City Beach, Florida. Although BP efforts to contain the emissions of petroleum products emanating from the wellhead 5,000 feet below the surface of the Gulf are continuing, these efforts are not yet capturing the majority of product, and there are millions of gallons of crude, including methane and other gases, that have been previously released.

Based on similar spills in coastal areas, many citizens and various professionals in natural resources management and planning fear that the spill could create large-scale or regional environmental impacts on marine and wildlife habitats. There is also a great deal of concern at all levels for saltwater and brackish ecosystems, including oystering areas in bays, as well as

freshwater lakes near the coast that discharge directly into the Gulf.

Oil is toxic to sea grasses, marshes, mangroves, and coral reefs. These areas provide food and habitat for many varieties of marine life. Should they be damaged by the spill, it could be years before they recover. Marshlands are particularly sensitive to oil spills, given their role in absorbing wave energy, preventing erosion, and providing wildlife and marine animal habitat. Louisiana is already experiencing a die off of marsh grasses which have come into contact with the oil. The Big Bend coast is a low-energy coastline that has very large areas of marsh grasses.

This time of year is also the spawning/nesting season for many varieties of marine life and it is unclear at this point what effects the oil spill will have on these activities. Sea turtles, for example, begin coming ashore in Florida from May-October to lay their eggs and the oil on the beaches as well as clean up activities could negatively affect the nesting process or even destroy the nest. Bluefin tuna, whose numbers are threatened due to over fishing, also spawn in the Gulf of Mexico this time of year and it is unclear how the oil will affect this process and the tuna hatchlings. Endangered species such as the Florida Manatee could also be negatively impacted by this spill.

Extensive field monitoring is occurring at present by federal, state, and local government officials and staff and volunteers from the public. However, the exact magnitude of the spill is still uncertain, and the long-term effects of large-scale dispersants use and the resulting suspended petroleum products in the water column is unknown. In any event, it is anticipated that effects of this oil spill will persist for a number of years.

#### Hurricane Events

According to NOAA, the effect of any oil on a hurricane is anticipated to be minimal. Most hurricanes would be larger than the spill at this time, and so any oil would not appreciably affect either the intensity or the track of a fully developed tropical storm or hurricane.

The effect of a hurricane on the oil itself may be beneficial. NOAA anticipates that a hurricane would likely mix and weather any oil patches, accelerating the biodegradation process, and the wave action associated with a hurricane would likely help clean beaches of oil. However, a hurricane with its storm surge and winds could also wash ashore oil currently at sea, or it could push oil or other oil residues inland and further into bays, rivers, and other inland waterways, thus complicating cleanup efforts and compounding environmental impacts. Due to the patchy, quickly changing nature of the oil and its residues, it is virtually impossible at this time to model any such impacts. It is also unknown to what degree any impacts would compare to the other expected property and other damages that hurricanes commonly create.

The location of any hurricanes or tropical storms would likely influence any oil residue distribution. For instance, since hurricanes and tropical storms have a counterclockwise circulation in the northern hemisphere, a storm located to the west of the Big Bend could bring oil or oil residues into coastal areas, whereas a storm located to the east would likely push any slicks or other contamination out to sea. It is also not anticipated that any storms would create "oily rain," but some lighter petroleum constituents could possibly be mixed into evaporation feeding rain clouds.

Until efforts to cap the well are in place, any tropical storm or hurricane that moves into the central or northern Gulf of Mexico will require suspension of at sea response activities. This may allow for additional unmitigated release of oil into the Gulf for a period of possibly 10 to 14 days

to account for evacuation and re-deployment of resources to the oil well location.

### Effects on Leon County

The potential effects of the spill on the Big Bend coastline depend on many factors, including coastal currents, wind, and extent, depth, and condition of any oil products present in or on the surface of the water.

At this time, FDEP staff do not anticipate any direct impacts to Leon County from this incident, nor does the chair of the County's Science Advisory Committee. However, FDEP staffers have identified at least three potential environmental impacts to the County that could arise from the spill:

1. A Category 4 or 5 hurricane could possibly drive weathered tar balls or "mousse" (weathered oil mixed with water) ashore or up waterways connected to the Gulf (storm surges from these magnitudes would affect portions of southern Leon County in the St. Marks River and Munson Slough basins);
2. If in-situ burning within three miles of the coast occurs (something Unified Command is considering only with offshore winds if heavy oil is moving towards sensitive unprotected habitats), citizens could see or smell dark plumes of smoke; and
3. If trucks carrying tarballs and/or other oil-soaked debris picked up by contractors are involved in an accident in the urban area.

### **Socio-Economic Effects**

The spill has and continues to damage the Gulf of Mexico fishing and tourism industries through the closing of large areas of the Gulf to offshore sport and commercial fishing, the cancellation of hotel, resort, and beach house reservations, and many other related ancillary economic impacts. While the long-term impacts of the spill are difficult to project, it is almost certain these effects will persist as long as the well remains uncontrolled.

Management and cleanup efforts are employing a number of citizens in and near coastal communities. According to FDEP's latest Situation Report #58 issued on June 25, 2010, at least 370 private and other boats have been hired in Florida under the Vessels of Opportunity (VOO) program, designed and implemented by BP to provide local boat operators an opportunity to assist with response activities, including transporting supplies, assisting wildlife rescue and deploying containment and absorbent boom. This program alone is mitigating the loss of revenue from other activities many of these boats would ordinarily be involved in (e.g., sport and commercial fishing). Overall, Unified Command states that more than 6,200 vessels are currently responding throughout the affected area, including skimmers, tugs, barges, and recovery vessels to assist in containment and cleanup efforts—in addition to dozens of aircraft, remotely operated vehicles, and multiple mobile offshore drilling units.

BP has also hired a number of people to help clean up beaches and marshes where possible. FDEP has reported 863 Qualified Community Responders are actively working on cleanup efforts in the Florida Panhandle. It is assumed these workers will be activated as long as oil products continue to affect the Florida coastline.

At present, the President has authorized the deployment of 17,500 National Guard troops from Gulf Coast states to respond to this crisis; currently, 1,640 are active. Approximately 37,000 personnel from a variety of federal and state agencies are involved in oil mitigation and cleanup activities along the Gulf Coast. According to FDEP, the following personnel are deployed in Florida:

- 7,887 positions related to the oil spill have been identified and advertised by the state Agency for Workforce Innovation and Regional Workforce Boards; 21,421 applicants referred for these positions;
- 4,038 individuals have been trained and are available through BP;
- 93 Florida National Guard personnel are on duty; the most recent are Liaison Officers serving Escambia, Santa Rosa, Gulf, and Bay Counties; and
- 15,193 volunteers have registered to respond to the Deepwater Horizon oil spill.

BP has also created a claims program for businesses and individuals who present “legitimate” claims for damages resulting from the oil spill and necessary response costs. At this time, BP claims in Florida total 20,431 with approximately \$17,911,675 in paid claims, according to FDEP. The federal Small Business Administration has issued an Economic Injury Disaster Loan Declaration for the State of Florida. Disaster Loan Outreach Centers are currently open in eight counties.

#### Leon County

There are concerns that “environmental and economic evacuees” from this oil spill may affect Leon County if the oil spill shuts down oyster and other fisheries for an extended period, or renders coastal communities and residential areas uninhabitable, particularly from a hurricane event. Potential impacts from any environmental evacuees associated with the oil spill may include new school-aged children enrollment, a possible increase in petty crimes and fraud, more trips on local roads, and other effects normally associated with an increase in population.

According to an analysis of the oil spill and its effects on crime and other socioeconomic factors made available to DEM and Planning staff by the Florida Department of Law Enforcement (FDLE), economic crime will likely be the most prevalent criminal activity as opportunities to commit fraud abound during and subsequent to any natural disaster. However, due to increased unemployment and stress, a rise in all types of crimes is anticipated, including but not limited to, robbery, burglary, domestic violence and other violent crime. In response to concerns about fraud, the National Center for Disaster Fraud has opened a fraud hotline and is accepting information from the public about suspected fraud associated with the oil spill.

An increase in domestic violence and other similar types of crime may impact social services such as hospital emergency rooms, domestic abuse shelters, suicide hotlines, and other counseling services. Protests and demonstrations can also be expected to increase as anger and outrage over the effects of the oil spill increases.

Positive effects from a migration to Leon County from coastal counties may include the purchase of homes, the startup of new businesses, and the increased consumption of goods and services by new residents. These activities would help contribute additional tax revenues which may offset some of the costs associated with mitigating any potential impacts from any evacuees.

Given the uncertainty of the oil spill and its impacts, it is not possible to anticipate at present

how many people in which location may be displaced by this event. Nevertheless, it is reasonable to assume that as long as environmental and economic mitigation activities continue to be funded, damage claim settlements continue to be paid, and if the oil well leak is finally sealed, there will be no large-scale sudden evacuations of coastal communities and other areas. Subsequently, Planning and Emergency Management staff concur that it is unlikely a significant exodus of workers or residents will migrate to the Tallahassee area to escape or avoid this spill. However, if this scenario were to occur, there are a number of planning documents that reference hurricane evacuations and effects, which would most closely resemble the impacts of any evacuees from other events. These documents are summarized below.

### **Ongoing Local Efforts**

#### Leon County Division of Emergency Management

DEM has already participated in this event through the following actions:

- monitoring daily State Emergency Operations Center (SEOC) interagency conference calls;
- ongoing threat assessment based on information via conference calls, situation reports, and briefings from other local, state, and federal agencies; and
- participation in conference calls conducted by the Florida Emergency Preparedness Association for inter-county coordination of emergency management activities.

In addition, DEM administers the Leon County Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan (CEMP). The CEMP is mandated by the State of Florida, and is to be coordinated and consistent with the state Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan. DEM coordinates with County and City departments, along with LCSO, to fulfill the objectives in the County's CEMP. The latest revision to the CEMP was approved by the Florida Division of Emergency Management on December 17, 2007.

The CEMP includes the County's preparedness, response, recovery, and mitigation activities to manmade, technological, and natural disasters. The CEMP follows the National Incident Management System (NIMS), which is a federally approved emergency management guide, and is divided into three sections (Basic, Recovery and Mitigation).

The Plan contains preparedness and response elements including general information about hazards in our community, geography, demographics, continuity of operations, responsibilities, financial management, and specific references to standard operating guides, supporting plans, and County and State authority to implement the CEMP. The Recovery section provides directions and steps the County must take to recover from an event by:

- Implementing damage assessment processes
- Opening disaster recovery centers to assist residents
- Managing debris
- Keeping citizens informed through community relations
- Identifying unmet needs, and
- Providing emergency housing for citizens

It is anticipated that the CEMP would help guide local agencies and departments in the case of

any effects from the oil spill, including addressing any “environmental evacuees” who may require information, housing, and other emergency services. The CEMP already references hurricane evacuation procedures, routes, and host shelters, including Red Cross shelters, and landing zones and logistical staging areas within Leon County.

Leon County, as are all Florida Counties, is a signatory to the Statewide Mutual Aid Agreement. In the event of a disaster or threatened disaster a Participating Party may invoke assistance under this Agreement by requesting it from any other Participating Party, or from the Florida Division of Emergency Management if, in the judgment of the Requesting Party, its own resources are inadequate to meet the disaster. Each Participating Party shall render assistance under this Agreement to any Requesting Party to the extent practicable that its personnel, equipment, resources and capabilities can render assistance.

#### Tallahassee – Leon County Planning Department

The Local Mitigation Strategy (LMS) is a planning document coordinated and administered by the Planning Department. The LMS is intended to help local officials identify and assess the various natural and technological disasters threatening the County, and then identify locally developed strategies to reduce the impact of future disasters. The LMS is also required by federal law in order for the local government to be eligible for pre- or post-disaster mitigation-related grant funding.

The LMS authorizes the Tallahassee / Leon County LMS Steering Committee and Working Group. The Steering Committee is composed of City and County officials, and representatives of the local universities, colleges, Red Cross, and hospitals. The Working Group consists of the Steering Committee members and related staff. The Committee and Working Group meet regularly to identify and discuss the hazards facing Leon County and the City of Tallahassee. From these discussions, the Steering Committee conducts hazard assessments and identifies mitigation strategies to reduce the County’s risk from identified hazards. These assessments and strategies, including specific mitigation projects, sources of funding, and education, are codified in the Tallahassee / Leon County Local Mitigation Strategy. The LMS serves both the City and the County, and also serves as the City’s Floodplain Management Plan.

The LMS does not currently directly address any environmental evacuations related to oil spills or other large-scale environmental disasters or events. The LMS does reference hurricanes and tropical storms and other related events, and it can be modified any time as necessary to address any new hazards and incorporate relevant strategies and initiatives in order to be consistent with any new federal mitigation funding opportunities.

## VolunteerLEON

Big Bend 211 has reported an increase of basic service needs calls from coastal communities that they serve. VolunteerLEON has been working with social service agencies responding to the increased demand for basic services. Organizations such as Catholic Charities and American Second Harvest of the Big Bend are pulling together plans and funding for food, rent and utility assistance for citizens whose employment has been adversely affected by the oil spill.

VolunteerLEON is also working closely with Volunteer Florida in order to provide the most current volunteer information regarding the oil spill. In the early stages, BP established a Volunteer Hotline and more than 27,000 people signed up to help. Unfortunately, BP had not established a solid plan on how it would utilize those volunteers. There is now an understandable frustration from volunteers who want help with the oil spill and recovery but cannot because only paid workers are allowed to work on oil impacted shores and wildlife due to the complex nature of the cleanup, coupled with health and safety concerns.

Working through the Big Bend Community Organizations Active in Disaster (COAD) program, VolunteerLEON staff has met with Wakulla and Franklin County's Emergency Management staff at their request, and has volunteered management technical assistance. This assistance includes the organization of beach cleanup service projects and assistance to permitted wildlife rehabilitation organizations to help ready their facilities to accept wildlife impacted by the spill. VolunteerLEON has also been working to backfill those organizations with volunteers serving in a supportive role. As of Monday, June 28, 2010, there were 3,250 volunteers in Florida who have served 19,467 hours on oil spill activities.

## Office of Management and Budget

The largest possible impact to Leon County's finances from the oil spill would be a decline in the disbursement of state revenue sharing. The two major state revenue sharing sources received as non-countywide general revenue are the half-cent sales tax and the county revenue sharing program. These revenues are used to fund transportation, stormwater and growth management services. Of all the state shared revenues, the half-cent sales tax generates the largest amount of revenues for local governments.

The FY 2011 tentative budget contemplates \$9.8 million for the half-cent revenue and \$3.8 million for the state shared revenue. On June 22, and 24th the state released revised forecasts for these revenues with the following footnote:

“These revised estimates are based on the results of the March 2010 general revenue estimating conference and do not include any potential fiscal impacts of events, which occurred subsequent to that conference (e.g. the Deepwater Horizon oil spill).”

If sales collections in the state drop precipitously during the year due to the Deepwater Horizon spill, Leon County could see an impact to revenue collections from these two sources. Projections of these revenues by OMB used in the development of the FY 2011 tentative budget were conservative due to the fact that the state has overestimated the past two years the amount of revenue to be distributed from these two revenue streams. Since the FY 2011 budget contemplates a conservative estimate of these state sales tax distributions, the immediate impact to the County's budget is minimal; however, this could change if the impacts of the oil spill dramatically affect tourism and associated sales tax collections in the state for a long term. Given that the local economy is not as dependent on tourism as are many parts of the state, local

sales tax collections are not anticipated to be significantly impacted by the spill.

OMB continuously monitors all revenue collections including the State's distribution of the half-cent and county shared revenue program. Any significant changes that could affect Leon County operations would be brought to the Board's attention immediately.

### **Summary**

The BP oil spill is an event of extraordinary magnitude, and its long-term effects upon the coastal environment, communities, and economies of the Gulf Coast is subject to uncertainty. At the same time, the degree and magnitude of the federal, state, local, and private response is also significant.

County staff and the chair of the Leon County Science Advisory Committee believe at this time that Leon County is likely to not be affected directly by the oil spill, nor do they expect a significant number of "environmental evacuees" from nearby coastal counties and communities. Nevertheless, Leon County has an existing CEMP and LMS that can help address many if not all anticipated impacts.

### **Recommended Actions**

1. The County's Division of Emergency Management, the Tallahassee – Leon County Planning Department, and all other relevant local government departments should continue to closely monitor federal and state emergency management and Governor's Task Force communications and activities.
2. The County should continue to coordinate as necessary with local institutions that may be called into action if a hurricane is forecast, or if significant oil or oil residues began moving into the Big Bend. These institutions include the City of Tallahassee, the Red Cross, the Tallahassee Area Chamber of Commerce, the Economic Development Council of Tallahassee/Leon County, the Audubon Society, the St. Francis Society, and other environmental, business, and social agencies as appropriate.
3. The County should continue to monitor the State's revenue and other appropriate estimating conferences to track any forecasted financial impacts from the oil spill and its effects on Florida's tourist economy.

cc: Vincent Long, Deputy County Administrator