

## **SUMMARY: Impacts and Actions: Strategic Responses to the BP Oil Disaster**

The Urban Conservancy and the New Orleans Institute @ City-Works convened seventy academics, activists, non-profit leaders, and local community leaders living and working in the New Orleans region on May 25, 2010. The group shared information and called for concerted action and vigilance in addressing the economic, social and environmental implications of the British Petroleum Offshore Drilling Disaster (BPODD) that continues to spew unlimited volumes of oil and other contaminants into the Gulf of Mexico only a few miles off the shore of the southeastern coast of the United States.

The group met in New Orleans, in the midst of the country's largest environmental disaster, and discussed the following:

- The United States's oil and gas dependency has exacted a disproportionate toll on the southeastern part of the country.
- The true costs of oil and gas extraction are hidden, absorbed by the shrinking coast, the vanishing wetlands, and the risks to the ecology, economy and social fabric of these areas, as evidenced now in the wake of BPODD.
- The economic, social and environmental health of the region are interdependent, so any actions to repair or jeopardize one has an impact on the others.
- Unclear jurisdictions and confusion between corporate, federal and state responsibilities is no longer an acceptable excuse to inaction.
- This region is forging an alliance between all the interests in this disaster: science and academia, industry, smaller local business, local communities, natural systems and wildlife, and the public sector to demand coordinated, aggressive action.
- The local public interest community is committed to working with their local community partners to document the impacts of BPODD.

To this end, the group issued a Background Report summarizing their discussions, and called for the following:

- 1. Immediate creation of a Citizen Advisory Council to oversee data collection, monitoring of impacts, and government action.**
- 2. Creation of a website [www.oilspilldonation.org](http://www.oilspilldonation.org) to facilitate donations for local non-profit organizations engaged in direct service and monitoring activity.**
- 3. Creation of a one-stop-repository that outlines all data monitoring activities.**
- 4. On-going multi-stakeholder activities that make clear the interdependency of the economic, social and environmental impacts of BPODD and the need for coordinated strategic responses and actions.**

The initial meeting was convened by these groups but now includes many more:

Hosted by The Urban Conservancy and the New Orleans Institute @ City-Works, with support from the Tulane Center for Water Resources Law and Policy, The New Orleans Institute at City-Works, The United Houma Nation, the New Orleans Food and Farm Network, Gulf Restoration Network, The Center for the Study of New Orleans at Loyola University, National Wildlife Federation, People's Environmental Center