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STATE OFFERS GUIDANCE FOR PROTECTING FLORIDA'S SHORELINE FROM OIL SPILL IMPACTS

TALLAHASSEE – As part of the state's ongoing efforts to monitor and prepare for any potential impact from the Deepwater Horizon oil spill, the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) in coordination with the State Emergency Operation Center (SEOC) is offering guidance for individuals, counties and local governments to protect their coastal communities.

"We have received numerous requests for permission to take proactive measures to protect Florida's shoreline since the Deepwater Horizon crude oil release began in the Gulf of Mexico on April 20," said DEP Secretary Michael W. Sole. "These supplemental efforts, in addition to the work being done by Unified Command, BP and state agencies, are important for preserving our precious beaches, and we want to ensure that all proactive measures are protective of Florida's environment."

While the desire to protect Florida's beaches is understood, some solutions could do more harm than good. In light of the distance of the plume, placing booms, bails, fences and other absorption technologies along the state's beaches could result in several additive problems rather than solutions. If the plume does reach Florida's coast it would largely be sheen and weathered petroleum (in the form of tar balls or floating mats). The shoreline impacts seen with this type of oil usually involves mild staining of sand.

If there is weathered petroleum, it will have significantly changed its consistency to a more solid form (tar like with a consistency of Vaseline). The use of barriers (such as hay bales or sand bags) can actually interfere with removal techniques and generate difficulty for disposing of solid waste. Should individuals observe any evidence of oil on Florida's coastline, they should leave the area and report the incident to 1-866-448-5816.

While the state appreciates the concern expressed by Floridians and the ingenuity of those seeking alternative measures to help protect the state's shoreline, the following tips are offered to ensure that these measures are helpful and not harmful to Florida's coasts, wildlife and water resources:

- Homeowners may be able to help prevent oil from reaching private property or damaging sensitive vegetation by utilizing sorbent booms.
- Booming and alternative absorption measures should be coordinated through the county and state Emergency Operation Centers since incorrect boom placement in navigable waterways can create a serious hazard.
- Coordination with state and local entities is important to ensure that booming or alternative measures being used do not impede navigation and are not more harmful to the natural environment in the long-run.
- If a boom is placed by a private citizen, that individual assumes responsibility for the boom, including the chance it could dislodge into the water or be harmful to wildlife.
- Booms placed by private citizens that become impacted by oil are the responsibility of that individual and require special authorization for removal and proper disposal.
- Alternative absorption methods, such as placing hay bales, homemade hair booms, sandbags or other technology along the shoreline, are not advisable as the overall debris from disposal of such methods would increase and could cause serious long-term damage.
- Oil is a hazardous material and should be handled by highly trained professionals only.
- Volunteers should not attempt to clean impacted beaches themselves or attempt to rescue oiled wildlife on their own. Touching oil is a health risk and disposing of it improperly could cause additional environmental damage.
- Authorized protective measures should be conducted in a manner that provides protection to, and does not disturb, native vegetation, species and their habitat.
- Taking, killing, harming or capturing any species, nests or eggs listed as an endangered species is not permitted.
- Individuals, counties and other entities seeking more information on types of protective measures can also contact BP's community information line at 1-866-448-5816.

For more information on Florida's response to the Deepwater Horizon oil spill, visit www.dep.state.fl.us/deepwaterhorizon or follow [www.Twitter.com/FLDEPalert](https://www.twitter.com/FLDEPalert). In addition, the Florida Emergency Information Line, 1 (800) 342-3557, is in operation from 8:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m.

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