

Opening Statement of Rep. Edward J. Markey  
Natural Resources Committee Oversight Hearing  
“*One Year after President Obama’s Gulf of Mexico 6-Month Moratorium Officially Lifted:  
Examining the Lingering Impacts on Jobs, Energy Production and Local Economies.*”

Most Americans likely remember the date April 20, 2010 as the day the Deepwater Horizon exploded and the BP oil spill began.

But October 12, 2010 would likely only trigger blank stares.

And that is the essential problem with this hearing. The Republican Majority is holding a hearing on the one year anniversary of the end of a temporary pause for a couple dozen of the riskiest deepwater drilling rigs in the Gulf of Mexico.

Those few months were important to ensure that rigs were safe and that workers and our environment were protected. But today we are having a hearing on that temporary pause as though it, and not the BP spill itself, were the cause of all problems.

Holding a hearing on the impact of a safety check following an unimaginable oil spill is a little like holding a hearing on the impact of wearing a cast after shattering your leg, without looking at the accident that required the cast.

But the Republican Majority and the oil industry aren’t holding hearings to examine the lingering effects from the actual oil spill.

They’re not talking about how the oil spill could cost the Gulf region \$22.7 billion over three years in lost tourism, according to one study.

They're not holding a hearing to demand answers about why there have been recurrent oil sheens showing up near the site of the Macondo well site a year after the accident, or reports of mutations in some fish species in the region.

And they’re not talking about what we do to ensure we never have a spill like this again.

So today, let’s talk about some of the real lasting impacts from the spill itself.

Just a few weeks into the BP spill, I successfully called on BP to create a \$500 million scientific research fund. One of the first studies from this fund was released just a few weeks ago.

That study, conducted by a team of researchers from Louisiana State, Texas State and Clemson Universities, shows that fish living in the marshes affected by the spill have undergone changes at the cellular level that could lead to developmental and reproductive problems in these fish. The researchers focused on the killifish [KILL-EE-FISH], which is the most abundant fish in the marshes of the Gulf and an indicator of the health of that ecosystem.

The researchers found that there have been potentially dangerous changes in this one species that may indicate the presence of a much larger problem. In fact, the researchers concluded that these may be some of the same significant early warning signs that we saw in the years following the Exxon Valdez oil spill in Alaska before species like the pacific herring and pink salmon suffered population declines. We may be seeing the first indications that there are lasting effects of the oil spill below the surface of the water. There may in fact be a host of ticking environmental time bombs in the Gulf whose impacts we are only beginning to understand.

But the most important species impacted by the spill has been the resilient people of the Gulf of Mexico. They were the ones who lost jobs because of the spill. They lost tourism dollars and fishing dollars and endured the priceless impacts on the environment of the Gulf.

And families lost husbands, sons and brothers on the Deepwater Horizon.

This Congress should finally end its moratorium on common sense and pass legislation to prevent similar spills in the future. We should ensure that there is proper monitoring of the Gulf ecosystem so that we are ready to adapt to possible impacts of the spill on fish and other species. Each time this Committee holds another hearing that avoids these responsibilities, it does a disservice to the people of the Gulf.

I yield back.