Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

October 16, 2012

Mr. Robert Dudley
Chief Executive Officer
BP
501 Westlake Park Boulevard
Houston, TX 77079

Dear Mr. Dudley:

During the 111th Congress, we conducted an investigation into the potential causes of the Deepwater Horizon explosion and subsequent spill and BP's recovery efforts after the spill. Recent reports suggest that oil continues to be detected in the Gulf of Mexico over two years after the initial event.

Last week, the Coast Guard's Federal On-Scene Coordinator for the Deepwater Horizon oil spill issued a Notice of Federal Interest to BP and Transocean indicating that an oil slick in the Gulf of Mexico detected in September matched oil from the Deepwater Horizon. According to the Washington Post, an internal BP slide presentation "said the new oil sheen probably came from the riser, a long piece of pipe that had connected the drilling rig to the well a mile below the sea surface."[1] Specifically, the Post reported that the internal presentation stated: "the size and persistence of this slick, the persistent location of the oil slick origin point, the chemistry of the samples taken from the slick ... suggest that the likely source of the slick is a leak of Macondo . . . oil mixed with drilling mud that had been trapped in the riser of the Deepwater Horizon rig."

The Coast Guard announced last week that it had also approved a joint plan from BP and Transocean to identify the source of the oil sheen.[2] According to this announcement, BP and Transocean plan to use satellite observations and remotely operated vehicles (ROVs) to examine the wreckage and debris on the sea floor, including the riser drill pipe.[3]

This recent report of a new oil slick from the Deepwater Horizon's riser raises questions about BP's efforts to stem the long-term impacts of the 2010 oil spill. To assist us in understanding your efforts, we request a briefing, by October 30, 2012, on possible causes of this recently reported oil release, BP's efforts to assess and remedy any current or future damage to

---

[1] *Oil in New Gulf Slick Matches That of 2010 Spill*, Washington Post (Oct. 10, 2012).

[2] United States Coast Guard, *FOSC for the Deepwater Horizon oil spill in New Orleans approved a joint plan from BP and Transocean (Oct. 12, 2012).*

[3] Id.

PRINTED ON RECYCLED PAPER

the Gulf from this or any future releases, and any design changes the company has made to its oil rigs to prevent future incidents like the Deepwater Horizon oil explosion and subsequent spill.

Further, we ask that you respond to the following questions in writing, and at the briefing:

1. Over what period of time will that subsea examination conducted? What is the size of the area that will be examined?

2. The Coast Guard reportedly stated that the sheen "could be residual oil associated with wreckage and/or debris left on the seabed from the Deepwater Horizon incident in 2010." Does BP plan to conduct a subsea examination of the wellhead, all the riser drill pipe, and all of the wreckage of the Deepwater Horizon so that the exact source of any leaking residual oil can be identified, contained and captured? Is there any debris or wreckage that BP does not plan to survey?

3. Does BP plan to examine the sea floor surrounding the Macondo well to ensure that oil is not migrating and escaping from locations on the sea floor away from wellhead? Why or why not?

4. According to press reports, the assessment that the oil in the sheen is likely coming from the riser is due to the presence of drilling mud. What is the maximum volume of oil that BP believes could be trapped in the riser pipe? Does BP believe it is possible to remove any oil trapped in the riser to prevent further degradation of the environment?

5. How much oil or other drilling fluids could be expected to be trapped in the riser or other wreckage of the Deepwater Horizon? Have there been other instances of leakage from the wreckage? If so, please list each such instance, and qualify the amount of oil released and the actions taken by BP in response to these releases.

We also request that you provide us with copies all internal documents and correspondence, including the internal presentation cited in the Washington Post and any other presentations and memoranda discussing the recently reported oil slick, including discussions of potential causes and efforts to stem the ongoing flow of oil, and all diagrams, maps, or ROV or other visual footage of the wreckage and/or debris and those areas affected by this recent oil sheen.

Please contact Morgan Gray on the Natural Resources Committee's staff at (202) 225-6065 or Tiffany Benjamin on the Energy and Commerce Committee's staff at (202) 226-3641 to schedule the briefing or if you have any questions regarding this request.

Sincerely,

Edward J. Markey
Ranking Member
Committee on Natural Resources

Henry A. Waxman
Ranking Member
Committee on Energy and Commerce