The Only Answer for Counteracting the Gulf Oil Gusher

Contributed by Jan Lundberg, oil industry analyst
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News Release

For immediate release

Washington, D.C. - If 100,000 barrels a day of crude oil are gushing out of the damaged sea-floor well underneath where BP's offshore oil rig used to perch, what can be done to offset this pollution immediately? Time is of the essence for the global ecosystem, not just for a part of the Gulf.

The gusher is not abating, for Mother Nature has more power than men can comprehend -- look at the power of an earthquake or a tsunami, or the global climate's increasing distortion. When out-of-control industrial activity pursues profit at the expense of humanity and nature itself, Mother Earth can get out of control too.

Therefore, all people can do under the circumstances is to stop the flow of oil that actually can be controlled. This means stopping a significant amount of oil extraction and refining anywhere on the planet -- as the ecosystem is all one interconnected closed system -- to the tune of 100,000 barrels a day, or whatever the best estimate of ongoing damage is in the Gulf. BP cannot be trusted to estimate the flow, as it falsely claimed that only 5,000 barrels a day were spewing from the well.

Additionally, the cut back in voluntary oil usage must be large enough to make up for what has already been spewing into the environment in the Gulf disaster. For almost a month and a half the gusher has raged out of control. As failure has dogged the incompetent, irresponsible and criminal BP, with the pro-oil U.S. government refusing to manage the situation or clean up the mess with supertankers vacuuming up the oil, mitigation is clearly overdue. Therefore, the cut back must be significantly over 100,000 barrels of petroleum a day around the world. Arguing about who must cut now, and who does not have to, would be a tragic waste of time. Boycotting BP is wrong-headed if the same amount of oil is purchased overall, for all extracted and refined oil is eventually burned or spilled (except that dumped as solids, such as asphalt, and plastics -- which do not biodegrade and end up in minute amounts in our bodies).

Some oil wells are easier to cap than others, and some capped wells can be brought back into production more easily than others. Enhanced oil recovery and injection of water mean wells are past their prime, so these are the logical candidates for closure. Additionally, some refineries can be closed. Shutting down other BP wells and some of the corporation's refineries first is the right move.

To ease this orderly cutback of supply, consumers must use less oil, such as ceasing car use one day a week. Large cars guzzling fuel must be retired anyway. All plastic (a petroleum product) offered at retail outlets can be refused, both as packaging and content of polluting products. All these measures help people to recognize also that the global peak of oil extraction must be dealt with.

We demand a response to this proposal from President Obama and Congressional leaders. If none is forthcoming immediately, we must take matters into our own hands. We can hear Obama or any other puppet of industry intone, “We mustn’t harm the economy.” However, unabated pollution (going on since the oil industry cranked up a century ago, and coal before that), is the real long-term threat to economic survival. Has Obama and his circle heard of James Lovelock's book Revenge of Gaia?

The oil industry workers in Louisiana who demand continued oil activity for the sake of their jobs, despite the clear damage going on at the disaster site, seem to care not for the welfare of people elsewhere or for the health of nature. A similar mindset has existed with timber workers clear-cutting the few remaining ancient trees. How long must this be accommodated for the sake of "jobs"?

Short-term thinking is the philosophy of extractive industries and polluters. Connected to Wall Street, the big banks and capitalism in general, the forces of private enrichment and greed are stealing from their own offspring and descendants. Policy change from the two-party Big Business game is hopeless, but system change is not. Extractive capitalism is a far cry from acting in such a way to protect the interests of the Seventh Generation, as the Iroquois Nation consciously did for centuries before the European invasion.

Whatever we do anywhere in the ecosystem affects us everywhere. It is not just the Nigerians’ problem when Shell Oil’s facilities poison tribal villages, or Indians’ problem when Chevron-Texaco’s toxic oil waste in the Amazon kills natives and wildlife. The “over there” that U.S. consumers want to forget about is knocking at their door now.

Note: this press release was revised as of May 31.

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Jan Lundberg is a former oil industry analyst who, among other functions, formally studied offshore oil drilling's potential for California on behalf of the oil industry -- resulting in Congress's immediate lifting of the moratorium there in the mid 1980s. He ran Lundberg Survey which published the Lundberg Letter, then known widely as “the bible of the oil industry.”

Further reading:

Oil Gusher in Gulf: Energy Gluttony, not Oil Addiction, is Greater Challenge

No Offshore Oil Drilling: Committee Against Oil Exploration (CAOE)

Ecological Denial on the Gulf Oil Disaster: U.S. Policies Continue Toward Collapse:

Contact:

Jan Lundberg, oil industry analyst

Culture Change: www.culturechange.org

(215) 243-3144, voice mail and fax

email: jan "at" culturechange.org