



Dr. Ian MacDonald: Over 50% of BP Oil Remains in Gulf

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Dr. Ian MacDonald of Florida State University is scheduled to testify at today's [meeting](#) of the National Commission on the BP Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill and Offshore Drilling. Testifying on a panel entitled "The Fate of the Oil," Dr. MacDonald will focus on the extent of the Gulf of Mexico's ability to heal.

Dr. MacDonald's testimony refutes claims by BP and the federal government response that most of the oil discharged into the environment has disappeared:

[T]he BP oil discharge was at least 10,000 times more concentrated in space and time and about twelve times greater in magnitude than the total annual release from natural seeps of the Gulf of Mexico. In my scientific opinion, the bulk of this material was dispersed in surface layers, from which about one third evaporated and ten percent was removed by burning or skimming. An additional ten percent was chemically dispersed. **The remaining fraction — over 50% of the total discharge — is a highly durable material that resists further dissipation.** Much of it is now buried in marine and coastal sediments. There is scant evidence for bacterial degradation of this material prior to burial.

Dr. MacDonald also cautions against a rush to judgment based on the limited wildlife impact data collected so far. "In Prince William Sound, for example, no dead orcas were found after the Exxon Valdez spill," said Dr. MacDonald. "Nonetheless, the present orca population in the Sound was reduced by over half by the spill." Dr. MacDonald recommends a long term approach to monitoring and restoring the Gulf's ecosystem and economy funded by BP's penalties.

The National Wildlife Federation is working with Dr. MacDonald and other scientists to monitor and respond to the Gulf oil disaster's impacts, while fighting for full public disclosure of all available data.

"From Day One, BP and the government have lowballed the volume of the oil in the water and minimized the current and future impacts of this disaster. Dr. MacDonald's testimony today is a wake-up call to those eager to declare the Gulf oil disaster over," said Dr. Doug Inkley, National Wildlife Federation senior scientist. "Gulf residents and the ecosystem they depend on don't need happy talk – they need a national commitment to restore the Gulf, along with real energy reforms to make sure a disaster like this never happens again."

Read Dr. MacDonald's [full written testimony \(PDF\)](#) and learn more about the National Wildlife Federation's response to the Gulf oil disaster at NWF.org/OilSpill.

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