From: Burrell, Mary
To: Burrell, Mary;
Subject: Volunteers Needed for Oil Spill Preparation
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Pinellas County
BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

News Release

Pinellas County Communications Department
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For Immediate Release
May 21, 2010

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MEDIA CONTACTS included below.

Volunteers Needed for Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill Preparation

There is no imminent threat of oil from the Deepwater Horizon spill making landfall in Pinellas County. The oil is 305 miles from the Clearwater coastline as of May 21, according to the State Emergency Response Team (SERT), a division of Florida Emergency Management. However, volunteers are needed to prepare in case there is a future landfall. If oil reaches the Pinellas coastline, it is expected to be highly weathered in the form of tar balls or mats. Although weathered material is not as toxic as fresh oil, it could still affect birds and other wildlife coming in contact with the material. If oil or tar balls wash up on area beaches, the materials would be removed by trained contractors, not volunteers.

Local environmental organizations are seeking volunteers for coastal watches, preventative beach cleanups and bird monitoring. Also, local wildlife rehabilitation agencies are requesting trained assistance and donations. Volunteers are needed as follows:

- **Coastline watchers:** To report oil on the shoreline, call (866) 448-5816, or dial #DEP from a cell phone. To report oiled wildlife, call (866) 557-1401.
- **Pre-oil landfall beach cleanup**: Sign up online with Keep Pinellas Beautiful at www.pinvol.org for a Special Beach Cleanup. Volunteers who register will be contacted for a beach cleanup event, if necessary, prior to oil making landfall. For information, call (727) 533-0402.
- **Local bird survey**: Assist Audubon with counting local bird populations by using the eBird checklist at www.ebird.org or call the Clearwater Audubon Society at (727) 431-2856.
- **Beach and wildlife monitoring**: Volunteers can contact Tampa Bay Watch at www.tampabaywatch.org or call (727) 867-8166.
- **Office work or seabird rehabilitation**: Volunteers are needed at the Suncoast Seabird Sanctuary for tasks such as feeding birds, which will free up trained staff for emergency work. Also, veterinarians and wildlife paraprofessionals are needed for an Emergency Call List. Visit www.seabirdsanctuary.com, or call (727) 391-2473.
- **Aquarium work:** Volunteers are needed to assist the Clearwater Marine Aquarium with daily duties. Training classes and long-term weekly shifts are required. Volunteers will not necessarily treat oiled wildlife directly, as marine animal needs will be determined by federal wildlife officials and facility staff. Visit www.seewinter.com or call (727) 441-1790, ext. 230.

Donations:

- **Suncoast Seabird Sanctuary** is requesting donations of items such as towels to treat oiled birds. Visit www.seabirdsanctuary.com, or call (727) 391-2473 for a current list of needed supplies.
- **Clearwater Marine Aquarium** has set up an Oil Spill Emergency Fund. Donations can be made by calling the aquarium at (727) 441-1790 or visiting www.seewinter.com.

In terms of local preparations, the U.S. Coast Guard Sector St. Petersburg is monitoring the situation and has specific plans in place for deflecting oil. After the 1993 Tampa Bay Oil Spill, the U.S. Coast Guard drafted a

detailed Area Contingency Plan to prepare for a future oil spill in the area. The plan has been recently updated by local environmental officials and wildlife organizations. The plan identifies environmentally sensitive areas in Pinellas County (such as mangroves, estuaries, bird rookeries and marshes) with specific strategies for protecting each area. Floating booms would be deployed to protect passes and inlets. However, booms are not efficient for beach areas because they are difficult to secure in open water areas due to wave action.

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*** MEDIA CONTACTS:**

Deepwater Horizon Operations:
Unified Command Joint Information Center, U.S. Coast Guard Sector St. Petersburg, (727) 820-3700 or (727) 820-3714. Visit www.deepwaterhorizonresponse.com

Response actions in Florida:
Florida Department of Environmental Protection: www.dep.state.fl.us/deepwaterhorizon
Florida Oil Spill Information Line: (888) 337-3569

Pinellas County volunteer organizations:

- Bill Sanders, Keep Pinellas Beautiful: (727) 533-0402, e-mail stoplitter@tampabay.rr.com
- Michelle Simoneau, Suncoast Seabird Sanctuary: (727) 391-2473, e-mail michelle@seabirdsanctuary.com
- Jeni Hatter, Clearwater Marine Aquarium: (727) 441-1790, ext. 228, e-mail jhatter@cmaquarium.org
- Peter Clark, Tampa Bay Watch: (727) 867-8166, e-mail pclark@tampabaywatch.org
- Barbara Walker, Clearwater Audubon Society: (727) 431-2856, e-mail barbibird@tampabay.rr.com

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