



A Region in Recovery

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Chapter One

Disaster Strikes

On April 20, 2010, the oil rig Deepwater Horizon exploded in the Gulf of Mexico. It caused the worst offshore oil spill in United States history. People from around the world leaped into action. Scientists worked to **assess** the damage. Volunteers helped with the cleanup. Concerned citizens sent donations. Oil poured into the water for months. Everyone watched with heavy hearts. Eventually, reporters turned their attention to other news. Fortunately, many **dedicated** people have continued the cleanup efforts. The region is now slowly on the road to recovery.



Several million gallons of oil poured from the well each day for a period of 5 months, from April 20 to September 19, 2010.



Workers set out barriers to keep oil from reaching the shore.

Chapter Two

The Effects Under Water



Dolphins have been washing ashore at four times the usual rate.



Sea turtles have been washing ashore at seven times the usual rate.

Endangered Wildlife

Official reports claim that the oil has been removed. Yet scientists continue to find oil in the water. One of their biggest concerns is how this is affecting sea life. High numbers of dolphins and **endangered** sea turtles continue to wash up on Gulf shores. Scientists are studying the problem and looking for ways to solve it.

Past Success Brings Hope

Earlier efforts to bring back endangered wildlife offer some hope. Bald eagles nearly died out because of environmental damage. Then efforts were made to **restore** and protect them. Bald eagles gradually made a comeback. The same may be possible for sea turtles and dolphins.

An Endangered Way of Life

Scientists are discovering that the oil spill has affected sea life in many ways. Coral reefs in the Gulf are covered with oil. Very little life has been seen there. Reefs used as **breeding grounds** are disappearing. Without them there will be fewer fish in years to come. Fishermen's catches of shrimp and fish are far below what they were before the spill. Many locals who depend on fishing and seafood are looking for new ways to make a living.



A healthy coral reef teeming with life



Fishermen are catching fewer fish and shrimp.

The Effects Above Water

Dying Marshes Threaten Birds

The oil spill affected sea life and also caused much damage above ground. The oil that **seeped** into the soil destroyed **marshes** along the Louisiana coast. These areas are nesting grounds for pelicans and many other birds that **migrate** south for the winter. Birds continued to lay eggs in this toxic environment. Oil-covered eggs were still being found in pelican nests a year after the spill. As a result, workers put up machines that create loud sounds to scare away birds in some of the worst-hit marshes. They hope these will keep birds from nesting there.



A healthy marsh before the spill

Restoring the Marshes

The marshes are not just nesting grounds. They help protect Louisiana from the floodwaters of hurricanes. Storms and environmental damage **eroded** the marshes in the past. Previous projects went a long way toward bringing them back. Now, the government has a project underway to clean oil from sea grass in the marshes.



A dead marsh after the spill

Restoring the Beaches

The shorelines are also important to the economy. The beautiful beaches bring millions of tourists to the Gulf. States depend on tourism **revenue**. Yet, who wants to go to a beach covered in oil? Tourism fell 50 percent in Alabama in the summer of 2010. It returned to nearly normal levels within a year. Mississippi and Louisiana did not **fare** as well, however.

There is a long way to go to restore the Gulf. Much damage was done. However, people and nature find ways to bounce back. Much progress has been made. With enough money, hard work, and time, the region will eventually recover.



Gulf beaches were clean and inviting before the spill.



Workers clean tar balls and oil from beaches.

Glossary

assess: to look closely at a situation, person, or problem to make a judgment about it.

breeding ground: area where a type of animal gives birth to its young.

dedicated: committed to a cause or purpose; spending most of the time and effort on something.

endangered: at risk of becoming extinct.

erode: to wear away as by water, ice, or wind.

fare: to get along; used to indicate how well or how badly someone or something is doing.

marsh: low-lying wetland, usually covered with grasses, that often lies between land and water.

migrate: to travel to another part of the world for warmer weather during a particular time of year.

restore: to clean or repair something to bring it back to the way it was before.

revenue: money earned from business activities or taxes.

seep: to pass or leak through slowly.