



Dispatches from the Gulf:

Science, Community & Recovery in the Aftermath of the Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill



Introduction

Narrated by Matt Damon, “Dispatches from the Gulf” is a one-hour documentary that investigates the environmental health of the Gulf of Mexico six years after the Deepwater Horizon blowout in April 2010. That’s when the world’s ninth largest body of water became a place where thousands of communities and millions of citizens were put in jeopardy by a single incident – the biggest oil spill in U.S. history.

Details

On April 20, 2010, the Deepwater Horizon drilling platform exploded, taking eleven lives and, over the course of 87 days, releasing more than 200 million gallons of oil into the Gulf of Mexico. The disaster was the largest oil spill in U.S. history and put thousands of communities, millions of citizens, and a vital ecosystem in serious jeopardy.

“Dispatches from the Gulf,” follows a team of international scientists as they investigate the oil spill’s effect on the world’s ninth largest body of water. The group’s ongoing, ultimate goal is to discover new and better ways to mitigate and cope with future spills. Their collective studies have ultimately become the largest coordinated oceanographic research endeavor in history. *“I go out...and try to figure out who’s winning this war of nature versus oil,”* summarizes Dr. Chris Reddy, senior scientist of Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution, one participating organization.



It considers the socio-cultural implications as well as scientific findings. The documentary examines the impact of the Deepwater Horizon oil spill on local communities, from members of the tourism industry to families who rely on seafood such as shrimp and crabs for their livelihood. *"If ever a light bulb went off in all of our minds, it was that our economy is totally dependent on a clean, safe, useable environment,"* stresses Mayor Robert Craft of Gulf Shores, Alabama. *"That is still our biggest concern."*

The film also captures instances of exciting innovation: Biologists and oceanographers use remotely operated vehicles and manned submersibles to study the effects of the oil on the ocean floor. Chemists and engineers design new laboratory techniques to understand the impact of the spill on fish species and how chemical dispersants interact with oil.

Produced by Emmy Award-winning filmmakers Marilyn & Hal, Journey to Planet Earth is an award-winning television series that explores new ways of looking at the delicate relationship between people and the world they inhabit. The series is also designed to help viewers understand and cope with the complexities of the most important environmental issues of the 21st century.

Through an interdisciplinary approach, each episode reaches beyond the physical sciences to draw connections to politics, economics, sociology, and history. Extreme Realities is the 13th episode in the Journey to Planet Earth series.

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