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June 8, 2010

President Barack Obama  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue  
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

I respectfully write to provide detailed information documenting dozens of major offshore oil spills in the Gulf of Mexico involving BP and a host of other corporations.

Toxics Targeting is an environmental database firm that maps and profiles more than 300,000 petroleum spills using local, state and federal government information. The data I have attached for your review was compiled by the federal National Response Center (NRC).

According to that information, critical aspects of the Deepwater Horizon catastrophe were earlier reported at other spill sites, including wells that "lost control," downed drill rigs, detached risers, "safety valve" problems, "sub-sea well complex" hazards, massive uncontrolled oil releases, contamination slicks covering more than 30 square miles and polluted wetlands.

Given this egregious record of offshore oil problems, the current catastrophe was obviously foreseeable and should have been prevented. I provide the data as a courtesy to assist your clean up efforts as well as to help you formulate policies and practices to prevent future spill disasters. See: [http://toxicstargeting.com/sites/default/files/pdfs/gulf\\_of\\_mexico\\_offshore\\_oil\\_spills.pdf](http://toxicstargeting.com/sites/default/files/pdfs/gulf_of_mexico_offshore_oil_spills.pdf)

The selected spills were reported from 1990 to 2009. Major spills involved **BP**, Shell, Phillips, Texaco, Chevron, Conoco and other firms. In many cases, no "remedial action" was required.

- Individual spills reportedly exceeded 200,000 gallons and involved: "crude" oil, "diesel oil," "petroleum naphtha," "hydraulic oil," "produced water," "methyl alcohol," "ethylene glycol," "unknown oil," "Jet A fuel," and many other toxic materials;
- Spills were reportedly caused by: wells that "lost control," "excess pressure" that "built up," accidents, hurricanes/tropical storms, valve/gasket failures, ruptured pipelines/hoses/tanks, "unknown reasons," "process upset," "corrosion," and human error;
- Spills reportedly caused serious worker injury;

- Spills reportedly spread thousands of feet and covered up to "10 miles x 3 miles;"
- Due to a "downed offshore rig" in 2008, **BP** reportedly spilled 2,000 gallons of hydraulic and lube oil "into the Gulf of Mexico." Remedial action was reportedly "N/A;"
- Due to a "Drilling hammer hydraulic line" that "leaked due to unknown reasons" in 1994, **BP** reportedly spilled 2,000 gallons of "hydraulic oil" "1000 FT below surface" into the Gulf of Mexico;
- **BP** reportedly spilled 1400 barrels (58,800 gallons) of "synthetic drilling fluid" in 2003 due to "an emergency disconnect of a riser" during a "tropical storm." Moreover, "material traveled down to the depth of 4,400 FT. in the water." No remedial action was reportedly conducted;
- Shell reportedly spilled 1500 barrels (63,000 gallons) of "crude" oil from a "ruptured 20 inch steel pipeline" in 2009;
- In 2009, operators at Viosca Knoll reported "a large spill passing by their platform. The spill is several miles in wide (sic) and length with rainbow and patches of brown." The "unknown sheen" was reportedly 7,794 gallons of "crude" oil. No remedial action was taken;
- In 2000, 1839 barrels (77,238 gallons) of "crude" oil was "spilled from a 24 inch offshore underwater pipeline. A drilling rig struck and ruptured the line with an anchor;" and
- In 2002, 1800 gallons of "crude" oil spilled from a storage tank due to "corrosion" into "20 acres of marsh area" in the "Gulf of Mexico."

## Regulatory Action

NRC's information reveals the Deepwater Horizon catastrophe involved problems that were documented over nearly 20 years at multiple offshore oil spill sites in the Gulf of Mexico. I request that you resolve those oil spill and regulatory shortcomings without further delay.

I specifically request that you require financial surety at offshore drill sites to alleviate and eliminate all pollution hazards that might occur. For example, New York State's Navigation Law provides that petroleum releases to surface waters as well as groundwaters incur strict clean up liability without limitation. That statute can serve as a guide for federal action.

Offshore drilling responsible parties also must be required to post bonds in the event of disaster. If that policy had been implemented earlier, there would be no uncertainty regarding remediating the Gulf's environment and making all those who have been harmed whole again.

## Marcellus Shale

Recent disasters make it plain that coal and offshore oil mining activities are improperly regulated. Federal agencies similarly lack requisite authority to prevent natural gas drilling hazards.

As you must know, the Marcellus Shale formation covers portions of nine eastern states and contains an estimated 500 trillion cubic feet of natural gas. Extracting that gas involves "hydrofracturing" that generates massive wastewater problems as well as other toxic risks.

Marcellus Shale pollution could ultimately dwarf oil contamination in the Gulf. I request that you take action to prevent that from happening, beginning in New York.

For the last two years, New York has imposed a *de facto* moratorium on Marcellus Shale horizontal hydrofracturing until new regulatory safeguards are adopted, but state authorities clearly accepted gas industry assurances that no hydrofracturing problems would occur and are eager to drill. That has put the drinking water supplies of New York City and hundreds of other communities at risk.

Toxics Targeting challenged industry assertions by reviewing gas drilling and spill records across New York. We documented fires, explosions, homes evacuated due to uncontrolled gas releases, polluted water wells, known hydrofracturing problems and improper management of drilling wastewater. We brought our findings to the attention of state and federal environmental regulators.

Your Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Region 2 colleagues wrote New York authorities last December to voice "serious reservations" about the state's proposed draft regulations. EPA forcefully declared that "greater emphasis needs to be placed on the potential health impacts that may be associated with gas drilling and hydrofracturing."

EPA provided a long litany of regulatory shortcomings, but failed to require the draft regulations to be withdrawn and the scope of the review to be revised.

See: <http://toxicstargeting.com/sites/default/files/pdfs/3ppEPA-Dec09-Letter-HL2.pdf>.

Please require that action to be taken now. Nearly 10,000 citizens, elected and appointed officials as well as local, state and national environmental groups have signed my coalition letter supporting that request. See: [http://www.toxicstargeting.com/MarcellusShale/coalition\\_letter](http://www.toxicstargeting.com/MarcellusShale/coalition_letter)

## Conclusion

Given the harsh lessons our nation is learning about offshore drilling hazards, I implore you not to make the same mistake with Marcellus Shale gas hydrofracturing. Adequate regulatory and financial safeguards must be put in place before drilling is allowed to proceed.

With all respect, the federal government simply must make sure that the nation's groundwaters do not suffer the same catastrophic fate as the oil-devastated Gulf waters.

Thank you for your consideration and your historic public service. I offer you my very best wishes as well as my promise to assist you if I can. Please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours very truly,

Walter Hang  
President

Cc: Honorable Lisa P. Jackson  
Honorable Judith Enck  
Honorable David Paterson  
Honorable Alexander Grannis