

FIO continues to support research on impacts 7 years after BP *Deepwater Horizon* oil spill

Thursday, April 20th marks seven years since BP's *Deepwater Horizon* oil rig exploded, killing 11 workers and leading to the largest oil spill in U.S. history, leaking 210 million gallons of oil over 87 days. The Florida Institute of Oceanography (FIO) took a lead role in the initial scientific assessment of impacts (made possible by a rapid release award from the [University of South Florida](#) Research Foundation) by being the first team on the scene collecting data. Former FIO Director, Bill Hogarth worked with state and federal legislators, the [Florida Department of Environmental Protection](#) and the [US Coast Guard](#) (USCG) to coordinate research efforts between these agencies and [FIO's members](#).

FIO was among the first organizations to receive \$10 million for spill-related research in the immediate aftermath of the disaster, funding 27 projects. FIO currently supports 91 investigators, 15 post-doctoral research associates, and over 45 students from 30 institutions studying the recovery and resilience of the Gulf of Mexico following the spill.

The response plan and early actions of FIO and partnering member institutions lead to FIO being designated as the Florida Gulf Coast Entity to administer and coordinate [Florida's RESTORE Act Centers of Excellence Program](#) (FLRACEP). In 2015, FLRACEP funded 10 projects focusing on important aspects of Florida's marine fish and wildlife. Earlier this year, the program funded a major, multi-year project using innovative DNA barcoding of fish eggs to advance the science of estimating fish population health. As part of BP's legal settlement, FLRACEP will receive a further \$22 million over the next 15 years in order to continue vital marine research. FIO was also designated as the only academic infrastructure support organization to sign a Memo of Understanding with the USCG in order to assist in their response to a natural or anthropogenic emergency.

FIO, its member organizations, and the Florida RESTORE Act Centers of Excellence Program are committed to excellence in marine research and informing the decades of restoration efforts to come.

In addition to environmental impacts, personal and economical affects remain across the Gulf. On the 7th anniversary, [C-IMAGE](#) will release [Beneath the Horizon](#), an interactive website examining the consequences of the two major oil spills in the Gulf of Mexico: The 2010 Deepwater Horizon oil spill in the northern Gulf and the lesser-known 1979 Ixtoc oil spill in the southern Gulf.

Beneath the Horizon features scientists who have devoted their lives to studying the spills and residents who lived through them, and explores how the environment and people cope with disaster and what we can expect for recovery in the future. To learn more, please visit www.beneaththehorizon.org.

David Hollander and Steve Murawski are available for interviews regarding USF efforts following *Deepwater Horizon*. Contact Benjamin Prueitt (727-553-3364, benjamin2@mail.usf.edu).