

A Disaster Reaches Beyond the Gulf Coast

By JESSE MCKINLEY, WILLIAM YARDLEY, ABBY GOODNOUGH and MARK LEIBOVICH
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As BP continues to struggle to plug the leak at the bottom of the sea, the president tries to convince the country that he is on top of the crisis, and the first oil laps the coasts of previously untouched states, Americans far from the gulf are feeling touched by the disaster. A sampling:

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Kevin Moloney for The New York Times

WYOMING

An 'Oil City' Fears for Its Future

CASPER, Wyo. — The lobby of the elegant old [Casper Petroleum Club](#) is filled with suggestions of its pro-oil ethos: a sign listing current crude and [natural gas](#) prices; a wall of plaques recognizing local companies in the business; and dozens of photographs of beaming engineers and executives who have served on the board of the private club over the years.

But in recent weeks, some club members' smiles have been replaced by more fraught expressions as worries have grown not only about the oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico, but also about the potential blowback to Casper's No. 1 industry.

"Honestly, the first concern is the problem it is causing the Gulf Coast, because a lot of us have spent time down there," said Jimmy E. Goolsby, a geologist who lived in Texas before decamping to Casper some 35 years ago.

"But secondary to us, and very important to all of us, is what impact it's going to have on the oil and gas industry in the U.S.," Mr. Goolsby said. "Is it going to be what Three Mile Island was to nuclear?"

In Casper, a city of 52,000, oil and natural gas production and refining are as central to the lives of many residents as pick-up trucks and big sky. That concern spreads all the

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way from the white-tablecloth confines of the petroleum club to the white-bibbed customers at the Rialto Barber Shop.

Ed Heatherington, who wields the razor beneath the watchful gaze of a stuffed pronghorn antelope at the Rialto, was measured in his response. "It's a shame it happened," he said. "But we're not living in an accident-free world."

But some of Mr. Heatherington's patrons were less forgiving Thursday morning as they chided [President Obama](#) for what they saw as a slow, haphazard response, as well as for his remarks Wednesday that he intended to roll back tax credits for the oil industry.

"He's just on another campaign trip," said Dee Beardsley, a 81-year-old retiree who worked for years as an operations manager in the energy industry. "They're brain dead."

That Mr. Obama would be unpopular in this red state stronghold — this is [Dick Cheney's](#) hometown, after all — is not surprising. But BP, the London-based oil giant, also drew an angry response from some local residents.

"We kicked the British out of here 200 years ago," said Ken Melder, a drilling consultant from Glenrock, Wyo., in a neighboring county. "And we ought to do it again."

Oil and gas have long been a part of life in Wyoming, where the first oil well was drilled in 1884, six years before the territory joined the union. Casper is no exception; sometimes known as "the Oil City," it has a refinery on one edge of town, with gigantic oil reserve tanks on the other. Rail tracks, where piping and tanker cars are a constant presence, run through the center of town, not far from one of its tallest structures — the six-story Petroleum Building.

Most of those in the oil and gas business here are not big, multinational companies, Mr. Goolsby said. "Most people here are like farmers: they just produce product," he said, meaning oil and natural gas. "They don't have pipelines. They don't have refineries. They don't have outlets. They just produce."

Residents here are used to boom and bust cycles. In 2008, the oil and gas industry employed about 30,000 people and poured nearly \$3 billion in Wyoming's coffers in taxes, royalties and other fees, according to the [Petroleum Association of Wyoming](#). But local residents say the current oil scene is in a slump, and some said they feared more scrutiny from the government could prolong the slump.

"Back in the '80s, when the bubble burst, you'd go to lunch and come back and the doors would be locked," Mr. Beardsley said. "I just hope that doesn't happen again."

Others — particularly the young and able — were not concerned that all that much would change because of the current slump, caused in part by the [recession](#), or the gulf spill.

Lucas Strawn, 21, had come to Casper to train for oil work after four years of working methane gas rigs north of here. He had more fear of dying on the job — "everything on a rig has a potential to kill you" — than his job dying on the vine.

"People still want to drive their cars," said Mr. Strawn, a Wyoming native, as he played pool in a local hall Thursday night. "And if we don't drill, they don't drive." —JESSE MCKINLEY

WASHINGTON

Grief After Another Kind of Oil Disaster

ANACORTES, Wash. — Hershel and Bonita Janz say they have been struck by how little

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media attention has been given to the 11 people who died in the explosion on the Deepwater Horizon rig in the Gulf of Mexico on April 20.

They understand that the nation is consumed with the environmental consequences of the spill, and they understand the worries Gulf Coast residents have over losing a way of life. But what about the loss of life?

“Today is the day, you know,” Mrs. Janz said, the evening news on the television as the couple sat down for dinner. “Two months today.”

It was June 2, two months to the day after [an explosion at the Tesoro oil refinery](#) killed seven people. The Janzes' son, Lew, died after clinging to life for 11 days in a hospital burn unit, all but his eyes swaddled in blood-soaked bandages.

“It was a terrible, terrible way to die,” Mr. Janz said.

Will Lamphiear, an operator at the refinery 80 miles north of Seattle, said that having the gulf spill constantly in the news at the same time Anacortes has been holding memorial services for the Tesoro victims had made him realize that news coverage, however omnipresent, is not necessarily intimate. “That’s noise, that’s a news story,” he said. “We feel this.”

“These were people you saw every day,” he said. “It’s a balancing act, doing your job and dealing with the grief.”

Homes here rattled with the explosion that night. The plant is still shut down and investigators are still at work. Yet even though the accident had much in common with what would happen in the gulf three weeks later — the [oil](#) industry, a fiery explosion, tragic deaths, a pristine setting on the water, hard questions over what happened — there was no oil spill here, no seemingly unsolvable environmental disaster. Grief is what people are trying to contain.

But they remain committed to the industry.

“These things happen,” Mr. Janz said, invoking the spill in the gulf as well as the 29 people who died in the Upper Big Branch mine in West Virginia in April. “But we’re not going to stop using [coal](#) and we’re not going to stop using oil. Bad things happen to good people, and Lew was one of the best.”

Officials say the refinery will reopen. Mr. Lamphiear and as many as 500 other employees and contractors are working to repair the facility. While the Tesoro plant had been fined for serious safety violations in the past, there has been no prominent effort to shut it down.

“I think things are really going to be up to snuff when they reopen,” Mr. Janz said.

—WILLIAM YARDLEY



Katherine Taylor for The New York Times

NEW ENGLAND

Far Away, Fishermen Watch: ‘If It Was Us, That Would Be It’

CHATHAM, Mass. — The fishermen unloading thousands of pounds of [cod](#) from weathered boats Thursday in Chatham,

Mass., appeared untouched by the crisis in the Gulf of Mexico; it was business as usual,

and some predicted it would stay that way.

“We won’t feel it,” Peter Taylor, a native of Cape Cod who has spent his life fishing its waters, said as seals hungrily circled his boat at the Chatham Fish Pier. “The only long-term outcome is there’ll never be any drilling up here on Georges Bank.”

But others suspect the spill might affect their livelihood, for worse or even for better. It depends partly on whether the spill kills the hatchlings of bluefin tuna, a prized New England catch that spawns in the gulf before migrating to Cape Cod.

“That’s first and foremost on everyone’s minds,” said Rick Thompson, who was packing the day’s catch in ice for shipment to markets and restaurants, “but that’s not going to be felt right away — probably down the road.”

Some are also wondering whether, in the shorter term, a shortage of seafood from the gulf might increase demand — and prices — for their own catch.

“If markets open up for ground fish to be shipped down there,” said Neil Kelly, operations manager at the Nantucket Fish Company, a wholesaler, “that would be great for the guys around here.”

Mr. Kelly’s boss, Andy Baler, said typical New England species like haddock, pollock and cod were not popular in the South, so people there would not be likely to turn to New England for replacement fish.

“It’s hard to change appetites,” he said, “but we’ll keep working on it.”

The one exception could be oysters, Mr. Baler said, adding that the cold-water varieties are far more expensive than those caught in the gulf.

“We’ll probably start seeing calls from down South,” he said. “We’ll probably see a little jump in price there.”

So far, Mr. Baler said, the biggest impact on Cape Cod fishermen has been the stress of imagining what would happen if they ever had a similar spill.

“The main effect is all of us losing sleep at night,” he said, “thinking about what’s happened down there. If it was us, that would be it — we’d be done as an industry. We’d fold.”

Still, New England fishermen are facing a legion of problems themselves, from depleted fish stocks to what they consider overly burdensome regulations governing when, where and how much they can fish. Those obstacles feel far more threatening than an [oil spill](#) more than a thousand miles away, Mr. Taylor said.

“If the oil companies had the kind of government oversight that the fishing industry has to deal with,” he said, “there would never have been a spill.”

—ABBY GOODNOUGH

Brendan Smialowski for The New York Times

PROTEST

Environmental Groups Stage ‘Citizen’s Arrest’ of BP Leader

WASHINGTON — BP’s embattled chief executive, [Tony Hayward](#), was placed under “citizen’s arrest” by a coalition of



environmental advocates Friday in front of the company's Washington offices. Not surprisingly, Mr. Hayward did not show up.

But 70 or so demonstrators did, along with about half as many reporters and photographers.

In sweltering midday heat, the protesters waved homemade signs ("Crude Awakening"), brandished pictures of [oil](#)-soaked birds and delivered megaphone speeches next to a 20-foot-high inflatable yellow oil drum.

"BP, you're under citizen's arrest," declared Erich Pica, president of [Friends of the Earth](#). "And it will be us, the U.S. citizens, who will be your judge and jury."

According to the demonstrators, everyone wants clean energy, and they want it right now. There was also a motley cry of "Hey hey, ho ho, BP's negligence has got to go."

In the scene's emotional crescendo, Robert Weissman, the president of [Public Citizen](#), one of the organizers of the gathering, led the protesters to the front entrance of the glass building that houses BP's offices on the seventh floor. But a beefy security guard denied them entrance.

Standing nearby, a spokeswoman for [Public Citizen](#), Barbara Holzer, tried to speak over the din of a "Spill, baby, spill" chant. "I think Mr. Hayward should turn in his pinstripes for prison stripes," she said.

The Obama administration did not escape indictment. Activists described the White House reaction to the spill as "uneven," "lackluster" and "insufficiently tough" on BP, and some expressed frustration that the administration had not seized on the spill as a chance to promote a bolder energy agenda.

"Until recently, the administration has not used this as a chance to talk about clean energy or reducing dependence on oil," said Nick Berning of Friends of the Earth. "You don't have moments like this often in the energy debate. And it seems like the administration could be using this more."

—MARK LEIBOVICH

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