

Fall 2010

Whose Problem Is It?



The largest oil spill in the history of the petroleum industry occurred in the Gulf of Mexico approximately 40 miles offshore of the coast of Louisiana on April 20, 2010, as the result of an explosion on the Deepwater Horizon, an oil-rig owned by [Transocean](#) and leased to BP. For the past two months, the tragedies associated with the loss of life, the damage to the ecosystem in the terms of the fishing industry and tourism, and the images of suffering caused to birds and marine mammals alike have become embedded in our minds. With nearly $\frac{3}{4}$ of our world made up of oceans, this lesson that can be explored by any country that depends on crude oil or borders an ocean.

If ever there was an opportunity to rally around an inter-disciplinary theme, it is the Gulf Oil Spill. As a result, many educators, and non-profit organizations geared toward education are “diving in” to take advantage of this teaching opportunity at all levels and ages. The oil has been elusive, seeming to disappear at one point only to reappear again. Where it will go and what it will do as it travels throughout the Gulf and later via the Gulf Stream is yet to be seen. No doubt the impact will eventually become an international disaster as well. It is time that we all stop and take notice of how a catastrophe such as this affects each and every one of us, but also that each of us can be a part of the solution.



The Project WET activity “Whose Problem Is It?” (p. 429) is designed to help students “analyze the scope and duration of a variety of water-related issues to understand the relationship between local and global issues. A quick look at the warm up section will help illustrate how well this old, non-localized activity will help you and your students tear into the issue of the day, while setting the stage for a course of inquiry based study that could easily engage you and your students in a quest for knowledge spanning multiple disciplines and grade level content standards. Extend the activity and encourage students to investigate how the problem in the Gulf impacts our lives here in GA. Are gas prices going up, what about the cost of seafood, etc?

A current events bulletin board could become a virtual sea of articles from the newspaper, Internet sites, magazines, etc. Just think of all of the opportunities and topics to choose from, impact on human and natural communities, the affects on the marine life and other wildlife that use the area, the economic impacts from loss of wages related to the fishing industry or tourism, the cost of cleanup, the relationship of government and private enterprise at all levels in relation to oversight and regulation (everybody from the local fisherman and oyster shuckers, to the Governor, President, Coast Guard, universities studying the problem, and of course, least we forget, British Petroleum and Transocean.) The Water Issues Analysis Chart would be helpful for this part of the activity.

NATURE RULES!

The In a world driven by technology, few students have actually experienced environmental catastrophes that have plagued mankind throughout the ages. Natural disasters, such as earthquakes, hurricanes, volcano eruptions, fire, flooding, drought, dust-storms and landslides often seem to have a greater impact on Third World countries than they do on our own. Growing up, most of us remember events such as Mt. Saint Helen’s erupting and the devastation to southeast FL caused by Hurricane Andrew. Those “naturally occurring” events seem to take a back seat to disasters such as Three Mile Island, Bophal, Chernobyl and Apollo 13 because of the fact that “human error” was involved.

Hurricane Katrina’s fifth anniversary just passed, and now many of the same people along the Gulf Coast that were deeply affected by it are now dealing with yet a new disaster - the Gulf oil spill. This highly manipulated system of dikes and levees was built in a floodplain, below sea level in most cases, so it is perceived to somehow be our “fault”. Is it easier for us to collectively deal with the suffering of our peers than it is the suffering of a group of pelicans covered in oil or a pod of dolphin swimming through the slick?

Based on the turnout to both disasters, it appears so. People have turned out in the thousands to volunteer to clean up beaches and wildlife refuges, as well as the “wildlife” that has been affected by the spill. Fewer people turned out to help their fellow mankind when Katrina devastated New Orleans. It is likely that the answer has to do with both human behavioral changes, as well as technological advances that have occurred over time. We “expect” those advances we have made through the years to be predictable and withstand the pressures exerted upon them because they were designed to do so. Unfortunately, we cannot expect the forces that affect Mother Nature to do the same. What if those safeguards for technology fail, or are not in place at all? Oftentimes, it is a matter of scale, but sometimes it is a matter of not having the human and financial resources in place in those areas to deal with the crisis when they are needed.

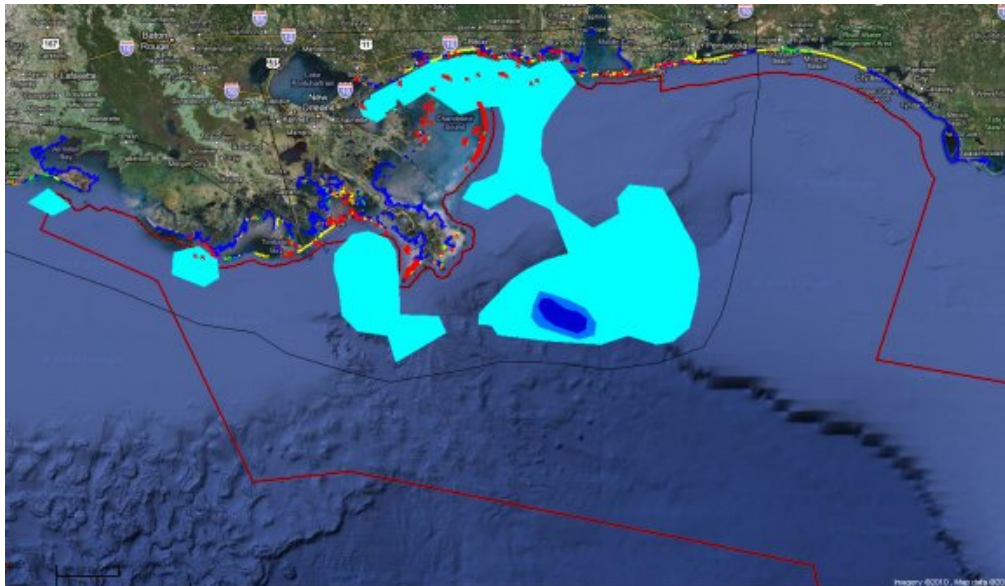
In Project WET's "Nature Rules" activity (p. 262), student use historical visual evidence of water – related natural disasters to compose stories, as well as more recent examples. Some students can focus on local catastrophes that have made the news, such as the flooding here in Atlanta in 2009. Others can look at the Gulf Oil Spill (Disaster) and Hurricane Earl which is currently heading up the east coast towards New England. In all cases, students should reflect on what makes particular locations more vulnerable to these water –related events that makes them historical in nature.

In the **Project WET Activity "After Math" (p. 269),** students go one step further and look at the economic impact these events have on a given area. How long will it take local industries to recover? How much is the cost of the recovery efforts? What will help sustain that area in the meantime?

Learning About the Gulf Oil Leak in the Lab

From the NY Times-The Learning Network. In this lesson, students consider the Deepwater Horizon oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico and related cleanup efforts. They then design and execute experiments to learn more about the effects of oil spills, and apply their findings to the coastal communities in the gulf region. Finally, they explore the economic and political impacts of the oil spill as well as the technological progress toward stopping the leak. (Find more activities on our website)

Visit GAProjectWET.org for more links, articles, and activities related to natural and man-made disasters

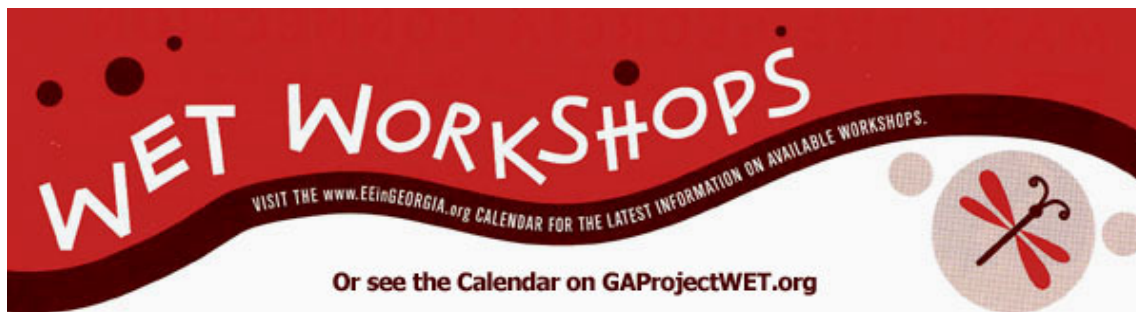


Public School Classrooms to Execute Projects to Clean Up the Gulf!

Funding for 3rd through 8th Grade Teachers in Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, and Texas.

Disney's Planet Challenge is offering funding to 3rd-8th grade classroom projects for \$650 or less in materials, aimed to help clean up the Gulf Oil spill. Visit www.donorschoose.org/teacher by November 1.

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**Another TRIPLE Facilitator Training is coming up!
WET, WILD, and PLT all in two days!!**

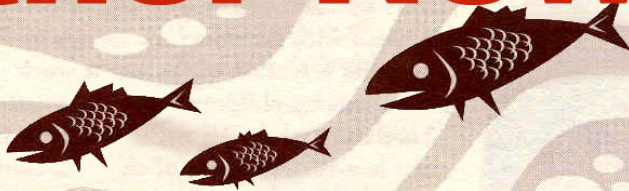
We will be in Forsyth at the GA Forestry Association Building February 3-4, 2011. Registration materials will be posted on our website, GAProjectWET.org and on EEinGeorgia.org. Watch for them!



River of Words entry deadline is December 1! Get rules and new forms from GaProjectWET.org

Watch your mailboxes during the next couple of weeks for information about the annual *River of Words International Poetry and Art Competition for K-12!* Request a free GA River of Words Teacher's Guide, the Contest Rules and information about Project WET, Rivers Alive and GA Adopt a Stream. Last year we had over 1800 entries, with 12 finalists and a national winner despite the fact that the deadline was much earlier than it had been previously. For more visit GAProjectWET.org or www.riverofwords.org

Other News



The 2010 Outdoor Classroom Symposium

SAVE the date for Georgia's 14th annual Outdoor Classroom Symposium to be held Friday, **November 5, 2010**, at Zoo Atlanta! The theme of "Get Outdoors! Teaching Locally, Connecting Globally" will feature hands-on sessions on how to create outdoor teaching spaces, teach outdoors, and use local resources to make connections to the larger world.

Additional details and symposium registration information can be found at www.eealliance.org.

Coastfest 2010 will be held on October 2, 2010 in Brunswick, GA For more information visit [COASTFEST 2010](#).

PCP Collection

On Saturday, September 25, the U.S. Dept. of Justice, Drug Enforcement Administration will coordinate a collaborative effort with state and local law enforcement agencies to remove potentially dangerous controlled substances from our nation's medicine cabinets.

To learn more about the program and find a collection site near you, visit www.deadiversion.usdoj.gov/takeback (new collection sites are being added daily).

Medication Disposal Day in Cobb County

Keep Cobb Beautiful and Kaiser Permanente are offering a Medication Disposal Program for the public on October 23, 2010 from 10am-2pm at the Cobb County Government Offices-Powder Springs Stations, 1150 Powder Springs Rd, Marietta, 30064

Please spread the word about this nationwide collection event for unused or expired prescription drugs.

Free seeds for education programs

Recovery Eco Agriculture Project is a nonprofit NGO based in Georgia. We work in sustainable land use education and research. One of our programs offers free seed; vegetables, flowers and herbs that are heirloom, organic or standard to community and school programs in the metro area. We ask participants to simply send us a list of what they want. Let us know how big their garden is, how many people participate and how much they want and we will try to get them based on what we have. We are also available for other resources as well. Please pass this on to those you think might be interested. (Frank Holzman, REAP)

EEA Annual Conference

Coming in March, the Environmental Education Alliance Annual Conference will be held in Kennesaw. Check the website eealliance.org for more details.