

Environmental group Oceana leads Fort Lauderdale protest against oil drilling

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Mock oil spill on ft.Lauderdale beach

Members of the environmental group Oceana stage a mock oil spill in Fort.Lauderdale at the beach to mark the one-year anniversary of BP spill.

(1:18)

By Segun Adeoye, Sun Sentinel

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Protesters gathered at [Fort Lauderdale](#) beach Wednesday to mark the first anniversary of the [BP oil spill](#) in the [Gulf of Mexico](#) and voice opposition to possible oil drilling near Florida's coasts.

Part of the protest activities, organized by the environmental group Oceana, was a mock oil spill, using a black tarpaulin. People dressed in hazmat suits cleaned up the "spill" and practiced methods needed to rescue affected wildlife.

Other protesters hung banners displaying messages, including "Stop the Drill," "What if it Happened Here," "No Drilling No Spilling," "[BP](#) = Biggest Polluter," and "Windmills don't Spill." Surrounding them were makeshift small windmills erected firmly in the sand.

Video: NASA scrubs launch of space shuttle Endeavour

"I've seen tourism decrease in the state of Florida," said Katie Parrish, Florida campaign organizer for Oceana. "Fortunately the oil spill didn't get to our coast, but for months, we were very concerned that it might happen, and just that fear alone drives tourists away who would have contributed to our economy."

Parrish said she was angry about the possibility of more offshore oil drills, as a way supporters say will bring down gas prices.

She, however, disagrees. Quoting the [U.S. Department of Energy](#), she said, "Even if we open all our oceans to oil drilling, we would only succeed in getting gas prices to decrease by a negligible 3-cent-per gallon by 2020."

The 2010 oil spill of about 4.9 million barrels of crude oil, following an oil well explosion that killed 11 men, killed thousands of marine animals, and has been described as the worst environmental disaster in U.S. history.

The alternative was to engage in offshore wind power, she said.

"We can actually generate 30 percent more energy by using offshore wind power instead of offshore drilling," she said. "And it is a complete myth to argue that by expanding offshore drilling we would bring about lower gas prices."

Of much greater concern for Candy Leone, 59, who grew up in Florida, was the spill's impact on marine life and the environment.

"Those asking for more oil [drilling] are not out there to see what is happening to marine life," she said.

[Palm Beach County](#) Commissioner Shelley Vana, said it was time to act responsibly.

"As a science teacher, I know that oil is going to run out," she said. "It's not a sustainable source, and we do not have the ability to stop any oil spills like what happened in the Gulf of Mexico."

Ned Stone, from the Florida Wildlife Federation, said he worries about how increased oil drilling will affect his livelihood.

"The fishing industry where I make my living is worth \$1.2 billion each year," he said. "That's where I make my living and so my job is dependent on clean water. Our economy is our environment."

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