



STATE OF FLORIDA

BILL McCOLLUM
ATTORNEY GENERAL

June 3, 2010

The Honorable Eric Holder
Attorney General
U.S. Department of Justice
Ben Franklin Station
Post Office Box 7415
Washington, D C 20044

Dear Attorney General Holder:

It was extremely disappointing that the Department of Justice chose to exclude the state of Florida from your meeting on Tuesday with Gulf State Attorneys General regarding the Deepwater Horizon oil spill. This omission would suggest that President Obama and his Administration do not fully understand and appreciate the imminent crisis Florida specifically is facing in the wake of the biggest environmental disaster in American history.

Yesterday your office advised that you do not plan to personally meet with me and Florida officials. As my Deputy Attorney General Joe Jacquot relayed in a phone conversation to Deputy Assistant Attorney General John Crudin, the state of Florida is facing an imminent threat from the oil spill, based on the latest National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) projections. It is disturbing that Florida is not commanding the full attention of the federal government.

With more than 1,260 miles of coastline, Florida has more coastline than any other state in the continental United States and our environment is a key driver in many of the industries that comprise the foundation of our economy. From commercial and recreational fishing, to our tourism industry, to the small businessmen and women who rely on our state's rich natural treasures, this disaster presents a clear and unprecedented danger to our way of life and the more than 18 million residents in our state.

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From the moment of the Deepwater Horizon explosion on April 20, your Administration has demonstrated a lack of competence in managing this disaster. There was no clear federal contingency plan to address the possibility of a catastrophic deepwater drilling incident of this magnitude. Instead, there was a misguided reliance on the responsible private party, British Petroleum (BP), to capably contain a massive undersea rupture, mitigate excessive damage to our coastline and ecosystem and pay out claims to affected Florida individuals and businesses

Here in Florida, we have worked for weeks to address our grave concerns with BP, to make their claims process more workable and to aggressively plan for any possible legal contingency that may be necessary on behalf of the state. While we look forward to working more closely with the Department of Justice on these concerns, the first and foremost priority of both the state and federal governments, in partnership with responsible parties, must be doing everything possible to protect Florida's coastal ecosystems and economy.

It is unacceptable that prior to this catastrophe no effort appear to have been made to encourage, evaluate and deploy new technologies that hold great potential to be much more effective at mitigating damages than those now in use that are the same as the technologies used in the Exxon Valdez spill. Just as concerning is the absence of federal personnel with control and command decision-making authority on the ground in our most affected counties. As a result, Florida is now facing imminent danger from this massive oil spill without needed federal assets.

I urge the Administration to make more federal assistance to Florida available immediately, especially skimming vessels; to evaluate, approve and deploy new technologies to mitigate the disaster; and to streamline command and control among the engaged federal agencies to establish clear lines of decision making authority on Florida's front lines.

Floridians deserve nothing less from the federal government.

Sincerely,

Bill McCollum

cc: Ignacia S. Moreno, Assistant Attorney General
John C. Cruden, Deputy Assistant Attorney General