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## TODAY'S "QUICK HIT": WHAT HAPPENED TO THE OIL?



By Stephen L. Bakke  November 25, 2016

### *Here's what provoked me:*

*Once again, analysis of the Gulf Oil Spill is appearing in newspapers across the country. The obvious goal is to continue the theme of perpetual destruction having been caused by the 2010 event. If this narrative is kept alive, it may change the course of future policy decisions regarding carbon based fuels. This was a devastating and disastrous event. But perspective is an important ingredient for making the right policy decisions about oil exploration.*

### *Here's my response:*

#### **What Happened to the Oil?**

I was surprised and pleased to see the November 24<sup>th</sup> report on "Oil Spill's Power of Erasure," by Chelsea Harvey of the Washington Post. It's important to remember what happened in the Gulf of Mexico. However, Harvey expects readers to accept as fact the enumerated continuing damage being caused by the 2010 oil spill. I remind readers that this is mostly opinion and conjecture and there are too many competing destructive forces in the Gulf to blame it all on the oil. It's important, if policy decisions are being made, that facts surrounding the situation help put things in perspective.

I stipulate that the spill was disastrous and harmful, but I ask readers to consider the following:

- Approximately 200,000,000 gallons of oil escaped during that disaster.
- That volume would fit comfortably in the IDS Center in Minneapolis.
- Compare that to the Gulf. On a relative basis it's "microscopic" – approximately .00000003% of the Gulf's volume.
- It's not unusual for "natural" oil seepage in the Gulf to reach this level in one year.
- The gulf benefits from "oil eating micro-organisms" which have eaten a significant amount of natural seepage as well as oil from the spill.
- Some of the oil has been dissolved and evaporated.
- A relatively small portion of oil from the spill remains.

This was a devastating and disastrous event. But perspective is an important ingredient for making the right policy decisions about oil exploration in the Gulf of Mexico.