



VANISHING  
PARADISE  
*A program of National Wildlife Federation*

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## **TEXAS SPORTSMEN TO GOV. ABBOTT: BP'S OIL SPILL FINES MUST RESTORE COASTAL HABITATS**

**AUSTIN, TX - "This is an once-in-a-lifetime opportunity not only to bolster our state's natural resources, but also to support and expand industries that rely on a healthy Gulf Coast."**

Texas' hunters and anglers want the governor's office to use BP's oil spill fines to restore wildlife habitats on the coast.

That's the message in a letter signed by 79 Texas outdoors business and sporting groups. The National Wildlife Federation and Ducks Unlimited worked together to gather support for the letter.

"Thanks to the RESTORE Act, Texas stands to receive as much as \$1 billion in Clean Water Act fines as a result of the Deepwater Horizon oil spill. These funds could be used for restoration of our state's wetlands, wildlife habitats, fisheries, and marine resources," reads the letter recently sent to Governor Perry. "This is an once-in-a-lifetime opportunity not only to bolster our state's natural resources, but also to support and expand industries that rely on a healthy Gulf Coast."

BP was recently found "grossly negligent" for its role in the 2010 Deepwater Horizon disaster and the company could pay as much as \$18 billion in civil penalties under the Clean Water Act. A 2012 law known as the RESTORE Act will send much of this money back to the Gulf States.

A portion of the RESTORE Act funding will be under the direct control of the governor's office. The letter asks the governor's office to dedicate this money to projects that:

- Create and restore habitat to secure Texas' future as a destination for world class duck hunting, birding, and fishing opportunities;
- Ensure ample freshwater flows for Texas rivers reaching our bays and estuaries along the Gulf to sustain their productivity, diversity, and functionality for the long-term health of our fish and waterfowl populations;

- Ensure Texas' marine habitats and fisheries remain healthy and productive by addressing fish habitat improvements, improving data and scientific programs and replenishing and protecting living coastal marine resources.

Kirby Brown, Ducks Unlimited's conservation outreach biologist said, "A healthy Texas coastal economy is directly dependent on a healthy coastal environment. Funding for conservation projects that have positive ecological benefits have both direct and multiplier impacts on the economies of our Texas coastal communities."

Fishing, hunting and other wildlife tourism such as bird-watching generates more than \$17 billion in revenue in Texas annually. The organizations that signed this letter contend that using the oil spill fines to improve the health of the coast will increase this segment of the state's economy.

"Texas sportsmen know that using BP's fines for habitat restoration is the best thing we can do to create jobs on the coast," said Steve Bender, director of the National Wildlife Federation's Vanishing Paradise program. "Texas is growing faster than any other state in the nation. If we're smart, we will use this money to restore declining coastal habitats like marshes and oyster reefs. Texas outdoor businesses and sporting groups look forward to working with Governor-elect Abbott on this opportunity to make the coast an even more attractive place to fish and hunt—and to protect an important piece of our Texas heritage."

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