



Charlotte Harbor Visitor & Convention Bureau  
Update #7 on the Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill  
Date: Tuesday, June 15, 2010

**Message to Charlotte Harbor & the Gulf Islands Visitors**

Charlotte County is closely monitoring developments surrounding the Deepwater Horizon Oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico. The Charlotte Harbor Visitor & Convention Bureau is providing the following message to our guests and encourages all Charlotte County businesses to do the same:

- Currently, there is no local impact from the Deepwater Horizon oil spill and Charlotte County is currently more than 200 miles away from the primary oil plume;
- Charlotte Harbor & the Gulf Islands is open for business and the shoreline and beaches are pristine, clean and ready for your enjoyment;
- We do not know if our area will be affected, but it is in no imminent danger.

**Landfall in Northwest Florida**

- Sightings of tarballs, tar mats and/or areas of light oil sheen have been confirmed in the waters from Escambia County (Alabama-Florida state line) to Walton County in Northwest Florida. There have been no reports of Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill-related oil products reaching the shore beyond the Northwest Florida region.
- Dime to five-inch sized tarballs and tar patties have been reported scattered along Northwest Florida beaches.
- There is no indication that the rest of the state will have impacts from weathered oil products within the next 72 hours.
- All Florida beaches are open.

**Fishing in Florida**

- As of June 7, 2010, about 67 percent of the Gulf of Mexico is open to fishing. Information on the Federal Fisheries Closure can be found at <http://sero.nmfs.noaa.gov>.
- The Florida Fish & Wildlife Conservation Commission has issued a partial fishing closure in Escambia County (located more than 300 miles from Charlotte County); the rest of Florida's recreational and commercial fisheries have not been directly affected by the oil spill.
- Fishing continues to be open in the vast majority of Gulf of Mexico waters, and all related saltwater fishing regulations remain in effect.

June 1 marked the beginning of Hurricane Season which is through November 30. NOAA has published a fact sheet titled "Hurricanes and the Oil Spill" at

[http://www.nhc.noaa.gov/pdf/hurricanes\\_oil\\_factsheet.pdf](http://www.nhc.noaa.gov/pdf/hurricanes_oil_factsheet.pdf)

### **Charlotte County is Open for Business**

Florida has more than 1,260 miles of coastline and 825 miles of beach including Charlotte County's 28 miles of sand beaches. Like all other Florida destinations, all of Charlotte County's accommodations, restaurants and attractions remain 100% open for business. We'll continue to monitor the situation and refer to [www.CharlotteHarborTravel.com](http://www.CharlotteHarborTravel.com) for the most accurate and up-to-date information on our area.

While we remain optimistic Charlotte County beaches will not be directly impacted by the oil spill it is the responsibility of the Charlotte Harbor Visitor & Convention Bureau to convey to the public the impacts of the spill related to Charlotte County Tourism. Charlotte County Emergency Management has emergency plans in place and a plan of action is dependent on the scenario.

### **Using Social Media to Share Open for Business Message**

- The Charlotte Harbor VCB is utilizing the social media channels of Facebook (<http://www.facebook.com/CharlotteHarbor>) and Twitter (<http://twitter.com/chqiflorida>) to update followers on the status of local beaches and waterways.
- Members of Charlotte County's tourism industry are also encouraged to utilize their social media platforms to educate future visitors that beaches and waterways are currently oil free. This can be done by:
  - Updating your website with beach status and an open for business message;
  - Share timely images and videos of Charlotte County's beautiful coastal areas on your Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and Flickr accounts as well as newsletters you send to subscribers. Share these on the Charlotte Harbor VCB Facebook page (<http://www.facebook.com/CharlotteHarbor>);
  - If your business is located in a coastal area, install a webcam to broadcast current conditions (and inform the Charlotte Harbor VCB).
  - VISIT FLORIDA, the state's official tourism marketing corporation, has launched Florida Live, [www.FloridaLive.com](http://www.FloridaLive.com), a social media platform where users are encouraged to share same-day Florida images through Facebook. The Charlotte Harbor VCB encourages you to share timely images of our beautiful beaches and water activities on this website.

### **Attract Summer Business**

***ECONOMICAL Summer Escapes*** is an ideal opportunity for accommodations to attract business during this situation. Accommodations can participate by offering vacation packages with local attractions and tourism businesses and/or offering lodging deals as stay two nights get the third free, valid through Oct. 31, 2010. Visit [www.charlotteharbortravel.com/cms/index.php?id=362](http://www.charlotteharbortravel.com/cms/index.php?id=362) to see examples and contact Lindsey Barfield at the Charlotte Harbor Visitor & Convention Bureau at [Lindsey.barfield@charlottefl.com](mailto:Lindsey.barfield@charlottefl.com) or (941) 743-1900 to participate.

### **State of Florida Marketing Efforts**

VISIT FLORIDA is the state's trusted source for travel planning and serves as a resource for travelers to Florida. A travel advisory page has been established ([http://www.visitflorida.com/florida\\_travel\\_advisory/](http://www.visitflorida.com/florida_travel_advisory/)) linking to individual Florida destinations and an interactive map with Twitter feed updates.

All members of the Florida tourism industry should read VISIT FLORIDA's Sunshine Matters blog at [www.visitfloridablog.org](http://www.visitfloridablog.org) for the latest on state marketing efforts including explanation of the \$25 million dollars BP gave the State of Florida for tourism marketing. Some of those funds were given directly to Northwest Florida tourism agencies and the rest given to VISIT FLORIDA to market the State as a tourism destination.

A 10-second television commercial produced for the Charlotte Harbor VCB as part of the \$25 million BP gave Florida for tourism promotion will air with a 20-second VISIT FLORIDA spot in various key Florida feeder markets beginning June 16, 2010.

### **Tracking Loss of Business**

**It is extremely important to track the loss of business due to the Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill.** Individual and business claimants may file a claim in one of three ways:

- Call the Deepwater Horizon response hotline number at 1-800-440-0858
- File a claim online at [www.bp.com/claims](http://www.bp.com/claims)
- Visit one of BP's Claims Centers

**Also, alert the Charlotte Harbor VCB if your business has received any cancellations. BP has asked counties to track the economic loss to the area.** It is important for every lodging business paying Tourist Development Tax to track their losses and complete the Charlotte County Loss of Business Form found at [www.charlotteharbortravel.com/travel\\_update/](http://www.charlotteharbortravel.com/travel_update/) and forward it to Elizabeth Parker at [elizabeth.parker@charlottefl.com](mailto:elizabeth.parker@charlottefl.com) or by fax to (941) 743-2245. BP is requiring these records from accommodations in order to consider compensating destinations for tourist tax lost revenues.

### **Information Resources**

For the latest updates on the Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill, visit the designated Florida Department of Environmental Protection website at [www.dep.state.fl.us/deepwaterhorizon/](http://www.dep.state.fl.us/deepwaterhorizon/).

VISIT FLORIDA, the state tourism marketing organization, Sunshine Matters Corporate Blog for the latest on the Deepwater Horizon oil spill and its impact on Florida tourism [www.visitfloridablog.org](http://www.visitfloridablog.org) and the VISIT FLORIDA Travel Advisory page [http://www.visitflorida.com/florida\\_travel\\_advisory/](http://www.visitflorida.com/florida_travel_advisory/)

Mote Marine Beach Report, tracking the Deepwater Horizon oil spill impact on Gulf beaches. [www.mote.org/beaches/](http://www.mote.org/beaches/)

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