

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: MAY 4, 2010

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**VOLUNTEER FLORIDA ENCOURAGES FLORIDIANS TO BECOME
COAST WATCH VOLUNTEERS IN RESPONSE TO THE DEEPWATER HORIZON
OIL SPILL**

~Coast Watch volunteers will serve as on-the-ground observers, reporting oiled wildlife, vegetation, and shorelines to the appropriate authorities.~

TALLAHASSEE – The Governor’s Commission on Volunteerism and Community Service (Volunteer Florida) is encouraging individuals who live along or are visiting coastal communities to watch for oiled wildlife, vegetation, and beaches by becoming a Coast Watch volunteer. Similar to the Crime Watch program, Coast Watch volunteers are community members who know the daily wildlife and plants that exist on their local beach. The “Coast Watchers” will assist BP, the state of Florida and partnering organizations in identifying beaches that need attention.

Coast Watchers will work within the coastal communities where they live or visit and commit to do the following:

- Report **injured** or **oiled animals** to the **Wildlife Distress Hotline: 1-866-557-1401**
- Report **oiled shoreline** to: **1-866-448-5816**
- Report a change in **Air Quality** to: <http://www.epa.gov/bpspill/>

Coast Watchers are **not permitted** to enter off-limit areas to obtain observations and must not make contact with oiled wildlife, vegetation, and beaches due the health concerns associated with contact.

Citizens wanting to become a Coast Watcher do not require any special training or registration. However, they should be conscious of the coastal environment in their community. If a Coast Watcher observes contaminated wildlife, vegetation, or shoreline, it should be reported immediately to the numbers above.

For up-to-date volunteer opportunities regarding the oil spill, visit www.volunteerflorida.org.

The Governor’s Commission on Volunteerism and Community Service, Volunteer Florida, was established in 1994 by the Florida Legislature to administer grants under the National and Community Service Trust Act of 1993. The Commission grants funds to Florida AmeriCorps and National Service programs; encourages volunteerism for everyone from youths to seniors to people with disabilities; coordinates volunteerism in disaster preparedness, response and recovery; and helps to strengthen and expand volunteer engagement.

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