

Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill Incident Volunteer Information

How You Can Help Manatee County's Beaches and Coastal Habitat

The recent offshore oil incident has yet to impact Manatee County, and there has been no impact to public safety or wildlife. Manatee County's staff has formed a team to address and monitor the situation and has created a strategy to combat any potential issues that might arise in the local waterways or beaches.

The public response to assist with help, both in the form of volunteer labor and monetary donations, has been overwhelming. Each day, County offices receive requests from citizens who are interested in assisting with the volunteer effort. In order to help those who would like to help, Manatee County has developed this informational handout detailing the volunteer needs for this situation.

How to Become a Volunteer

- **Register with Volunteer Florida** at www.volunteerflorida.org. We recommend that all interested individuals register with this site, even if you are already a member of another volunteer organization as Volunteer Florida is the state coordinator and will distribute information.
- **Get affiliated.** Volunteer Florida will provide you with a list of **local** organizations once you register. Or, if you already are a volunteer with a local organization (such as the Natural Resources Department, Wildlife Inc. or Volunteer Manatee) contact your organization to be added to their list of volunteers for oil spill related needs. You can also contact Melissa.nell@mymanatee.org for more information on local organizations in need of volunteer help.
- **Get informed.** Check out www.deepwaterhorizonresponse.com to learn more about the oil spill and response efforts. Visit www.mymanatee.org to view the status of the situation locally and to obtain downloadable resources and state situation reports.



Top: Hermit crab Bottom: Volunteers conduct a marine life survey
Photos by Charles Taylor at Robinson Preserve

What Happens Next?

The biggest questions on most of our minds are "what happens next?" and "when will volunteers be needed?"

At the current moment, volunteers are encouraged to apply so that when the call to action is given we will have a standing team that is ready and able to act. The U.S. Coast Guard Sector St. Pete and Volunteer Florida are working with Manatee County to coordinate the volunteer effort. Volunteers ARE needed. But we do not need to act yet.



Volunteer Assistance FAQ

Frequently Asked Questions about Volunteering for the Oil Response

Will I be handling oil?

NO. Volunteers will not be put into situations where they will be “suing up” to collect oil. At this time, that role will be filled by paid contractors who have received specialized safety training in hazardous materials.

What type of training will I need?

Training will be dependent upon the role you are going to fill. Training may be provided either by the agency you are affiliated with or, if it is for a specialized position such as a Coast Watcher, it may be available online.

Can I work with wildlife?

There are a number of organizations that help wildlife within Manatee County. You can volunteer with one of these organizations, which will have their own training protocol. Volunteers may not be able to handle oiled wildlife, however. You can also help wildlife by reporting oiled wildlife using the Wildlife Hotline at 1-866-557-1401.

What types of positions will be available?

The positions for volunteer help during any potential Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill Cleanup will primarily consist of pre-oiling activities and support roles. Available positions will include pre-impact shoreline cleanups, delivery/runners, and coast watchers.

Can I help clean the beaches and shorelines now?

The U.S. Coast Guard has requested that volunteers wait to clean the beaches until arrival of oil on our shores is imminent. “Cleaning” does not simply mean removing trash but, to be an effective deterrent entails the elimination of all debris including the rack line and other materials that have washed onshore. Pre-emptive cleaning in this manner eliminates any wildlife habitat and forage values the rack line could have provided to our nesting shorebirds and to other wildlife. It is also our critical shorebird nesting season in Florida. Volunteer presence during beach cleanups, while well-meaning, could have an impact on the nesting birds, causing mothers to abandon nests and damage to nesting sites resulting in chick mortality and damage to all nesting sites.

What can I do to help out now?

PLENTY. Register to become a volunteer and select your affiliated organization. You can also become a **Coast Watcher** and help to monitor changes in the local waterways and shorelines. To find out more please visit www.volunteerfloridadisaster.org/#coast. There are lots of other opportunities, too, in Manatee County’s natural places helping with everything from trash and exotic plant removal to installing native plants to assisting with scientific bird and marine life counts. To find out more about how you can help please contact



Photo by Dotty Motta

