NRDC
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NATURAL RESOURCES DEFENSE COUNCIL

October 12, 2010

Robert Dudley
CEO, BP
1101 New York Avenue Northwest, Suite 700
Washington, DC 20005

Dear Mr. Dudley:

We are writing to express our continuing interest in, and concerns about, the $500 million BP has pledged to spend on independent scientific research on the impacts of the Gulf disaster, separate from any work related to the Natural Resource Damage Assessment (NRDA). As you know, we were pleased when BP announced this funding in the spring, although we raised questions about the extent the research would be truly independent. We appreciated the information BP officials provided to us in late June about the plans that had then been put on hold pending conversations with the Gulf governors.

We look forward to our upcoming briefing on BP's current plans for disbursing the remaining funds, but we are disturbed by press reports indicating that politics may unduly constrain the distribution of the money. The impacts of the disaster raise a host of scientific questions, many of them unprecedented—such as the effects of the deepwater use of dispersants—and they need to be addressed by the best scientific minds available. While many such scientists may reside at institutions in the Gulf, no region has a monopoly on scientific expertise. The Gulf will benefit most from getting the best scientific guidance. Economic recovery needs to be part of the plan to restore the Gulf—and BP must contribute to such efforts—but not through biasing the dissemination of funds for scientific research.

We hope BP will set up a fair, open and unbiased system for distributing research funding that will be based on ensuring that the Gulf will benefit by getting the most credible, thoughtful scientific results.

Again, we look forward to meeting with BP officials. It is urgent that research begin promptly and be conducted well.

Sincerely,

Peter Lehner
Executive Director

www.nrdc.org
1200 New York Avenue, NW, Suite 400
Washington, DC 20005
TEL 202 289-6868
FAX 202 289-1060
NEW YORK • SAN FRANCISCO • LOS ANGELES • BEIJING • CHICAGO

cc: The Honorable Carol Browner, Director, White House Office of Energy and Climate Change Policy
The Honorable John Holdren, Director, White House Office of Science and Technology Policy
The Honorable Eric Holder, Attorney General
The Honorable Janet Napolitano, Secretary of Homeland Security
The Honorable Ken Salazar, Secretary of the Interior
The Honorable Jane Lubchenco, Under Secretary for Oceans and Atmosphere and NOAA
The Honorable John Rockefeller, Chair, Senate Commerce, Science, and Transportation Committee
The Honorable Kay Bailey Hutchinson, Ranking Member, Senate Commerce, Science, and Transportation Committee
The Honorable Jeff Bingaman, Chair, Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee
The Honorable Lisa Murkowski, Ranking Member, Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee
The Honorable Barbara Boxer, Chair, Senate Environment and Public Works Committee
The Honorable James Inhofe, Ranking Member, Senate Environment and Public Works Committee
The Honorable Henry Waxman, Chair, House Energy and Commerce Committee
The Honorable Joe Barton, Ranking Member, House Energy and Commerce Committee
The Honorable Nick Rahall, Chair, House Natural Resources Committee
The Honorable Doc Hastings, Ranking Member, House Natural Resources Committee
The Honorable Bart Gordon, Chair, House Science and Technology Committee
The Honorable Ralph Hall, Ranking Member, House Science and Technology Committee
The Honorable Edward Markey, Chair, House Select Committee on Energy Independence and Global Warming
The Honorable James Sensenbrenner, Ranking Member, House Select Committee on Energy Independence and Global Warming
David Nagel, Vice President of Government Affairs, BP
Ellen Williams, Chief Scientist, BP