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SkyTruth, SouthWings and Waterkeeper Alliance Launch Gulf of Mexico Monitoring Consortium

Shepherdstown, WV. - Today, [SkyTruth](#), [SouthWings](#), and [Waterkeeper Alliance](#) launch the **Gulf Monitoring Consortium**: an innovative partnership that is systematically monitoring oil pollution in the Gulf of Mexico with satellite images and mapping, aerial reconnaissance and photography, and on-the-water observation and sampling. This unique effort led by three non-profit organizations will collect and publish images, observations and sampling data of the Gulf of Mexico to rapidly respond to reported and suspected oil pollution incidents. SkyTruth, SouthWings and the Waterkeeper Alliance worked collaboratively during the 2010 Gulf disaster to use their unique expertise to bring the truth about the spill to the public. The natural fit of the services and tools of these organizations working together will help ensure that future disasters are quickly discovered and documented, and that the story is fully presented to the public. This newly formed alliance will actively bear witness to current, ongoing, and future oil pollution to fill the information gap exposed since the tragic BP / *Deepwater Horizon* explosion one year ago tomorrow.

During the BP spill SkyTruth, SouthWings and the Waterkeeper Alliance detected and documented an unrelated, [chronic leak](#) from a platform destroyed by Hurricane Ivan in 2004. For several days following an oil spill that came ashore March 20 in Grand Isle, Louisiana, government officials [provided little information](#) to the public on the source or severity of the pollution. Concerned citizens, NGOs and the media scrambled to figure out what was happening, requesting help from our organizations.

“Damaging rumors and speculation take hold in the absence of good information, leading people in Gulf communities still reeling from the BP disaster to fear the worst: another major offshore spill” said John Amos, President of SkyTruth. “And the official government pollution reports, in many cases submitted by the polluters themselves, [don’t match what we observe](#) on satellite images. That’s why we’ve formed an alliance with SouthWings and Waterkeeper, to systematically evaluate reported or suspected pollution incidents in a coordinated approach from space, from the air, and on the water, so we can fill the dangerous information gap that currently exists.”

“Waterkeepers are on the frontline of suspected pollution holding both the government and industry accountable. This partnership allows us to collect and distribute information quickly that might otherwise take us days or even weeks to do so, allowing us to better stand up for our waterways and our communities” said Renee Blanchard, Save Our Gulf Coordinator for the Waterkeeper Alliance and Gulf coast native. “In the wake of the BP oil disaster there is a heightened interest in the number and size of Gulf coast oil spills. Gulf coast communities currently must navigate cumbersome governmental databases often with a large lag time to gather information on Gulf coast oil discharges.”

Of the Gulf Monitoring Consortium, Southwings Executive Director Hume Davenport states, “SouthWings’ volunteer pilots enable agents of change a view of environmental degradation, from a vantage point generally unavailable to non-profit organizations. This Alliance provides our colleagues as well as governmental decision makers and industry executives a go-to resource for accurate information on oil pollution incidents. We believe the data and imagery we capture and compile through this collaborative effort will result in better informed decisions to protect the Gulf of Mexico.”

The Gulf Monitoring Consortium is a rapid response alliance that collects, analyzes and publishes images and other information by space, air and water in order to bring truth to oil pollution incidents that occur in the Gulf of Mexico.

SkyTruth uses satellite and aerial images to investigate and illustrate environmental incidents and issues. SkyTruth’s President, John Amos, testified on the risks posed by offshore drilling at a [November 2009 hearing](#) of the Senate Committee on Energy & Natural Resources. SkyTruth is headquartered in Shepherdstown, WV, and champions the use of imagery to investigate and monitor the management of public lands and waters.

SouthWings enables those we fly to better understand, from an otherwise inaccessible vantage point, the globally significant ecosystems of the Southeast. Through the aerial perspective, SouthWings’ service provides experiential understanding of environmental challenges and opportunities for conservation. This perspective fosters understanding of scale/magnitude, and the relationships of cumulative and compounding environmental effects. We provide a means to educate the public and elected officials, media, community leaders, researchers and conservation organizations.

Waterkeeper Alliance provides a way for communities to stand up for their right to clean water and for the wise and equitable use of water resources, both locally and globally. The vision of the Waterkeeper movement is for fishable, swimmable and drinkable waterways worldwide. Our belief is that the best way to achieve this vision is through the Waterkeeper method of grassroots advocacy.

Gulf Monitoring Consortium Spokespeople:

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