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April 29, 2015

On April 29, the Senate Commerce, Science, and Transportation Committee held a hearing examining impacts and changes in the five years since the Deepwater Horizon oil spill. Senators asked questions about safety and industry standards, environmental ramifications, and necessary changes.

Witnesses emphasized the importance of facilitating communication between emergency responders and researchers so that oil spill response can occur more quickly and effectively. Witnesses testified about the need to establish thorough environmental baselines in the Gulf, Arctic, Great Lakes, and other potential oil spill areas. Dr. Samantha Joye, a professor of marine science at the University of Georgia, explained how good environmental baselines allow for accurate “CSI: Geochemistry” in determining hydrocarbon sources and impacts. Dr. Joye stated that the three major scientific takeaways from the Deepwater Horizon spill are the importance of obtaining accurate flow rates, understanding deepwater plumes, and including biological sedimentation processes in analyses in order to have a fully-formed representation of what happened during and after the event.

Senators expressed concerns about future oil spills and changes made since 2010. Senator Gary Peters (D-MI) brought up the potential for oil spills from pipelines in the Great Lakes. Dr. Nancy Kinner, Director of the Coastal Response Center and the Center for Spills in the Environment at the University of New Hampshire, explained the difficulties responders would face in such a situation, as there are no current dispersants that work well in fresh water and high wind and wave action would prevent mechanical oil recovery. Senator Dan Sullivan (R-AK) raised concerns over the problems of a “one-size-fits-all” strategy for dealing with oil spills. Senator Ed Markey (D-MA) expressed his frustration that Congress had not created legislation based on the Blue Ribbon Panel’s suggestions in the wake of the Deepwater Horizon spill.

An archived video of the hearing is available [here](#).

Source: Commerce, Science, and Transportation Committee
