

Even though the Gulf Coast remains totally focused on efforts to stop and contain the impact of the oil spill, it is also important to note that Alabama's beaches are open for business and, quite frankly, they have never been more beautiful than they are right now.

With Memorial Day weekend signaling the traditional kick-off to summer, the sugar-white sands of Orange Beach, Gulf Shores, Fort Morgan and Dauphin Island are calling.

Not only are our beaches open and prettier than ever, but the entire Gulf Coast economy needs our support, especially now as the tourist season should be ramping up for what will hopefully be a banner year.

Rest assured, everyone from condo owners who depend on their summer rentals to pay the mortgage, to charter boat captains whose bookings right now are more important than ever... there is a diverse group of small businessmen and women who are extremely anxious about what this summer may bring.

Think of all the good times you've had with your family when you head out to your favorite restaurant for a basket of fresh fried shrimp, piled high, along with a bowl of steaming hot seafood gumbo.

Or what about the fun you had on some of the South's most beautiful golf courses, not to mention the treacherous greens of the local amusement park where our kids often look like future pros when playing a round of putt-putt.

From the boutique owners, to the local seafood markets... from the real estate agency to the souvenir store that looks like a giant shark... a ton of memories have been made on Alabama's beautiful beaches and there is no reason why the best memories aren't still in front of us!

Take it from a rather biased congressman... I am privileged to represent some of the prettiest coastline in the world. Come on back down to the beach this summer; everyone is welcome!

Speaking of the spill...

Meanwhile, my offices in Mobile, Foley and Washington remain in daily contact with local, state and federal agencies to ensure all resources are made available to protect our local coastline and environmentally sensitive areas; and that prompt assistance is rendered to those who have been adversely impacted by the spill.

A month after the spill, nearly 20,000 personnel are now involved in the containment and clean-up response – up 6,000 from last week. Approximately 8 million gallons of oil and water mix have been captured from the Gulf, and 364,000 feet of boom have been deployed along the Alabama coastline.

While the oil spill largely remains off the Louisiana coast, Alabama is already feeling the impact in a number of ways. For instance, the spill is significantly impacting both commercial and recreational fishing. In response, BP is processing economic damages claims from the oil spill.

Last Friday, my local staff and I met with BP officials to discuss the urgency of these claims. As of May 19, BP reported 4,462 Alabama oil spill-related damage claims and they have made over \$5 million in payments.

BP has local offices in Baldwin and Mobile counties for those who wish to initiate a claim. They are open daily, 8AM to 7PM. In Foley: 1505 North McKenzie Street (Hwy 59), Suite 104, Foley, Alabama 36535; Bayou LaBatre: North Wintzell Avenue, Bayou LaBatre, Alabama 36509; and in Gulf Shores/Orange Beach: 24039 Perdido Beach Boulevard, Suite 1, Orange Beach, Alabama 36561.

For those who wish to contact BP by phone, you can dial toll free 1-800-440-0858, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

For more information, you are invited to visit my web site: <http://bonner.house.gov/> and click the link "[Gu](#)
[If Oil Spill Information](#)
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Last week, the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) also announced the availability of federal disaster loans for seafood and fishing-related businesses negatively affected by the oil spill. The SBA issues loans of up to \$2 million at 4 percent interest with up to 30 years repayment.

According to the SBA, eligible small businesses include those involved in shrimping, crabbing and oyster fishing in waters affected by the oil spill, as well as small businesses dependent on the catch or sale of shrimp, crabs and oysters; suppliers of fishing gear and fuel; and docks, boatyards, processors, wholesalers, shippers, retailers and other small businesses dependent upon revenue from fishing, recreational and sports fishing small businesses, and coastal small businesses.

For more information, you may call the SBA Disaster Assistance Customer Service Center at 1-800-659-2955 or visit their web site at http://www.sba.gov/service_s/disasterassistance .

My staff and I work for you. If we can ever be of service, do not hesitate to call my office toll free at 1-800-288-8721.