

Evangelicals pray for people economically affected by Gulf oil spill

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WASHINGTON (ABP) — The National Association of Evangelicals and Evangelical Environmental Network set aside Sunday, July 18, as a "National Day of Prayer for the Gulf."

Mitch Hescox, president and CEO of the Evangelical Environmental Network, said he realized a national day of prayer was needed after traveling to the Gulf area a few weeks ago and visiting with fisherman concerned about their future.

"Real people, everyday people, will continue to be ravaged in the aftermath of Deep Water Horizon," Hescox [said](#). "We realize that the oil spew may be ending, but the affects will last for decades."

"Today is a beginning, a new day in prayer, thanksgiving and hope for this human caused disaster," he continued. "The beginning starts where it should start by seeking God in prayer in the National Day of Prayer for the Gulf. This day focuses on how, we the American church, came together with God's children in the Gulf and His creation that is desperately groaning."

"The BP Oil Spill is a slow onset disaster," the National Association of Evangelicals [said](#) in a statement on its website. "As oil continues to spew into the Gulf, the ocean currents spread poisons over a larger and larger area. Oil has invaded the marshes destroying entire ecosystems of living organisms. Even attempts to clean up the mess have created new problems. Those hired for the cleanup are being subjected to health hazards. The

dispersants used to break up the oil are themselves toxic and may be causing long-term damage to the ocean life — fish, shrimp, oysters, and crabs — on which coastal residents depend for food and livelihood."

"As Christians, we are compelled to respond to those hurting from the disaster, and our first response is prayer," the statement continued. "The NAE asks its churches to observe July 18, 2010 as the National Day of Prayer for the Gulf by setting aside time in their weekend services to pray for the people of the Gulf, the Lord's intervention and deliverance, and the impacts of the oil spill on God's creation."

Hescox also announced "The 100,000² Initiative," a goal to connect 100,000 churches with 100,000 hurting Gulf families. He said a game plan for matching up congregations and families would be forthcoming.

In the meantime, Hescox suggested that Christians with vacations planned for the Gulf not cancel or change their plans. "We encourage you to have a sacrificial vacation in the Gulf to support your brothers and sisters," he said. "They need you."

—Bob Allen is senior writer for Associated Baptist Press.