

Gulf Coast Oil Spill

Student Perspectives and Graduate Education in Environmental Engineering

The 2010 *Deepwater Horizon* oil spill off the Gulf Coast of Louisiana was one of the largest environmental disasters in the history of the United States. The spill and its effects dominated the national news for months, and the details of the spill and its cleanup are well represented in the technical literature. By now, we are all familiar with the facts surrounding this event.



Beyond these basic facts are many interesting side plots. People and communities were affected by the spill in ways that were not apparent from the news coverage. In this issue of *EM*, we highlight one of those stories, focusing on a group of university students in Louisiana who furthered their environmental education by studying the spill management and cleanup operations first-hand. The feature articles in this issue were written by some of these students, and their articles reflect the knowledge they gained and their perspectives on the oil spill.

This month's authors are graduate students at the University of New Orleans. In the fall of 2010, they enrolled in an Oil Spill Management class taught by Dr. Bhaskar Kura, who recognized the unique opportunity to use the *Deepwater Horizon* spill as a teaching tool. He asked his students to spend the semester evaluating some aspect of the spill or its impact on humans or the environment. Dr. Kura also recognized the value of having some of the students share their experience with the *EM*

readership, and he has guided them through the process of preparing their articles for publication. You will find an introductory article by Dr. Kura following this message, describing the educational process surrounding his students' oil spill work.

Through these articles you will see the value of using a current environmental crisis as an educational opportunity, which can allow students to gain knowledge through their own observations and experiences. Many of Dr. Kura's students are Louisiana natives, and you will also sense the strong feelings that they have for preserving and protecting the environment of their home state. **em**

Charles E. McDade, Ph.D.

Principal investigator, IMPROVE program
University of California, Davis
cemcdade@ucdavis.edu

Chuck is a member of *EM's* Editorial Advisory Committee.