

May 28, 2010

WASHINGTON, DC – On Friday, Congressman Peter DeFazio (OR-4) called on EPA Administrator Lisa Jackson to prohibit British Petroleum (BP) from using the harmful dispersant “Corexit” in the Gulf of Mexico.

BP has dumped over 700,000 gallons of the petroleum-based chemical into Gulf waters in response to the recent oil spill, now believed to be the largest spill in the history of the United States. While Corexit is one of eighteen U.S. sanctioned dispersants, it is one of the most toxic and least effective products on the market. The dispersant is harmful to human health and ocean resources.

The EPA directed BP to use a less toxic dispersant on May 20, 2010. BP refused to stop using Corexit and continues to release thousands of gallons of the dispersant into the Gulf every day.

“It’s absolutely unacceptable that the company responsible for the worst oil spill in our nation’s history is dictating to the government what chemicals it pours into public waters. It’s even more unacceptable that the EPA is not forcing BP to use the most effective, least toxic dispersant available. This has to stop.”

The text of Congressman DeFazio’s letter to Administrator Jackson is below:

Lisa Jackson Administrator Environmental Protection Agency 1200 Pennsylvania Ave., NW,
Room 3426 ARN Washington
n, DC 20460

Dear Administrator Jackson:

I am writing to urge you to prohibit British Petroleum (BP) from using the dispersant Corexit and demand that the company use a more effective, less toxic dispersant in the Gulf of Mexico.

I was encouraged by the EPA Assessment Directive (Addendum 2) issued on May 20, 2010 requiring BP to “identify...one or more approved dispersant products from the National Contingency Plan Product Schedule that are available in sufficient quantities, are effective at dispersing the oil plume” and have a specific level of toxicity.

Based on EPA’s own National Contingency Plan Product Schedule, Corexit is one of the least effective and most toxic dispersants available on the market. Allowing BP to continue to dump hundreds of thousands of gallons of the harmful Corexit into public waters when better alternatives are available is unacceptable.

BP’s May 20, 2010 letter to the EPA in response to the directive was non-responsive and insulting. In the letter, BP informed the federal government they refused to stop using Corexit, offering poor excuses for failing to switch to proven alternatives. Such a response from a company responsible for the worst oil spill in our nation’s history should not be tolerated.

After questioning BP President and CEO Lamar McKay in oversight hearings in both the House Transportation and Infrastructure and Natural Resources committees, it is clear to me that BP will continue to use Corexit until the EPA prohibits the company from doing so. I urge you to take immediate action to put an end to BP’s defiant and reckless use of Corexit and to replace it with a more effective, less toxic alternative.

Sincerely,

Peter DeFazio

Member of Congress