

BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS ESCAMBIA COUNTY, FLORIDA



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Since last April, the entire county continues to address the consequences of the Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill. The spill, which was geometrically greater than the Exxon Valdez event two decades ago, pumped several hundred million gallons of oil throughout this upper gulf coast region. While I continue to work to ensure that BP does not leave until the beaches are truly cleaned, the real concern remains; that most of the oil has not yet reached our shoreline and sits in pockets on the ocean floor. I have seen this personally on a few scuba dives this past year. I commend our county staff for the expertise they employed. They developed a strategic oil 'booming plan' that was ultimately adopted as an acceptable national response strategy. Today, our local action plan ensures that BP not leave until all impacts are addressed. We have worked hard to clean-up the oil which you and our residents continue to discover. We're making headway. BP recently acknowledged the near-to-shore tar mats on Perdido Key in Segments 6 and 7. They established a precedent through your persistence in getting BP to use equipment from the shoreline to remove tar mats from the on the floor of the near-to-shore waters.

I pledge to you that I will continue to press BP to clean-up the beaches and to compensate citizens and business owners for their fair and rightful share of revenues lost. We knew that long after the media took its spotlight off Pensacola, we would be left with an on-going concern. Oil will continue to impact our shores. A federally-based program sponsored by Congress, with matching funds from BP, is the solution. Their massive effort to clean-up is required. The ocean floor, from the shoreline to hundreds of yards out to sea, should be the primary focus. Focusing only on beach clean-up does not address the real problem. BP said they would not leave until our beaches were restored to the condition it was prior to April 20, 2010. I'm holding them to that. Your days have been long. Your efforts have been tireless; handling a response to a crisis we did not bargain for. Your efforts have not gone unnoticed. I will need your support and ask that you stand at my side when we take this issue as far as we must for resolution. There's a power in the spirit of the people on this coast...and that includes YOU, our Escambia County Team. I'm honored to have you with us as we go forward to protect Escambia's best keep secret, our sugar white sands.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Gene M. Valentino".

Escambia County Commissioner
District 2