

Disaster lurking on our doorstep?

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"Dateline's" recent special, "Disaster in the Gulf," pointed out the magnitude of the tragedy which resulted from the Department of the Interior's mismanagement, beginning with its Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). The Department prepares these reports to analyze risks before projects are approved.

In the EIS the department concluded a spill from drilling for oil in the Gulf would result in: "negligible threats to beaches"; "temporary effects on marine life"; and "recovery in six months to the fishing industry." There was no analysis about the effects of a spill on other species of wildlife. Now we know the department's projections were wrong. According to scientists, the spill is the worst environmental disaster in history.

Speculation is rampant that the Department of the Interior orchestrated the study's conclusions to fit the government's goal of tapping domestic oil resources to reduce the country's dependence on foreign oil. The department's behavior raises the question: how many other Environmental Impact Statements has it created to fit the outcome it desires?

Experts in environmental studies and wildlife management believe the Department of the Interior slanted another EIS, the one for Valley Forge National Historical Park (VFNHP), to suit park officials predetermined intention to kill 80 percent of the deer that they blame for the forest's problems.

These scientists point out that the EIS for the Valley Forge park failed to include information such as pertinent climate data which could explain the forest's condition. Others suggest that this \$3 million plan violates the department's own standards set forth in the Organic Act. Accordingly the Department of the Interior is required to protect wildlife within its parks. The only exception to the rule are instances where animals attack people like the grizzly bears that attacked visitors in Yellowstone National Park.

A world famous expert in wildlife management sees the department's decision to use sharpshooting as opposed to fertility control reflective of its "clear bias against any type of contraception." even though the Pennsylvania Game Commission recognizes it as valid in areas where hunting is dangerous.

The department's decision to put its stamp of approval on sharpshooting in this metropolitan area runs counter to Erie Insurance Co.'s and PennDOT's warnings about deer/vehicle collisions.

According to their findings shooting anything at deer makes them run away in panic. Route 23, Route 252 and Route 422 run through the park and are used by thousands of motorists day and night. Chances of deer/vehicle collisions from sharpshooters firing at hundreds of deer is high especially when shooting could continue for 15 years. Every year hundreds of people die and thousands are injured in deer/vehicle collisions. Although the death of BP employees in the Gulf

is tragic, no innocent bystanders died as a result of the Department of the Interior's misguided projections about the hazards of the plan in the Gulf.

The Department of the Interior could be criminally negligent for the Gulf EIS. Before they are allowed to implement their dangerous sharpshooting plan for Valley Forge, it's imperative we urge our congressmen and senators to use their oversight responsibility to prevent another tragedy: this time close to home.

Betty Madden

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