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Thursday, May 20, 2010

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**Green**

**A Blog About Energy and the Environment**



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May 19, 2010, 8:33 pm

## If You Build It ...

By [LIZ ROBBINS](#)



For 15 years, Kevin Costner has been overseeing the construction of oil separation machines to prepare for the possibility of another disaster of the magnitude of the 1989 Exxon Valdez spill.

Does this evoke his tagline from “Field of Dreams?” It seems that Mr. Costner, the 55-year-old actor, environmental activist and fisherman, was ready for the current spill in the gulf.

Disturbed by the effects of the Valdez spill in Alaska, Mr. Costner bought the nascent technology from the government in 1995 and put \$24 million of his own money into developing it for the private sector.

“Kevin saw the Exxon Valdez spill, and as a fisherman and an environmentalist, it just stuck in his craw, the fact that we didn’t have separation technology,” said [John Houghtaling](#), Mr. Costner’s lawyer and business partner as chief executive with Ocean Therapy Solutions, which developed the technology.

Mr. Costner’s brother, Dan, is a scientist who worked on the project and was also in New Orleans this week.

On Wednesday, BP’s chief operating officer, Doug Suttles, said that the company had approved six of Ocean Therapy’s 32 machines for testing. All boast centrifuge processing technology — giant vacuum-like machines that suck oil from water, separate the oil, store it in a tanker and send the water, 99.9 percent purified, back into the gulf.

“I’m very happy the light of day has come to this,” Mr. Costner said at a news conference in New Orleans. He said he was “very sad” about the spill, “but this is why it’s developed.”

“It’s prepared to go out and solve problems, not talk about them,” the actor said of the technology.

Mr. Houghtaling of Ocean Therapy Solutions said that the company had trained independent contractors and were bringing in scientists from U.C.L.A. to deploy the machines, which were waiting on a barge in Venice, La., on Wednesday afternoon.

The technology was available for use 10 years ago, Mr. Houghtaling said. “These machines have been very robust, but nobody’s been interested in them until now,” he added.

BP officials and Ocean Therapy are working to determine where best in the gulf to test the machines, and if all goes well, the technology will be running within the week, he said. “We just need the green light from BP.”

He said that the largest four machines have the capability of separating 210,000 gallons of oil from water a day, 200 gallons a minute.



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[1.](#)

[Dan](#)

Olympia

May 19th, 2010

7:29 pm

Kevin, you're forgiven for Waterworld. And The Postman.

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[2.](#)

Please fix this

Everywhere

May 19th, 2010

7:37 pm

"All boast centrifuge processing technology — giant vacuum-like machines that suck oil from water, separate the oil, store it in a tanker and send the 99.9- percent-purified oil back into the water."

I highly doubt they take the almost pure oil and put it "back into the water." I think they put the almost pure water back into the water.

Also it would be really nice if the 'Suggest a Correction to This Blog Post' linked page were radically simplified. It has multiple email accounts, a phone and more than five additional links for reporting problems. You should just let us submit the problem to you guys and somebody on your end can figure out where it should go.

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3.

[splashy](#)

Arkansas

May 20th, 2010

4:23 am

Wonderful! At least this is something we can get behind.

Way to go, Kevin! Yay!

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4.

PS

Florida

May 20th, 2010

4:25 am

Having recently been in Venice I can say that there are several other viable technologies being proposed by credible people and everyone has the same complaint: we're waiting for permission from BP. As if more harm could be done. Or as if BP controls the situation.

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5.

swatter

Washington DC

May 20th, 2010

4:26 am

You'd think the people whose jobs this is would be more prepared than an actor, right? Maybe Mr. Costner should be the head of NOAA or MMS? My hat (if I wore one) is off to Mr. Costner.

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6.

Nick Selby

New York

May 20th, 2010

4:26 am

Um, further to the last, it would be good if you'd watch the video you quote before quoting it. (1) The participants in the video say clearly that the machines clean the water to 97%, not 99.9%; (2) Costner didn't say "'I'm very happy the light of day has come to this," Mr. Costner said at a news conference in New Orleans on Tuesday. "I'm very sad about this. But this is why it's developed." - his quote was far less convoluted." If you're going to be mere stenographers as opposed to journalists (no opposing or objective scientific opinion was sought, you know, as would have been done in, you know, a news story), be less sloppy and stupid, please.

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7.

riverat436

Louisiana

May 20th, 2010

7:02 am

If you want to get this spill cleanDr up, BP should put a "bounty" on the Oil. Last week they estimated spending \$450 million on the effort and 400,000 gallon estimated spilled. That a cost of \$112.50 per gallon. I would guess if they told everyone that has a solution to the spill that they would pay \$100 for every gallon of oil recovered, this would be solved in no time. The skimmer boat would be so thick on the Gulf that you could walk to the spill site, Grandmas would be down on the beach with turkey basters and milk jugs sucking this up.

But instead, BP goes to the usual suspects for a solution.

Environmental cleanup firms have the same objective as BP, to make money! They make it by billing the oil companies an hourly rate for each man/trade they have on a clean up project. Thus, their incentive is to keep as many people on the job for as long as they can.

**PAY THEM BASED UPON HOW MUCH OIL THEY RECOVER!**

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8.

Cindy

Arkansas

May 20th, 2010

7:04 am

Why would they need the green light from BP? Does BP own the gulf?

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9.

mo

dc

May 20th, 2010

8:26 am

Seems to me no off shore drilling permits should be given out until the clean up technology catches up with the extraction technology. The only way that will ever happen is for our government to actually govern. President Obama, please put an indefinite hold on off shore drilling leases. This is our public land, public waters. Please protect.

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