

The spill and more shenanigans

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Outta the Zone: The Spill — About the recent oil spill in the Gulf I've heard several of my fellow citizens ask why there wasn't some government agency keeping an eye on the BP's of the world so a catastrophic event could have been averted. The simple response is that there is such an agency and it worked just as it was supposed to.

As reported by The Daily Beast, an "...obscure agency known as the Minerals Management Service manages energy resources on federal land and the outer continental shelf. The mission of the agency is supposed to be to ensure that these resources are used responsibly ... But under the Bush administration, it, like so many agencies, was turned into a plaything of industry leading to numerous ecological catastrophes."

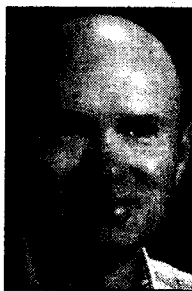
Specifically, the MMS chose to give the Deepwater Horizon project a "categorical exclusion" from the National Environmental Policy Act's requirement for a detailed examination of possible environmental impacts. The New York Times found MMS also simply ignored warnings from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Association and MMS' own scientists that the drilling represented a threat to endangered species ... and a half-dozen current or former MMS scientists said managers at the agency have routinely overruled staff scientists whose findings highlight the environmental risks of drilling."

The Daily Beast noted: "This, of course, was the very essence of the Bush

administration approach to government. When a regulator could be staffed by shills for the industry it was supposed to oversee, it was ... The results were disastrous and we're still paying the price today."

"The hard-core drillers of the right like Gingrich and Karl Rove grasp for the argument that the spill is somehow "Obama's Katrina" — a charge so absurd that even Fox News hosts won't buy it. Meanwhile, new revelations in the New York Times reveal that something closer to the reverse is the truth—the Deepwater Horizon fiasco is yet another consequence of George W. Bush's corruption and incompetence," added TDB.

Greek To Me — I'm sure you're watching the economic meltdown in Greece. Some European nations are pointing at Greece's odd government pension system as a major part of the problem. Did you know if you're a Greek trombone player you get to retire at 50 on grounds that you may have late-career breathing problems. Hairdressers can retire early because they come in contact with dyes and chemicals. Masseurs at steam baths get an early out due to exposure to heat. A policeman gets full retirement at 45 because the job is dangerous. The daughters of deceased army officers could claim their



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father's pension for a lifetime if they remained unmarried. The list goes on. And the Greeks can't figure out why the rest of Europe is not too keen on bailing them out.

Afghan Price Tag — This week the number of Americans killed in Afghanistan reached 1,000. The monetary tab so far is \$345 billion. That number equals

the combined 2010 federal budget for the departments of Health and Human Services, Transportation, Veterans Affairs, State, Education, NASA and Labor.

Texting and Driving — There is no defensible argument on behalf of allowing texting while driving. Still, when the votes were cast on Michigan's no-texting bill, 46 percent of state senate Republicans, 52 percent of state Congress Republicans and 20 percent of congressional Democrats opposed the law. If you wanted a clear definition for "clueless" this would be it.

Ice Cream — If the above isn't clueless enough for you, how about the debate in the Tennessee legislature. They are "considering" a plan that would ban pedophiles from operating ice cream trucks. The key word here is "considering," as reported by the Commercial Appeal newspaper in Memphis. Question: What's to consider?

Odds and Ends — Washington D.C. has the most e-crim-

inals per 100,000 residents, 116. They are followed by Nevada, Washington, Montana and Utah... The USA spent more on health care in 2009 than the combined economic output of the United Kingdom, Russia, France and Brazil... Scientists have found that if you want to react faster when you play sports chewing on cinnamon gum helps because it makes you stay focused. This is why I chew 17 sticks of Big Red whenever I golf; it gives me focus when I'm looking for my golf ball in the woods...

Finally, the world has gone bonkers and I can prove it — my all time favorite TV series is the Andy Griffith Show. I mean, what better place to live than in Mayberry with Andy, Barney, Gomer, Aunt Bea, Floyd, Opie, Goober, Helen, and Thelma Lou?

For the series, the town of Mayberry was based on an actual place, Mt. Airy, North Carolina. A couple of years ago Betty Lou Lynn, the woman who played Thelma Lou, moved from Los Angeles to Mt. Airy to escape the crime in L.A. Well, according to the Mt. Airy News, Miss Lynn recently had her purse and wallet snatched at a Mt. Airy shopping center.

The crook was eventually nabbed, but all this is really disheartening. I mean, it's come to this in America. Thelma Lou is not even safe on the streets of Mayberry. Is that bonkers or what?

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