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Oil Spill Suits Start Drifting Ashore

Whenever we hear about shrimpers, we can't get the shrimp lines Bubba blathered in Forrest Gump out of our head all day. "You can barbecue it, boil it, broil it, bake it, sauté it. There's uh, shrimp-kabobs, shrimp creole, shrimp gumbo. Pan fried, deep fried, stir-fried. There's pineapple shrimp, lemon shrimp, coconut shrimp..." that whole bit.

Shrimp concoctions were on our mind today when we read two new federal lawsuits filed over the oil spill that is currently spewing crude into the Gulf of Mexico after an explosion on one of BP PLC's offshore rigs. Both lawsuits were filed in the Eastern District of Louisiana.

The first was filed on behalf of two Louisiana commercial shrimpers Acy J. Cooper and Ronnie Louis Anderson, who allege that the spill "is causing dangerous environmental contamination of the Gulf of Mexico and its shorelines, threatening Louisiana's sensitive wetlands and estuarine areas" and it "will continue to cause loss of revenue to persons (and businesses) who are being prevented from using the Gulf of Mexico and Louisiana's Coastal Zone for diverse activities, including work and to earn a living." [Click here for the complaint.](#)

Among other things the plaintiffs are seeking "economic and compensatory damages in amounts to be determined at trial, but not less than five million dollars," the suit said.

Besides BP, the suit names Transocean Offshore Deepwater Drilling Inc., which owns the Deepwater Horizon drilling rig; Halliburton Energy Services, Inc., which was in charge of cementing the well and well cap; and Cameron International Corp., which manufactured the rig's "blow-out preventers" designed to stop an explosion.

In the other complaint, a commercial fisherman sued BP, Transocean and insurers on behalf of a proposed class of plaintiffs, alleging the spill is destroying the marine life vital to the fishing industry.

According to this WSJ story, a BP executive on Thursday agreed with a U.S. government estimate that the oil leak in the Gulf of Mexico could be pumping up to 5,000 barrels a day of crude into the ocean, far more than previously thought.

Richard Arsenault, one of the plaintiffs' attorneys, says the spill could eclipse that of the Exxon Valdez. If 5,000 barrels a day leak for 90 days, which is how long the government estimates it will take to plug the leak, the result will be 18.9 million gallons of oil in the Gulf, he says. By contrast, the Exxon Valdez leaked 11 million gallons.

Both suits were filed before the WSJ published this account that the oil well lacked a safeguard device – a remote-control shut-off switch used in two other major oil-producing nations as last-resort protection against underwater spills.

The entire plaintiffs' bar of Louisiana apparently filed the first suit. We're exaggerating, of course, but the list of names at the bottom of the 17-page suit is quite long: Richard Arsenault, Danny Becnel, Camilo K. Salas III and Russ Herman to name a few. Others plaintiffs' attorneys include Robert F. Kennedy, Jr. and The Cochran Firm. We'll update the post if we hear from any of the defendants.

The lawyers on the second suit include James Andry and Los Angeles heavyweight plaintiffs' lawyer Pierce O'Donnell.