

Battle to save Gulf sea turtles from oily death

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A dead sea turtle is seen laying on a beach in May 2010 in Waveland, Mississippi. While BP struggles to finally seal the leaking Gulf of Mexico oil well, an equally desperate battle has been enjoined on the surface to save endangered sea turtles from meeting an oily grave.

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Jane Lubchenco, head of the US government's National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), said Tuesday that some 180 turtles had been rescued so far and that 170 were still in rehabilitation.

"NOAA sea turtle experts are vital members of the incident command's wildlife branch which has deployed five turtle rescue boats whose crews search for oiled turtles," she said.

Lubchenco's figures only relate to the number of turtles that were "visibly oiled" and found alive. Almost 500 turtles have been found dead since the disaster began in April, only 17 of them "visibly oiled."

Most of the dead turtles are still listed as pending cases because their cause of death has not been determined but experts say the number is far higher than would be expected naturally.

Up to 700 sea turtle nests, containing some 70,000 eggs, are in the process of being moved from the Gulf to Florida's Atlantic coast.

And activists are furious that endangered Kemp's Ridley sea turtle hatchlings from Texas nests are still being released by the government into the [Gulf of Mexico](#), putting the baby turtles at risk.

The Center for Biological Diversity, a non-profit group, filed a lawsuit on Monday against Interior Secretary Ken Salazar for not sufficiently protecting the region's endangered turtles and whales from possible [oil](#) spills.

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