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For Immediate Release

May 3, 2010

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**Press Conference Today: 12:30 PM, 4226 Canal Street, New Orleans, LA (office of LA Bucket Brigade)**

## **CITIZEN JOURNALISTS NEEDED FOR OIL SPILL CRISIS MAP** ***Tool Will Show Government, Responders Where Help is Needed Most***

**(New Orleans)** As the massive Deepwater Horizon oil spill disaster drifts toward land, residents of the Gulf Coast can report sightings of fishermen out of work, endangered wildlife, oil on shore, oil sheens, health impacts and other problems using a new tool known as the Oil Spill Crisis Map. The reports, submitted via text message, the web or e-mail will appear on a web based map of the Gulf Coast, alerting officials and the public alike of the extent of the damage. "The Oil Spill Crisis Map compiles and maps eyewitness accounts of the oil's effects in real time," said Anne Rolfes of the Louisiana Bucket Brigade. "This is a tool for all of us to understand the extent of the damage."

Reports can be made and viewed at <http://oilspill.labucketbrigade.org>. Mobile phone users can text reports to **(504) 27 27 OIL**. Reports can also be sent to [bpspillmap@gmail.com](mailto:bpspillmap@gmail.com) and through Twitter with the hashtag #BPspillmap. Eyewitness reports for the map require a description, and location information such as address, city and state, zip-code or coordinates. Citizen reporters can remain anonymous or disclose their contact information. Photos and video can be uploaded via the web.

Tufts University teamed with Haiti residents after the earthquake to use the map to direct disaster relief. The Oil Spill Crisis Map implements technology called "Ushahidi," first used by bloggers in Kenya to display eyewitness reports of that country's post-election violence in that 2008. Meaning "testimony" in Swahili, Ushahidi provides a clear and simple graphical depiction of large events over both time and geography. Reports are sent in by ordinary citizens, verified and then visualized on a web based map.

Recognizing the power of this technology, Tulane University graduate students, Louisiana Bucket Brigade staff and California based Radical Designs have partnered to create the Oil Spill Crisis Map. "This application is the first time that Crisis Mapping is used in the U.S. for a disaster," continued Ms. Rolfes. "We are proud of this work and grateful to Dr. Nathan Morrow and the Tulane students who made it possible."

This use of public testimony is changing the field of disaster management by utilizing reports from local sources. Crisis Mapping thus far has two uses. The first is for emergency response in times of a disaster, the second is to facilitate information sharing, transparency and accountability. Those involved with the Gulf Coast Oil Spill Crisis Map anticipate that the responders to this disaster will use this tool to inform their work.

The Louisiana Bucket Brigade and partners are calling upon residents of the Gulf Coast to submit their reports of the effects of the oil spill. "By mobilizing information from affected communities the immediate purpose is to contribute useful data. As time goes on, these reports will serve as a record of this tragedy, so that others may never have to bear witness again," said Mariko Toyoji of the Louisiana Bucket Brigade.

If you are in danger or witness an emergency, please contact your local emergency response agency immediately. The Oil Spill Crisis Map is not an emergency response service.

For more information on Crisis Mapping, go to <http://www.ushahidi.com>.



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The Louisiana Bucket Brigade is a 501(c)(3) environmental health and justice organization working supporting communities' use of grassroots action efforts to become informed, sustainable neighborhoods free from industrial pollution.

