

Environmental Science & Technology

overlapped with inland areas most exposed to DWH oil.<sup>44</sup> Further, since the spill, dolphin stranding rates have been highest in and around BB compared to other northern Gulf of Mexico areas, and high stranding numbers in BB did not occur until after the spill of June 2010. *Dolphins and Oil Spill*.

Conservation Status

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In the paper, we acknowledge that we do not have health measures from before the spill to document whether or not there were pre-existing disease conditions in BB dolphins. However, our paper presents strong correlative evidence implicating DWH oil as an adverse contributor to the poor health of BB dolphins, and it is highly unlikely that disease of the prevalence and severity found in BB dolphins postspill would have gone unnoticed had it existed prior to the spill. We wholeheartedly agree with the author's comment that continued monitoring of the health of this population over time will help improve the understanding of the influence of pre-existing and continuing stressors.

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*44* *Analysis of the Ecology of Northern Bottlenose Dolphins, Stranding Mortality and Biological Sampling. Final Report, Contract No. 00AS-G4-C-0002, National Marine Fisheries Service, 1993, p. 176.*