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## Steve Scauzillo: The 'Oceans' message now hitting home

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"HAVE you seen that 'Oceans' movie?" asked Reese Halter, conservation biologist from Cal Lutheran University.

Reese phoned me the other day to talk about the need to protect the oceans from overfishing. He's written previously for our Perspectives page, which publishes every Sunday, on the dwindling population of honey bees and the connection to pesticides from farming and backyard gardening.

When I said I had seen the motion picture and enjoyed it very much, he continued telling me his thoughts about the new Disney movie currently in theaters and the topic of the oceans' health in general.

"My colleagues said it (the movie) does not hit hard enough on conservation," Halter said. "But I said step one is to go on wonder. You've got to go on wonder."

Wonderful. Extraordinary. Amazing. Those are a few of the adjectives that describe the movie. There's this shot of the ocean floor teeming with crabs that's both mind-boggling and a bit creepy at the same time.

Seems like Disney didn't have to "hit

conservation hard" (although the movie does include a shot of the massive plastic garbage float that found a "home" in the Pacific halfway between Santa Monica and Hawaii) because the shoreline of the Gulf of Mexico is currently being threatened by the largest oil spill since the Exxon Valdez.

The news channels and newspapers have the "ocean conservation angle" covered. The breaking news from Louisiana sounds the conservation alarm louder than any movie ever could. Unfortunately, whether it is the health of our oceans, or our own underground water pollution, not enough people understand the economic consequences of pollution. Oil spills and spilled contaminants that get into our groundwater are bad for the environment. That's obvious. But they are also bad for the economy.

News reports from Thursday said the oil gushing from a leaking well beneath the ocean's surface is now estimated to be five times greater than originally estimated.

British Petroleum, which operates the offshore drilling well, said they did not know why its shut-off mechanism didn't work. Not very comforting.

Last year, we saw GOP candidates, including former Alaska governor Sarah Palin, chanting "drill baby drill." Now we have BP saying they can drill all right, they just don't know how to stop drilling when things go awry, like the impending devastation to Louisiana's coastline, not to mention its \$1.8 billion a year shrimp industry.

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If the Sarah Palins of the world don't care too much about protecting the environment, they should care about protecting jobs and business.

The commercial fish and shrimp industry of Louisiana is furious, saying the BP spill will cripple their industry. They've begun an early shrimp harvest in a desperate effort to salvage their business before the arrival of the gigantic oil slick, Bloomberg Business Week reported Thursday. Business Week estimated oyster and shrimp sales accounted for \$962 million in revenue for the state. Sportfishing, also bracing for a hit, adds more than \$757 million to the state's economy and 7,700 jobs.

The oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico - set to arrive tonight - brings up the age-old lesson our country never learns: Pollution hurts the economy. Just imagine what a local oil spill would do to California's beach-related tourism industry?

I shudder to think. But soon, we won't have to imagine. We can ask Louisiana.

[steve.scauzillo@sgvn.com](mailto:steve.scauzillo@sgvn.com)

Steve Scauzillo is opinion page editor.

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