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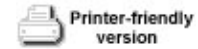
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## Washington Post Exposes BP ties to Eco-Groups, Other Media Ignore Controversy

Nature Conservancy and other left-wing environmental organizations accepted millions from oil giant, broadcast networks silent.

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Business & Media Institute  
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British Petroleum's (BP) reputation has been marred by the April oil rig explosion and subsequent oil spill which is still gushing more than 40 days later. But according to The Washington Post, the reputation of some left-wing environmental groups has also been polluted by the incident.

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"[T]he Nature Conservancy lists BP as one of its business partners. The Conservancy also has given BP a seat on its International Leadership Council and has accepted nearly \$10 million in cash and land contributions from BP and affiliated corporations over the years," Joe Stephens wrote for the Post May 24.

It's not just Nature Conservancy either, the Post found \$2 million in donations to Conservation International and relationships between BP and other lefty activist groups Environmental Defense Fund (EDF), Sierra Club and Audubon.

"The crude emanating from BP's well threatens to befoul a number of alliances between energy conglomerates and environmental nonprofits. At least one group, Conservation International, acknowledges that it is reassessing its ties to the oil company, with an eye toward protecting its reputation," the Post said.

This was front page news at The Post on May 24, but received only silence from other mainstream media outlets including the three broadcast networks. Even after the oil spill, when the networks interviewed experts from two of the groups that had partnered with BP, reporters failed to make the connection. In the past, the research of conservative organizations has been undermined by reporters for such corporate contributions.

NBC's "Today" consulted "scientists" from the Nature Conservancy on May 8 as many coastal communities feared damage from the spreading oil spill. Reporter Mike Taibbi examined artificial reefs off the Gulf coast and spoke with the group who said, "All we're trying to do is restore some of the injustices we have done to it in the last few decades."

Taibbi didn't mention the BP/Nature Conservancy partnership in his report.

Sierra Club's ties to BP also escaped the notice of CBS "Morning News" on April 29, when the network interviewed the group's director of land protection, Athan Manuel, about the oil spill in the Gulf.

Manuel told CBS, "We've always said that oil and gas drilling is a dirty and dangerous business, both in terms of pollution, but also in terms of what damage can be done to workers and to the environment."

"NBC Nightly News" also interviewed Manuel on March 31 (before the oil spill). Manuel expressed opposition to Obama's call for "expansion of drilling" as "too aggressive." "[D]rilling is just a dirty and dangerous business that we think is incompatible with our coastlines and our beaches," Manuel claimed.

Yet in 2007, the Sierra Club joined forces with many liberal environmental groups and companies including BP Wind Energy to create the [American Wind & Wildlife Institute](#).

Sierra Club, Nature Conservancy and many other eco-groups like it have been uncritically treated as experts for years by the mainstream news media. The networks brought their spokesmen on to discuss a range of issues – from global warming, to land preservation. In contrast, conservative groups like the Competitive Enterprise Institute (CEI) and scientists including Patrick Michaels have been undercut by network reporters.

"Public awareness [about global warming] lagged behind, partly because of a disinformation campaign funded by the fossil-fuel industry," ABC's Bill Blakemore said on "World News" Sept. 23, 2007. During his statement, Blakemore aired video footage of a CEI commercial, insinuating that it was "disinformation."

### **Liberal Anger at Green Groups Mostly Ignored**

The revelation that BP was heavily tied to eco-groups like Conservation International and Nature Conservancy angered many of their supporters, yet the networks and other major papers have so far failed to report the relationships between green groups and BP.

The Post quoted Reagan De Leon of Hawaii who had called for a boycott of "everything BP has their hands in," before finding out that the oil company had its hands in the Nature Conservancy. "Oh, wow," De Leon reacted, "That's kind of disturbing."

According to the [Washington City Paper's](#) blog, there was a "deluge" of angry comments from members of Nature Conservancy including Cindy D. who "accused the organization of censoring comments to its blog." One commenter on City Paper called Nature Conservancy a "whore."

City Paper pointed out that BP spent "hundreds of millions of dollars" to "transform its image from that of a dirty old oil company into 'Beyond Petroleum' – a company so environmentally friendly it had transcended oil drilling (and spilling) for happy, sunny and clean technologies such as wind and solar."

They also noted that the environmental groups "trumpeted their ties to corporations, arguing that these partnerships lead to better corporate environmental policies and less damage to the planet."

That's exactly how the relationship between BP and Conservation International was framed by ABC's "Nightline" back in 2002.

Fill-in anchor Chris Bury introduced the segment calling it an "exception" from the stories

about rich and famous people doing “trivial” things. This was different, “rich and powerful and famous people trying to create something of lasting value.”

Bury was talking about the “highly aggressive environmental organization” Conservation International partnering with a number of prominent businesspeople, actors, athletes and others to purchase and protect millions of acreage around the world.

“[T]ogether, with other environmental groups, they have launched an extraordinary, planet-sized experiment,” correspondent Robert Krulwich said. That alliance included the head of British Petroleum, according to ABC.

### **Media Hypocrisy: Conservative Groups Blasted for Ties to Exxon**

In news reports, eco-groups (like all the ones tied to BP) were rarely labeled negatively. Words like “naturalists,” “conservationists,” and occasionally “auto-industry watchdog” have all been used to describe the groups’ liberal missions. On the other side, CEI and Cato Institute fellow Patrick Michaels have been labeled with disparaging terms like “denier” and statements about funding were used to undermine them.

In 2007, ABC’s Bill Blakemore alleged that CEI was behind a “[disinformation campaign](#)” that had prevented more people from understanding the threat of global warming.

“Public awareness [about global warming] lagged behind, partly because of a disinformation campaign funded by the fossil-fuel industry,” Blakemore said on Sept. 23, 2010, while airing footage of a pro-carbon dioxide commercial from CEI.

Blakemore, a longtime advocate of global warming alarmism, didn’t include anyone from CEI or the fossil-fuel industry to respond. According to MSNBC.com, ExxonMobil stopped funding CEI in 2006.

NBC’s primary global warming alarmist Anne Thompson also undercut CEI on Aug. 15, 2007. After presenting the argument that “science” showed man has a role in global warming, Thompson said, “Getting to that point involved fighting interest groups fueled by powerful companies, including oil giant ExxonMobil.”

“The Union of Concerned Scientists says ExxonMobil, gave almost \$16 million over seven years to denier groups, including the Competitive Enterprise Institute,” Thompson continued. The Business & Media Institute’s parent organization, the Media Research Center, was also listed by the Union of Concerned Scientists among the groups receiving funds from ExxonMobil.

In addition to using the pejorative term “denier,” to label CEI, Thompson failed to mention that Exxon had stopped funding the non-profit organization.

A similar media contradiction happened when the news media labeled the grassroots Tea Party movement as corporate-sponsored “Astroturf” or fake grassroots. At the same time, the media have all but ignored the issue of corporate sponsorship of the left-wing [green movement](#).

And one has to [look no further than Earth Day 2010](#) to see the corporate fingerprint on so-called green activist efforts. Major U.S. corporations like Proctor & Gamble, Siemens, Wells Fargo, AT&T, UPS, Philips and Ford all had a major presence at the so-called Earth Day “Climate Rally” [on the National Mall back on April 25](#). That’s [in addition to](#) a sponsorship from NASA, a federal government entity and media outlets, including The Washington Post and Gannett’s USA Today.

Even though that fits the left’s own definition of “Astroturf,” the news media refused to apply the term to those efforts.

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