BP OIL SPILL TRIAL WILL HAVE IMPACT IN MISSISSIPPI

Posted by Evelina Burnett

Mississippi stands to receive millions more in oil spill restoration funding based on the results of a trial that starts today in New Orleans. MPB's Evelina Burnett reports, it's the third phase of the BP oil spill civil trial.

This phase will decide the exact amount of penalties BP will pay under the Clean Water Act, which fall along a range that goes as high as $13.7 billion dollars. Helen Rose Patterson with the Gulf Restoration Network says the decision will be closely watched because 80% of the fines will be used in the five Gulf states, in differing amounts.
Jill Mastrototaro with the National Wildlife Federation says Mississippi's portion could be $1 billion or more, which she'd like to see used for restoring the coast's natural resources and economy. But, she cautions, appeals are likely.

"This process may drag out for many years to come," she says. "As we saw with the Exxon Valdez disaster in Alaska, it took at least 20 years for the civil penalty portion of that disaster to actually come to a conclusion."

In a statement, BP says the Court is required to consider eight statutory factors, such as the company's efforts to minimize the effects of the spill. BP argues that weighing all these together should lead towards a penalty at the lower end of the possible range.