

Let's review the bidding. Since the Deepwater Horizon explosion on April 20, estimates of the volume of oil gushing into the Gulf of Mexico have gone steadily up. They began at zero, then 1000 barrels a day, then 5000 barrels (210,000 gallons), a number that has been repeated over and over in media reports. But that number may be way too low. By May 1, [SkyTruth was reporting](#), based on analysis of aerial pictures of the oil slick, an estimate of more than 26,000 barrels per day. Now, [based on a brief video clip](#) released by BP on Wednesday, experts are estimating that the flow rate may be 50,000, 70,000, or even 100,000 barrels per day — that's 2 to 4 million gallons every day for the last three weeks, or an Exxon Valdez worth every 2.5 to 5 days. BP doesn't exactly contest those figures. The company insists that there is no accurate way to estimate the volumes. But it reportedly [confessed in a Congressional briefing](#) that the flow either could already be or could grow to (subsequent statements made it unclear which was intended) 60,000 barrels a day.