

King Canute famously ordered the waves to retreat from the shore. In a gesture of nearly equal futility, the State of Louisiana is building giant sand berms. Unlike King Canute's gesture, however, Louisiana's is not only futile but harmful. Also, Canute knew his gesture was pointless; his explanation was that he wanted to illustrate the limits of human power. Louisiana is yet to admit that its berms are merely a boondoggle.

Is the berm doing any good? No, according to the [NY Times](#):

"It certainly would have no impact on the diluted oil, which is what we're talking about now," said Larry McKinney, who heads the Gulf of Mexico research center at Texas A&M University in Corpus Christi. "The probability of their being effective right now is pretty low."

So far, the berms have captured only 1,000 barrels of oil, according to official estimates, compared with the nearly five million barrels believed to have spewed from the BP well over all. By contrast, . . . roughly 270,000 barrels of oil were burned off by Coast Guard vessels offshore. Skimming operations, meanwhile, recovered at least 34 million gallons of oil-water mixture.

Is it harmful? Probably:

Some conservation groups and scientists . . . warn that the intensive dredging associated with the berms has already killed at least a half-dozen endangered sea turtles and could kill many more.

They have also repeatedly raised concern that further dredging may squander limited sand resources needed for future coastal restoration projects.

Is it good politics to squander \$360 million on a useless shore defense? Yes indeed!

The berm project has been a boon to Louisiana industry: although many of the dredging companies working on the project have out-of-state headquarters, all have a major presence in Louisiana. The Shaw Group, the lead contractor on the project, is based in Baton Rouge and has been one of Mr. Jindal's leading campaign contributors over the years.

In short, the BP spill may have harmed fishing, but the pork barrel is even fuller than ever.