

# The Palm Beach Post

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## A 'human line in the sand'

By **SALLY SWARTZ**

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Floridians who don't want oil drilling as close as 3 miles head for the beaches this Saturday for the simplest demonstration ever.

For those joining Hands Across the Sand, here's the drill: "Step 1. Go to the beach at 1 p.m. for one hour, rain or shine. Step 2. At 1:30 p.m., hold hands, forming lines in the sand against oil drilling in our coastal waters. Step 3. Leave only footprints." That's it.

Palm Beach County's Surfrider Foundation chapter suggests wearing black to symbolize oil. A Treasure Coast group adds: "Use only approved beach accesses and parking. Create as many lines or as long a line as you wish. Be courteous and respectful to those who disagree with your view."

A surfer/restaurant owner in the Gulf Coast town of Seaside, Dave Rauschkolb, got the idea for a "human line in the sand" last fall to let legislators know that many residents want to protect beaches from near-shore drilling. Next came a Web site — [www.handsacrossthesand.org](http://www.handsacrossthesand.org) — where volunteers can download everything from radio spots and literature to T-shirt designs and banners, and a Facebook page. Chambers of commerce in the Panhandle and Tampa Bay joined. Local governments signed on, and not just those in coastal areas that oil and natural gas companies have targeted.

More Floridians have begun to realize that the Gulf Stream could carry a spill from the west coast and deposit oil on east coast beaches. Broward County, Miami Beach and Key West got on board. The Audubon Society, the Defenders of Wildlife and the Sierra Club are among the environmental groups backing the event. "We have close to 70 beaches around the state, from Jacksonville to Miami, from Key West to Pensacola," Mr. Rauschkolb said, "and more signing up every day."

Last year, the Florida House abolished the ban on drilling in state waters, from 3 to 10 miles offshore. The Senate refused to take up the issue, but it will come up again during this year's session that begins March 2. The federal ban on drilling closer than 125 miles from shore is under attack in the Senate.

Hands Across the Sand, Mr. Rauschkolb said, already has educated beachgoers. "Oil is on the lips of Floridians," he said, "and they don't like the taste of it."

Mr. Rauschkolb is a Surfrider member. The Palm Beach County chapter blocked a beach renourishment project in the town of Palm Beach and now is battling a \$30 million plan to build breakwaters off Singer Island. "We're not a bunch of potheads or burnt-out surfers," chapter Vice Chairman Todd Remmel said. "Many of our members are educated, with backgrounds in science." He joined Hands Across the Sand "because I want my kids to have the same opportunity to enjoy the beaches that I did." Mr. Rauschkolb likes to surf where he can "sit and see the bottom in 20 to 30 feet of water ... the last thing I want to see is oil rigs obscuring the horizon and fouling our beaches."

Hands Across the Sand, Mr. Remmel said, could be "the largest public gathering in the state's history." The organizers' tip sheet has one last suggestion: "Enjoy yourself. It's the beach!"

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