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Will Hair Clippings Help Clean Up the Gulf Spill?

For the sea swells and sandy shorelines affected by the Gulf Coast oil spill, help is just a hair away—that is, if Lisa Gautier can get Unified Command (UC), the federal government's joint response team, to return her calls.

"We're still waiting to hear, but we're not upset," says Gautier, when reached by TakePart. "We think that eventually they will, with this much press. I know that NBC and PBS have already mentioned us to them."

Gautier's San Francisco-based nonprofit organization, Matter of Trust, is coordinating a massive effort to mobilize the nation's hair salons to first gather and then mail their daily hair clippings to regional warehouses where "booms"—basically, piles of hair stuffed into nylon stockings—will be constructed by volunteers. Gautier is quick to point out that animal hair, collected by dog groomers, say, is also welcome.



Photo: Courtesy of Matter of Trust

Once Gautier and Matter of Trust coordinates with UC, these booms will be sent to the effected coastal regions and used to soak up oil.

When reached by TakePart, representatives at Unified Command's Joint Information Center did not know why Gautier's well-intentioned request has, to date, gone unanswered.

While she waits, Gautier recommended two actions—donating nylon stockings and financial contributions—that people can take to help immediately.

"The nylons have to be washed," says Gautier. "They can have runs and they can be any size. They can also be tights or knee highs, it doesn't matter."

"The second thing they can do is donate money. One hundred percent of this money is going to go to the purchase of mesh sleeves, which is a protective layer that goes over these booms." The founders of Matter of Trust are matching each donation up to \$50,000.

"Let's face it, the government is not going to be able to do everything," says Anthony Bellapigna, the business manager of Michael Angelo Hair Studio in Tampa, Florida. "It is going to have to come from the public, from each individual, to get out there and do something."

For Bellapigna, the best way that anyone can help is to simply "get a haircut."