

# Oil and Water

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2019 - present

These photographs come from an ongoing project examining the Texas Gulf Coast. I was struck by the dual nature of the Gulf Coast the first time I saw it. It is an important ecosystem that provides vital habitat for wildlife and simultaneously a site of oil and gas development that is equally vital to the global petrochemical industry.

The Texas Coast is home to thousands of species of birds, fish, reptiles, and mammals. Wildlife refuges and sanctuaries dot the shoreline, inland waters, and wetlands. These areas support coastal species and migrating birds who use the Gulf Coast as a vital resting point on their annual migrations. Attracted by the wildlife and the beauty of the landscape, the coast is a hub for tourism, recreation, and the fishing industry. At the same time, the region is also home to some of North America's largest oil refineries, export terminals, and infrastructure connected to the petrochemical industry.

My photographs emphasize the conflict between these competing interests.

I began photographing the coast in 2019, by visiting wildlife refuges on the Bolivar Peninsula and beach communities including Crystal Beach, Galveston, and Surfside. As I continue developing the project, I am photographing communities built around oil refineries and export terminals, including North America's largest oil refinery, the Motiva facility in Port Arthur. Human communities on the Texas Gulf Coast are supported by the dual industries of tourism and energy development. Residents and visitors recreate in waters polluted by offshore drilling rigs, and commercial fishing boats catch crab, shrimp, and saltwater fish for global consumption. Residents deal with the negative health effects of living next door to refineries and petrochemical plants that pollute the air and water.

Texas feels like ground zero for the conflict between an economy based on resource extraction and our society's growing recognition of the dangers of climate change and the need to use energy responsibly. This ongoing project images the coast in a time of transition – possibly change for the better.