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## Costner's Cleanup Machines to Be Tested in Gulf

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[Michelle Ruiz](#) Contributor

(May 20) -- The "Waterworld" references are already flowing, but actor Kevin Costner's commitment to the [BP oil spill](#) cleanup is more than just a celebrity photo op. After investing 15 years and millions of his own money in new oil-separation technology, Costner hopes to help clean the oil from the waters of the Gulf of Mexico at a faster and more successful rate than ever before.

Moved by the catastrophic Exxon Valdez spill in 1989, the Oscar winner and ardent fisherman bought new centrifugal oil separators from the government in 1995, investing \$24 million to develop the vacuum-like machines for the private sector.



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This device, funded by Kevin Costner, is described as a centrifugal processing device that separates oil from water. Costner hopes the device will help with the Gulf oil spill cleanup efforts.

Fifteen years later, BP has approved six of the machines for testing in the gulf, where they will extract the spilled oil, send it back to a tanker and pump 99 percent purified water back into the ocean.

Costner's business partner in Ocean Therapy Solutions, Louisiana trial attorney John Houghtaling, said the machines could be in the water as early as Friday.

"The technology works," Houghtaling told AOL News. "We know the technology works and we know it's really the only solution."

BP confirmed that it planned to use Costner's machines in the cleanup effort, with spokesman Mark Salt telling AOL News today that "we've agreed to test them."

Costner tapped his scientist brother, Dan, and Houghtaling to aid in the cleanup efforts after the massive spill on April 20, years after Costner first took a keen interest in separation technology.

"He didn't get investors. He did it all himself," Houghtaling said of Costner's multimillion-dollar investment. "His single purpose was that if there was ever going to be another massive oil spill, this machine was going to be able to separate the oil from the water."

That sort of spill came last month, after an explosion on the Deepwater Horizon oil rig located off the Louisiana coast.

"Kevin didn't get involved with this opportunistically ... he's an environmentalist," Houghtaling said. "We know him as a big movie star, but he's a very big hunter and fisher."

Though oil-extracting machines had been in use for decades, Houghtaling said they are slower and less effective than those developed by Ocean Therapy Solutions. He said the new machines not only clean the polluted water but sift out pure, reusable oil.

"What struck Kevin was that we had this same separation technology for years -- how is it that we can go to the moon in the '60s but we can't advance our separation technology?" Houghtaling said.

Costner and Houghtaling demonstrated the machines for local leaders and reporters at a New Orleans news conference last week.

"I'm very happy the light of day has come to this," Costner said of the technology, telling a reporter that he was "very sad" over the spill, but saying of the machinery, "This is why it's developed."

BP said Wednesday that it will attempt a tactic known as a "top kill" as early as May 23

in an attempt to cement and seal the well. The company has pledged to pay for the rising cost of the spill, estimated at \$625 million (and counting).

For Houghtaling, joining Costner's endeavor and funding the advanced centrifuge technology meant recusing himself from potentially lucrative litigation in which he was representing oyster fisherman against BP.

"Kevin won me over and convinced me that we have the ability to change the oil industry," Houghtaling told AOL News. "I believe the industry is going to embrace this technology so that if ever there was something to happen again, there's a safety device out there that can clean it up quickly."

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