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E. Hanover firm leads Gulf wildlife rescue

By João-Pierre Ruth

Dennis Petrocelli Sr., vice president with environmental engineering company **Matrix New World Engineering Inc.**, in East Hanover, said his firm plunged its hands into cleanup efforts in Louisiana for wildlife affected by the ongoing oil spill.



[Matrix New World Engineering photo]

Matrix New World tapped wildlife experts — both those it brought and several it hired from the Gulf Coast region — to work rescuing birds, such as brown pelicans.

"In one weekend, we hired about 30 people," Petrocelli said. He said some 50 people are at work for 80 to 100 hours per week with his firm in the rescue efforts.

Matrix New World workers, along with representatives from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, scour the waters for affected wildlife, Petrocelli said.

Petrocelli said teams of two to three must work together to rescue large birds such as the brown pelican. "In the last few weeks they have collected close to two hundred birds," he said. "The brown pelicans are huge. They are half the size of a person."

He said thousands of birds remain in need of rescue. Matrix New World will remain with the cleanup efforts for the long haul, he said, though the extent of the work will depend on when the oil well is capped.

"There is a lot of oil in the gulf," he said. "It is a very fluid situation. It is day-to-day, hand-to-hand combat out there."

Petrocelli said as the oil spill spreads, his firm is being asked to get more teams in place in Alabama and Florida to rescue more wildlife. "It is not unforeseeable that I could have 100 people down there in a month," he said.

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