Can Mother Nature take a punch and stay standing? If the Gulf of Mexico oil spill is any indication, then the answer seems to be yes. The explosion on April 20, 2010 at the BP-leased Deepwater Horizon drilling rig in the Gulf of Mexico off the coast of Louisiana, resulted in the dispersal of an immense oil plume 4,000 feet below the surface of the water. Despite spanning more than 600 feet in the water column and extending more than 10 miles from the wellhead, the dispersed oil plume was gone within weeks after the wellhead was capped – degraded and diluted to undetectable levels. Furthermore, this degradation took place without significant oxygen depletion. The main degrader was a new and unclassified species of oil-eating bug that apparently lives on the floor of the Gulf where oil seeps are common.

Was this event a miracle or simply nature’s own environmental restoration crews doing what they do?

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