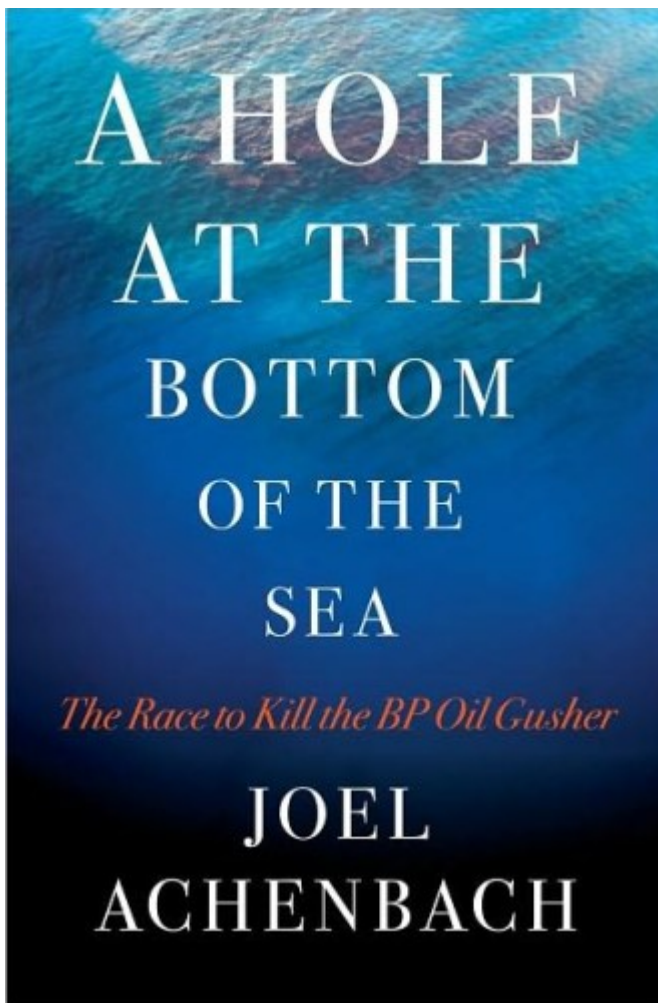


A Hole at the Bottom of the Sea, by Joel Achenbach

Books in the [May 31, 2011](#) issue

In Review



A Hole at the Bottom of the Sea

By Joel Achenbach
Simon & Schuster

Washington Post reporter Achenbach stayed in the Gulf region long after most reporters covering the 2010 oil spill had left, watching the frenzied but painstakingly slow process of blocking the well. Achenbach calls the spill the Apollo 13 of environmental disasters, "every bit as fascinating as it was horrible." The well's isolation, along with its industry-specific technology, meant that only a small number of engineers were able to work on a solution, often improvising maneuvers for the remote deep-sea vehicles, while a nation and government watched impatiently. Achenbach covers the dramatic day-to-day progress of these engineers and delves into the shortcuts, unheralded warning and lazy policy that riddled the oil industry's rapid expansion into deep-water wells.