

NOAA RAR Analysis, 18 Dec. 2007

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Resources at Risk for Belle Isle 1-42 Well Blowout, LA

I. Spill Source Information

This report was prepared at 1145 EST on 18 December 2007. This report describes resources at risk from a well blowout near Belle Pass (29° 31' 20" N, 91° 24' 30" W). The discharge is ongoing and the discharge rate is unknown. Initial estimates indicate that approximately 50 barrels of condensate were discharged.

II. Geographic Region Covered

This report covers Atchafalaya Bay and river and environs. Consult other ResponseLINK reports for information on the potential trajectory of the oil.

III. Shoreline Resources at Risk

Atchafalaya Bay is predominantly composed of freshwater marsh islands. The outer shorelines of the islands include: exposed and sheltered tidal flats; salt, brackish, and freshwater marsh; sand and gravel beach, sand beach, and exposed scarps. Belle Isle and surrounding areas include freshwater marshes and forested wetlands.

III. Biological Resources at Risk

Threatened and Endangered Species

A threatened raptor may be nesting at Belle Isle Lake. Piping plover (federally threatened) are wintering at Eugene Island and the other Atchafalaya Delta Wildlife Management Area (WMA) islands outside the mouth of the Atchafalaya River. Plovers are also wintering at North Point, Point au Fer and along the outer coast of Little Hammock. Louisiana Black Bear (federally threatened) occupy Shell Island and other marsh islands around Little Bay. Rare plants occur in the marsh between Shell Island Point and Cutoff Island along the Lower Atchafalaya River.

Other Birds

Wintering waterfowl are abundant at this time of year. Species present in marshes include: American coot, American wigeon, blue-winged teal, canvasback, gadwall, green-winged teal, hooded merganser, lesser scaup, mallard, mottled duck, northern pintail, northern shoveler, and ring-necked duck. Lesser scaup occur in open waters along the coast and in the WMA with higher numbers likely in the bay.

Wading birds and terns (e.g., cattle egret, tricolored heron, black-crowned night-heron, great egret, snowy egret, glossy ibis, roseate spoonbill, Caspian tern, yellow-crowned night-heron, black skimmer, gull-billed tern, and Forster's tern) may be present year round on marsh islands, but are not nesting at this time of year. Shorebirds may be present, but use of this area is higher during migration (spring and fall) than during the winter.

Fish

Highly abundant fish species present in Atchafalaya Bay and environs at this time of year include: Atlantic croaker, bay anchovy, spot, and gulf menhaden. There are numerous additional species present in Atchafalaya Bay and River, freshwater marshes, inland waters, and nearshore Gulf waters. Several species are spawning.

Invertebrates

Bay squid, blue crab, gulf stone crab, Florida stone crab, brown, pink, and white shrimp, river shrimp, and white river crawfish are present in the area. Several species are spawning at this time of year in the Gulf of Mexico. There are oyster lease sites in the area.

Reptiles and Terrestrial Mammals

Juvenile and adult alligators, raccoons, mink, muskrat, river otter, and nutria are present in marshes.

Human-Use Resources at Risk

The Atchafalaya Delta WMA covers a large portion of Atchafalaya Bay.