



## **NOAA Web Update May 24, 2010**

### **DEEPWATER HORIZON Incident**

**Situation: Monday 24 May** — NOAA scientists are participating on a flow rate task force. The National Incident Command's Flow Rate Technical Group (FRTG) is designed to support the response and inform the public by providing scientifically validated information about the amount of oil flowing from BP's leaking oil well while ensuring the vital efforts to cap the leak are not impeded.

Today, a briefing was held in Mobile, Alabama, to educate TV Weather personnel on NOAA Trajectory Prediction maps and how forecasts are created. There were 22 participants. For further information, visit [NOAA Trajectory Maps](#).

### ***NOAA by the Numbers in the Gulf Region May 24, 2010:***

#### **NOAA aircraft deployed:**

- N42RF Orion (WP-3D), Current Station: Tampa, Fla., Mission: Loop Current study; First Flight: 8 May, flew May 21. During its May 21 mission 62 vertical oceanographic profiles (AXB, AXCP, and AXCTD) and eight atmospheric profiles (GPS dropwindsondes) were collected. The next flight is planned for Friday, May 28.
- N46RF Twin Otter (DHC-6), Current station: Mobile, Ala., Began flying marine mammal surveys as of 28 Apr. Its mission changed on May 5 to multispectral scanning to study oil density and thickness.
- N56RF Twin Otter (DHC-6), Current Station: Mobile, Ala., Mission: Marine mammal surveys, First Flight: 5 May
- N68RF King Air (BE-350ER), Current Station: New Orleans, La., Mission: Coastal photography and mapping, First Flight: 5 May

#### **NOAA and contract research vessels:**

- NOAA Ship Gordon Gunter  
GUNTER completed planned operations on May 22 and transitioned to Pascagoula, Miss. Ship has several necessary repair items to address and departure is currently scheduled for Thursday, May 27.  
Objective: characterize the water column in the vicinity of the main release to inform response and fishery closure decisions, protect human health.
- NOAA Ship Thomas Jefferson  
TJ departed Galveston, Texas at 1400 CDT on Sunday for a mission to deploy US Navy current drifters, profiling floats, and profiling gliders in the vicinity of the Deepwater Horizon oil spill.

The instruments will be used by scientists to monitor the surface and deep currents that are distributing the oil.

- R/V Pelican (NOAA contracted)  
Mission 1: May 2 – May 16  
Supported by NOAA Research Ocean Exploration Program  
Bottom sediment sampling and water column work in the spill area  
Water sampling, new sensors including a Wetlabs fluorometer intended to detect oil at depth  
Mission 2: May 16 – ongoing  
Dr. Nancy Rabalais of the NOAA-supported Louisiana Universities Marine Consortium is leading team to evaluate factors that lead to the formation the northern Gulf hypoxic zone every summer.  
Examining hydrographic, chemical and biological properties along the Terrebonne Bay and taking water and sediment samples for analysis of oil content
- F/V HST, R/V Caretta (NOAA contracted)  
At dock
- F/V Beau Rivage (NOAA contracted)  
May 22: Trawling in closed fishing areas to collect baseline samples for the seafood inspection labs
- R/V Brooks McCall (BP contracted; NOAA scientist on board)  
(Previous missions started May 7) May 21 – 23, May 27 – 30, June 3 – 5, June 9-11  
Evaluating chemical dispersant efficacy and mapping the sub-surface oil plume. Intended to determine the effectiveness of the chemical dispersant that BP is injecting into the subsea plume.
- R/V Ocean Veritas (BP contracted; NOAA scientists on board)  
May 24 – 26, May 31 – June 2, June 6 – 9  
Characterizing water column in the vicinity of the main release to inform response and monitor dispersant effectiveness.
- R/V Weatherbird (NSF/NOAA/USF)  
Water sampling at depth and deployment of glider to provide samples and detection of oil to see if sub-surface materials have entered the Loop Current in dispersed but detectable quantities.
- R/V Walton Smith (no NOAA affiliation, NSF/University of Miami & Georgia)  
May 27 – June 9

Characterizing water column in the vicinity of the main release to inform response and monitor dispersant effectiveness.

- R/V Bold (no NOAA affiliation EPA sponsored)  
Not definite at this point. Notional planning stage.
- R/V Gandy continues work off the Fla. Middle Grounds
- Other NOAA vessels in area include OREGON II and PISCES

***Glider & AUV summary:***

Three gliders are in the water and are operated primarily by universities and institutions through their own funding and/or redirecting other federal funds. All are NOAA IOOS partners and have been keeping NOAA advised of their activities.

***SCAT teams:***

Two aerial reconnaissance teams and three SCAT teams were operational on May 23.

***Fishery closure update:***

NOAA Fisheries Service revised the fishery closure effective 6:00 p.m. EDT on Friday, May 21. The closure now encompasses approximately 20 percent of the federal waters in the Gulf of Mexico. No change to closure on Monday, May 24.

***Marine mammals and turtles (effective May 23):***

Marine Mammals - To date, 19 dead dolphins have been verified since 30 April within the “designated spill area” -none of which have had visible external or internal signs of oiling.

Turtles - The total number of sea turtles verified since 30 April within the “designated spill area” is 209, however, none have died from oil or dispersant.

***NOAA Facilities in the Gulf:***

- NOAA Fisheries Regional Office in St. Petersburg, Fla.
- National Marine Sanctuaries: Flower Garden Banks National Marine Sanctuary, Galveston, Texas; Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary, Key West, Fla.
- National Estuarine Research Reserves: Mission-Aransas Reserve, Texas; Grand Bay, Miss.; Weeks Bay, Ala.; Rookery Bay, Fla.
- Field offices of the Science Center in Galveston, Texas and Pascagoula, Miss.
- Seafood Laboratory in Pascagoula.

