

## NOAA Web Update May 29, 2010

### DEEPWATER HORIZON Incident



**Situation: Saturday 29 May —**

#### ***Response:***

After three days of trying to kill the well with drilling fluids and debris, BP has conceded that the effort has not been successful in stemming the flow of oil from the ruptured riser. In an early evening press conference, BP said it was unclear why the "top kill" failed, but said it was time to move to other options.

The next approach for stopping the well leak is the lower marine riser package approach, or LMRP. The LMRP cap is a newly made version of a device formerly referred to as a "top hat." In this operation BP will cut the bent riser pipe from the blowout preventer and place an engineered cap over the opening. The cap would be connected to the drillship via a riser pipe. The material and equipment required to complete this operation are already in place, but the effort is still expected to take four to seven days. BP believes that the system could capture much of the leaking oiling, but acknowledges that the relief wells remain the primary solution.

OR&R scientists continue to produce daily trajectories of the surface oil. For the nearshore region, moderate southerly winds are forecast to resume and continue through Monday at 5-10 kts. These winds may begin moving oil that has been tending to the southwest from the source towards the Delta. In addition to continued threats to shorelines in Breton and Chandeleur Sounds, model results indicate that some oil may move north to threaten the barrier islands off Mississippi and Alabama later in the forecast period. OR&R continues to track the light tendril of oil near the northern end of the loop current. Overflights to this region have observed streamers of emulsified oil no further south than approximately 28 degrees N, with contiguous, colorless sheens continuing in a narrow band as seen in the satellite imagery. Trajectories for remaining observed oil within this region suggest some of these scattered sheens will continue to be entrained into a counter-clockwise eddy, while some may move into the Loop Current Eddy and persist as very widely scattered tarballs not visible from imagery.

#### ***Assessment:***

NOAA's Damage Assessment Remediation and Restoration Program is conducting a Natural Resource Damage Assessment [http://response.restoration.noaa.gov/book\\_shelf/1959\\_deepwater-Horizon-NRDA-ORR-web-5-7-10.pdf](http://response.restoration.noaa.gov/book_shelf/1959_deepwater-Horizon-NRDA-ORR-web-5-7-10.pdf) (PDF, 89 K). The focus currently is to assemble existing data on resources and their habitats and collect baseline (pre-spill impact) data. Data on oiled resources and habitats are also being collected.

## **NOAA by the Numbers in the Gulf Region May 29, 2010**

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

- N46RF Twin Otter (DHC-6). Current Station: Mobile, Ala. Began flying marine mammal surveys as of 28 April. Its mission changed on May 5 to multi-spectral scanning to study oil density and thickness.

- N56RF Twin Otter (DHC-6) is out of routine maintenance today and departing for a new project on the west coast. This aircraft had been flying marine mammal and Fisheries enforcement missions.
- N68RF King Air (BE-350ER). Current Station: New Orleans, La. Mission: Coastal photography and mapping. First Flight: 5 May. Is expected out of maintenance and conducting a bore site calibration.
- N42RF Orion (WP-3D). Current Station: Tampa, Fla. Mission: Loop Current study. First Flight: 8 May, flew May 21. Aircraft flew mission on Friday, May 28 – media onboard.

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

- Gordon Gunter
  - Reporters and photographers from New York Times, CNN, Associated Press, and the Times-Picayune visited the ship while underway yesterday.
  - Preliminary data results from the acoustic survey are beginning to circulate
- Thomas Jefferson
  - Alongside in New Orleans conducting repairs.
  - Media briefing conducted dockside on Friday.
  - Staging for upcoming acoustic and water sampling.
- NOAA Ships Pisces and Oregon II are alongside in a repair status.

***Glider operations:***

- 2 NavO gliders deployed from the NOAA Ship Thomas Jefferson.
- Glider RU21 – Rutgers/IOOS Glider Zone East.
- Sam – USF / IOOS Glider Zone East.
- Waldo – Mote Marine Lab / IOOS Glider Zone East.
- Seaglider 515 – USM/Irobot (Univ of Washington)

***Fishery closure update (effective May 29):***

- NOAA Fisheries Service revised the fishery closure effective 6:00 p.m. EDT on Friday, May 28. The closure now encompasses approximately 25 percent of the federal waters in the Gulf of Mexico exclusive economic zone.

***Marine mammals and turtles (effective May 28):***

**Sea Turtles**

- The total number of sea turtles verified from April 30 to May 28 within the designated spill area is 240. The 240 turtles verified include three entirely oiled sea turtles that were captured alive during dedicated on-water surveys: two small Kemp's Ridley and a larger sub-adult Loggerhead turtle. They were taken to the Audubon Aquarium where they are undergoing care and are doing well.
- In addition, 224 dead and 13 live stranded turtles (of which three subsequently died in rehab) have been verified. A total of 12 live turtles are now in rehabilitation. One of the live stranded

turtles –caught in marine debris -- was disentangled and released. One of the turtles that stranded dead – a Kemp’s Ridley - had visible evidence of external oil. All others that stranded dead and alive have not had visible external oil.

- Turtle strandings during this time period have been higher in Louisiana, Mississippi and Alabama than in previous years for this same time period. This may be due in part to increased detection and reporting, but this does not fully account for the increase.

### **Dolphins**

- From April 30 to May 28, there have been 25 dead dolphins verified within the designated spill area. So far, one of the 25 dolphins had evidence of external oil. It was found on an oiled beach. We are unable at this time to determine whether the animal was externally covered in oil prior to its death or after its death. The other 24 dolphins have had no visible evidence of external oil.
- Since April 30, the stranding rate for dolphins in Louisiana has been higher than the historic numbers for the same time period in previous years. This may be due to increased detection and reporting and the lingering effects of the earlier observed spike in strandings.
- Strandings are defined as dead or debilitated animals that wash ashore.

### **Coastal Contamination Assessment Activities**

- Florida Keys Shallow Water Coral Field Team has deployed to the Florida Keys and is composed of 2 FTEs and 2 contract personnel.
- Chandeleur Dolphin Tissue Sampling Team composed of 3 contract personnel on team and is deployed to Chandeleur Sound.
- Yesterday, a joint NCCOS and NMFS Southeast Fisheries Science Center team collected tissue samples from 3 dolphins in Chandeleur Sound, bringing the total samples up to 10 for the week. The team focused on northeast end of the Sound and no oil was observed. None of the dolphins encountered showed evidence of oiling. The team will continue sampling in Chandeleur Sound on Friday and then return home on Saturday.

### **Marine Contamination Assessment Activities**

- Plume Mapping & Dispersant Efficacy deployed to sea near the *Deepwater Horizon* site. One FTE on team.
- An NCCOS biologist is en route to the *R/V Brooks McCall* – a vessel contracted by the responsible party (BP) – to characterize the water column in the vicinity of the main release in order to inform responders and monitor dispersant effectiveness. The ship is scheduled to depart Port Fourchon on Saturday May 29.

### **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 and Key Largo, Fla.
- National Estuarine Research Reserves: Mission-Aransas Reserve, Texas; Grand Bay, Miss.; Weeks Bay, Ala.; Rookery Bay, Fla.

- Science Center in Panama City, Fla.
- Field offices of the Science Center in Galveston, Texas and Pascagoula, Miss.
- Seafood Laboratory in Pascagoula, Miss.
- Texas - 13 Weather Forecast Offices (WFOs) and the southern regional office in Fort Worth.
- Louisiana - 4 WFOs
- Mississippi - 4 WFOs
- Alabama - 4 WFOs
- Florida (West Coast to Key West) - 4 WFOs (additional 3 WFOs in East coast Florida and National Hurricane Center in Miami)
- NMFS and NOS offices in Lafayette, La.
- NMFS regional office in Baton Rouge, La.
- National Coastal Data Development Center, National Data Buoy Center, Gulf Coastal Services Center - Stennis, Miss.

***Miscellaneous:***

- Two NOAA communications personnel are detailed to the federal Joint Information Center (JIC) in Robert, La., one communications staffer is at the JIC in Mobile, Ala.