

NOAA Web Update June 9, 2010

DEEPWATER HORIZON Incident



Situation: Wednesday 09 June —

BP engineers have been working over the past five days to optimize the 'top hat' containment device performance. Their efforts appear to be helping. The collection of oil has steadily increased over the past six days and BP hopes to ramp up the collection rate from 15,000 to 28,000 barrels per day over the next week. As collection increases, BP, in coordination with federal response agencies, will increase processing capacity at the Enterprise drillship and a service rig at the water's surface in order to handle the increased load. In addition, BP anticipates adding another 5,000 to 10,000 barrels a day of capacity by pulling oil and gas holes in the failed blowout preventer. This operation involves connecting the rig used during the 'top kill' procedure, the Q4000, via one or more pipes to the holes and could be completed by next week.

Response

Onshore (SE) winds are forecast to continue through Friday at 15 knots or less. Persistent southwesterly winds last week resulted in northward movement of the slick towards the Mississippi/Alabama barrier islands and westward movement along the Florida Panhandle. Models show alongshore currents becoming more westward over the next few days, inhibiting further eastward movement of any oil. However, coastal regions between Horn Island, Alabama and Pensacola, Florida may continue to experience limited shoreline oiling throughout this forecast period. To the west of the Mississippi delta, any remaining floating oil in this region could come ashore between Timbalier Bay and Southwest Pass.

In the offshore zone, satellite imagery analysis continues to indicate patches of sheen to the SE of the main slick. Scattered sheens and tar balls observed in this region may be getting entrained into the northern edge of the large clockwise eddy that has pinched off the main Loop Current (LC). Trajectories indicate that some of these sheens may continue southward along the eastern edge of this main LC eddy, whereas some may be getting entrained into the counter-clockwise eddy to the NE of the main LC eddy. Satellite imagery of the Florida Strait and Gulf Stream saw no anomalies. However, a research vessel confirmed tarballs mixed in with seaweed along the NE edge of the main LC eddy.

Closures

NOAA Fisheries Service is not modifying the fishery closure in the Gulf of Mexico today. Any changes to the closure are announced daily at 12 p.m. Eastern at sero.nmfs.noaa.gov and take effect at 6 p.m. Eastern the same day.

Sea Turtles and Marine Mammals (effective June 8, 2010)

A total of 322 sea turtles have been verified from April 30 to June 8 within the designated spill area. (The designated spill area for sea turtles and marine mammals is from the Texas/Louisiana border to Apalachicola, Florida.) Between Monday, June 7 and Tuesday, June 8, 7 turtle strandings were verified;

all were dead (four in Mississippi, two in Louisiana, and one in Alabama. One from Louisiana had visible external oil on it). Thirty heavily oiled sea turtles have been captured in the on-water turtle search and rescue operation by NOAA, the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, and other partners working under the Unified Command. Twenty-five of those captured turtles are in rehabilitation at Audubon Aquarium in New Orleans, two turtles were collected dead and three captured alive subsequently died at the aquarium. A total of 37 stranded or captured turtles have had visible evidence of external oil. These include the 30 captured turtles from the on-water operation, four live stranded sea turtles (two caught in skimming operations) and three dead stranded sea turtles. All others have not had visible evidence of external oil.

Of the 322 turtles verified from April 30 to June 8, a total of 270 stranded turtles were found dead, 22 stranded alive. Three of those subsequently died. Three live stranded turtles have been released, including two that were found in Mississippi and released after rehabilitation in Ten Thousand Islands, Florida. There are 41 turtles in rehabilitation. 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.

From April 30 to June 8, 38 stranded dolphins have been verified in the designated spill area. Of this, 36 dolphins stranded dead and two stranded alive. One died on the beach and another that stranded in Florida was euthanized. So far, two of the 38 stranded dolphins had evidence of external oil. However, we are unable at this time to determine whether the animals were externally oiled before or after death. Since April 30, the stranding rate for dolphins in Louisiana, Mississippi, and Alabama has been higher than the historic numbers for the same time period in previous years. In part, this may be due to increased detection and reporting and the lingering effects of an earlier observed spike in strandings for the winter of 2010. A stranding is defined as a dead or debilitated animal that washes ashore or is found in the water.

Assessment

NOAA's Damage Assessment, Remediation, and Restoration Program (DARRP) is conducting a [Natural Resource Damage Assessment](#) (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.