

NOAA Web Update June 16, 2010

DEEPWATER HORIZON Incident



Situation: Wednesday 16 June —

BP succeeded today in collecting oil and gas through a second containment system attached to the Deepwater Horizon failed blow out preventer (BOP). The new system is connected directly to ports on the BOP and carries oil and gas to the Q4000 vessel at the surface where it is flared using a clean-burning system. The Lower Marine Riser Package (LMRP) containment system continues to collect around 15,000 bbls/day. BP previously estimated that the new containment system may collect between 5-10,000 additional bbls/day and expects to have a more accurate collection rate soon. Information on the volume of oil collected from both containment systems will be posted twice daily on the [BP Web site](#).

Clean-up operations at the surface and on shore are ongoing. There have been over 200 in-situ burns of nearly 5.20 million gallons of oil. Over 5,000 response vessels and 95 aircraft are deployed, and over 400 skimmers have collected more than 21.1 million gallons of oily water. Dispersants continue to be released and boom staged. Shoreline Cleanup and Assessment Technique (SCAT) teams are supporting cleanup of shorelines in Louisiana, Alabama, Mississippi, and Florida.

Trajectories

Winds are forecast to be relatively weak (5-8 knots) and predominantly SW/W through Thursday, then becoming NW at 6-9 knots on Friday. Trajectories indicate continued movement of the slick to the NE over the next few days. Eastward alongshore currents will continue to move the oil east along the Florida coast. Coastal regions between Dauphin Island, Alabama and Panama City, Florida are threatened by shoreline contacts within this forecast period. A morning overflight reported scattered sheens and tarballs south of the Chandeleur Islands; this region is also threatened by shoreline contacts within this forecast period.

Closures

NOAA modified the commercial and recreational fishing closure in the oil-affected portions of the Gulf of Mexico today. See the [Southeast Fishery Bulletin, June 16, 2010](#) (PDF; 230K) for map and information. The closure measures 80,806 sq mi (209,286 sq km), or about 33% of the Gulf of Mexico exclusive economic zone. The majority of federal waters in the Gulf of Mexico are open to commercial and recreational fishing. 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 15, 2010)

The NOAA Ship *Pisces* reported a dead 25-foot sperm **whale** was located 150 miles due south of Pascagoula, Mississippi and approximately 77 miles due south of the spill site. The whale was

decomposed and heavily scavenged. Samples of skin and blubber will be analyzed. Sperm whales are listed as an endangered species.

A total of 449 **sea turtles** have been verified from April 30 to June 15 within the designated spill area from the Texas/Louisiana border to Apalachicola, Florida. Between Monday, June 14 and Tuesday, June 15, 12 turtle strandings were verified. The on-water turtle rescue operation led by NOAA, the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, and other partners working under the Wildlife Branch of the Unified Command captured 7 heavily-oiled turtles Tuesday and brought them ashore for rehabilitation at the Audubon Nature Institute outside New Orleans. There are now 85 sea turtles in rehabilitation centers. These include 60 heavily-oiled sea turtles captured as part of the on-water rescue operation and 25 turtles that stranded alive. A total of 75 stranded or captured turtles have had visible evidence of external oil since verifications began on April 30. These include the 66 captured or collected turtles from the on-water operation (60 live turtles, 3 collected dead and 3 that died in rehabilitation), 5 live stranded turtles (2 caught in skimming operations), and 4 dead stranded sea turtles. All others have not had visible evidence of external oil.

Of the 449 turtles verified from April 30 to June 15, a total of 350 stranded turtles were found dead, 33 stranded alive. Four of those subsequently died. Four live stranded turtles were released, and 25 live stranded turtles are being cared for at rehabilitation centers. Turtle strandings during this time period have been much higher in Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, and the Florida Panhandle 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 15, 45 stranded **dolphins** have been verified in the designated spill area, an increase of 2 (both documented in Mississippi) verified since June 14. Of the 45, 43 dolphins stranded dead and 2 stranded alive. One of those dolphins died on the beach and the other that stranded alive in Florida was euthanized. So far, 2 of the 45 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, Alabama and the Florida Panhandle 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. NOAA and its partners are analyzing the cause of death for the dead stranded and dead captured sea turtles and the stranded marine mammals.

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.