

NOAA Web Update June 18, 2010

DEEPWATER HORIZON Incident



Situation: Friday 18 June

Response

Over 25,000 barrels of oil were recovered yesterday. The Enterprise is now producing above what was originally anticipated.

More than 40 Shoreline Cleanup Assessment Teams (SCAT)—federal, state and BP officials are working to assess and determine how cleanup will be conducted, and oversee cleanup operations—continue to monitor and cleanup shorelines along the Alabama, Louisiana, Mississippi, and Florida coastlines.

Light variable winds over the next few days should slow oil movement to the east.

OR&R's modeling team continues to generate daily trajectories for the nearshore and offshore surface oil. Overflights are also conducted on a daily basis (weather permitting) to provide field verification of model trajectories. Please see GeoPlatform.gov/gulfresponse for further information on the federal response to the Deepwater Horizon Incident.

Trajectories

Recent satellite imagery analysis no longer shows the persistent patches of sheen to the S-SE of the main slick. However, non-recoverable sheens and tar balls previously observed in these regions may have been entrained into the large clockwise eddy (Eddy Franklin) that has pinched off the main Loop Current (LC). Trajectories indicate that most of these sheens will continue to move clockwise in Eddy Franklin. The connection between the spill source and Eddy Franklin has been cut off due to a change in the currents. The oil will biodegrade and photo-oxidize over the time frame of weeks to months. No recoverable oil is expected to enter the Florida current over the next 72 hours.

The Loop Current is an area of warm water that comes up from the Caribbean, flowing past the Yucatan Peninsula and into the Gulf of Mexico. It generally curves east across the Gulf and then flows south parallel to the west Florida coast. An eddy is water that rotates.

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 17, 2010)

The NOAA Ship *Pisces* reported a dead 25-foot sperm **whale** that was located 150 miles due south of Pascagoula, Mississippi and approximately 77 miles due south of the spill site earlier this week. The whale was decomposed and heavily scavenged. Samples of skin and blubber will be analyzed. Sperm whales are the only endangered resident cetacean in the Upper Gulf of Mexico.

A total of 469 **sea turtles** have been verified from April 30 to June 17 within the designated spill area from the Texas/Louisiana border to Apalachicola, Florida. Between Wednesday, June 16 and Thursday, June 17, 8 turtle strandings were verified (one dead oiled turtle in Alabama, one dead in Louisiana, three live and three dead in Mississippi). There are now 95 sea turtles in rehabilitation centers. These include 66 heavily-oiled sea turtles captured as part of the on-water rescue operation and 29 turtles that stranded alive. A total of 83 stranded or captured turtles have had visible evidence of external oil since verifications began on April 30. These include the 72 captured or collected turtles from the on-water operation (66 live turtles, 3 collected dead and 3 that died in rehabilitation), seven live stranded turtles (two caught in skimming operations), and four dead stranded sea turtles. All others have not had visible evidence of external oil.

Of the 469 turtles verified from April 30 to June 17, a total of 360 stranded turtles were found dead, 37 stranded alive. Four of those subsequently died. Four live stranded turtles were released, and 29 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 17, 46 stranded **dolphins** have been verified in the designated spill area. On Thursday, responders located a dolphin off of Florida, classified as stranded because it was trapped by boom. The responders moved the outer boom so the dolphin could swim out on its own. There was no visible oil on the dolphin or in the area. The dolphin was classified as oiled because there was oil on the outside of the two booms. Of the total 46 stranded dolphins, 43 dolphins stranded dead, three stranded alive. Two of the live strandings died. Visible evidence of external oil was found on two dolphins. 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.