# NOAA Web Update June 20, 2010
# DEEPWATER HORIZON Incident

## Situation: Sunday 20 June –

Under the direction of the federal government, BP continues to capture some oil and burn gas at the surface using its containment dome technique.

In addition to the *Discoverer Enterprise*, which is linked by the riser pipe to the wellhead, a second recovery vessel, the *Q4000*, continues to flare off additional oil and gas being brought up through the choke and kill lines—a method that was also put in place at the government's direction.

The *Development Driller III* continues to drill the first relief well to a depth of approximately 11,000 feet below the sea floor, and crews have begun the process of cementing and casing the well liner. The *Development Driller II* has drilled the second relief well—a redundancy measure taken at the direction of the administration—to a depth of approximately 5,000 feet below the sea floor.

### Response

OR&R's modeling team continues to generate daily trajectories for the nearshore 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.

The offshore trajectory maps will be suspended because the northern end of the Loop Current has been pinched off into a large eddy (Eddy Franklin), so there is no clear path for oil to enter the Loop Current from the source. Also, there have been no reports of recoverable oil in the Loop Current or Eddy Franklin, and the oil has moved to the north and away from the Eddy Franklin. We will continue to monitor the area with overflights, vessel observations, and satellite analysis. When the threat of shoreline impacts to the Florida Keys increases, we will resume producing the offshore trajectory maps.

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.

### Trajectories

Winds are forecast to continue to be relatively light (less than 10 knots) and variable this weekend, then become more persistently onshore (SE) Monday night through Tuesday. Trajectories indicate continued slow movement of the slick to the east. Coastal regions between Dauphin Island, Alabama and Panama City, Florida continue to be threatened by shoreline contacts within this forecast period. More persistent SE winds later in the forecast period will begin to increase the threat of shoreline contacts to the Chandeleur Islands and the Mississippi Delta.

## Closures

NOAA Fisheries Service is not modifying the fishery closure in the Gulf of Mexico today. The June 16 closure is still in effect. 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 19, 2010)

A total of 494 **sea turtles** have been verified from April 30 to June 19 within the designated spill area from the Texas/Louisiana border to Apalachicola, Florida. Between Friday, June 18 and Saturday, June 19, 8 turtle strandings were verified (one live turtle was discovered by Mississippi Marine Patrol in a boarding of a shrimp fishing vessel, 4 dead turtles were found in Mississippi, two dead turtles in Alabama, and one dead turtle in Louisiana). The Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries captured 6 live oiled turtles during offshore bird and turtle surveys. There are now 103 sea turtles in rehabilitation centers. These include 73 heavily-oiled sea turtles captured as part of on-water survey and rescue operations, and 30 turtles that stranded alive, including the one found by Mississippi Marine Patrol. A total of 90 stranded or captured turtles have had visible evidence of external oil since verifications began on April 30. These include the 79 captured or collected turtles from on-water operations (73 live turtles, 3 collected dead and 3 found alive that died in rehabilitation), six live stranded turtles (two caught in oil skimming operations), and five dead stranded sea turtles. All others have not had visible evidence of external oil.

Of the 494 turtles verified from April 30 to June 19, a total of 377 stranded turtles were found dead, 38 stranded alive. Four of those subsequently died. Four live stranded turtles were released, and 30 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.

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 earlier last 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.

From April 30 to June 19, 49 stranded **dolphins** have been verified in the designated spill area. This includes a live, unoiled dolphin that stranded in Louisiana on Saturday and was taken to Audubon Aquarium for rehabilitation. Another dead stranded dolphin from Mississippi was verified on Saturday. On Thursday, responders freed a dolphin off Florida that was caught between booms; it was classified as live stranded. 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 49 stranded dolphins, 45 dolphins stranded dead, four dolphins stranded alive and two of those have subsequently died, one on the beach and the other euthanized. The other two include the one in rehab found Saturday and the one freed from the booms. Visible evidence of external oil was found on the two that stranded alive and subsequently died. 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.