



ROLL OVER FOR MORE!



Site Search Search Local Business Listings

Search for keywords, people, locations, obituaries, Web ID and more.



Brought to you by:



- Home
- News
- Weather
- Sports
- Entertainment
- Living
- Interact
- Jobs
- Autos
- Real Estate
- Rentals
- Classified Ads
- News
- Crime
- La. Politics
- Education
- Opinions
- Business
- Northshore
- Videos & Photos
- Obituaries
- Katrina Archive

Top Stories



Share your Jack-O-Lantern photos



Gleeks, this page is for you!



Video: TP entertainment writers' weekend hot picks

Home > 2010 Gulf of Mexico Oil Spill > Breaking News

Massive stretches of weathered oil spotted in Gulf of Mexico

Published: Saturday, October 23, 2010, 11:37 AM Updated: Saturday, October 23, 2010, 11:42 AM



Bob Marshall, The Times-Picayune Follow

Share this story

Story tools

Just three days after the U.S. Coast Guard admiral in charge of the BP oil spill cleanup declared little recoverable surface oil remained in the Gulf of Mexico, Louisiana fishers Friday found miles-long strings of weathered oil floating toward fragile marshes on the Mississippi River delta.



The discovery, which comes as millions of birds begin moving toward the region in the fall migration, gave ammunition to groups that have insisted the government has overstated clean-up progress, and could force reclosure of key fishing areas only recently reopened.

Enlarge Matthew Hinton, The Times-Picayune

MATTHEW HINTON / THE TIMES-PICAYUNE A boat travels through oil that was spotted in West Bay just west of the Southwest Pass of the Mississippi River Friday October 22, 2010.

Oil Slick in West Bay gallery (9 photos)



801

176

Like

801 people like this.

Share

Comment

27 Comments

The oil was sighted in West Bay, which covers approximately 35 square miles of open water between Southwest Pass,

Sponsored By:



STAGE DOOR CANTEN

WWII THE NATIONAL WWII MUSEUM

HEADLINE ENTERTAINMENT EVERY WEEKEND! DINING & DANCING, THE VICTORY BELLES & MORE!

BUY TICKETS NOW

Reservations online at stagedoorcanteen.org

Connect with NOLA.com

What's this?

All NOLA.com Facebook & Twitter accounts >

Recommendations

Login

You need to be logged into Facebook to see your friends' recommendations



Massive stretches of weathered oil spotted in Gulf of Mexico

783 people shared this.



3 men plead guilty to beating newborn calf to death after Saints loss last year

2,036 people shared this.



Larry Dauterive resigns as East St. John coach

248 people shared this.



Saenger Theatre is about to get a new lease on life

397 people shared this.



New Orleans airport installing full-body

More 2010 Gulf of Mexico Oil Spill

Most Comments

Most Recent

2010 Gulf of Mexico Oil Spill stories with the most comments in the last 7 days.

26 Massive stretches of weathered oil spotted in Gulf of Mexico

15 Federal leaders of Gulf of Mexico oil spill response report only a few lingering trouble spots

13 Study recommends measures to offset rising Gulf Coast toll

the main shipping channel of the river, and Tiger Pass near Venice. Boat captains working the BP clean-up effort said they have been reporting large areas of surface oil off the delta for more than a week but have seen little response from BP or the Coast Guard, which is in charge of the clean-up. The captains said most of their sightings have occurred during stretches of calm weather, similar to what the area has experienced most of this week.

On Friday reports included accounts of strips of the heavily weathered orange oil that became a signature image of the spill during the summer. One captain said some strips were as much as 400 feet wide and a mile long.

The captains did not want to be named for fear of losing their clean-up jobs with BP.

Coast Guard officials Friday said a boat had been dispatched to investigate the sightings, but that a report would not be available until Saturday morning.

However, Times-Picayune photojournalist Matt Hinton confirmed the sightings in an over-flight of West Bay.

Robert Barham, secretary of the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries, said if the sightings are confirmed by his agency, the area will be reclosed to fishing until it is confirmed oil-free again.



Just Tuesday, Coast Guard Rear Adm. Paul Zukunft, in charge of the federal response, and his top science adviser, Steve Lehmann, said that little of the 210 million gallons of oil spilled into the Gulf remained on the surface or even on the Gulf's floor. Lehmann pointed to extensive tests conducted by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration that included taking samples of water from various depths, as well as collections of bottom sediments both far offshore and close to the coast.

Those claims, announced on the six-month anniversary of the spill, brought quick rebuttals from a variety of environmental and fishermen's groups who insist their members have been reporting sightings of surface oil all along.

LSU environmental sciences professor Ed Overton, who has been involved in oil spill response for 30 years, said he believes both claims could be accurate. The Louisiana sweet crude from the Deepwater Horizon is very light and has almost neutral buoyancy, Overton said, which means that when it picks up any particles from the water column, it will sink to the bottom.

"It's quite possible that when the weather calms and the water temperatures changes, the oil particles that have spread along the bottom will re-coagulate, then float to the surface again and form these large mats.

"I say this is a possibility, because I know that the (Coast Guard) has sent boats out to investigate these reports, but by the time they get to the scenes, the weather has changed and they don't see any oil."

"I think the reports are credible, but I also think the incident responders are trying to find the oil, too," Overton said. "This is unusual, but nothing about this bloody spill has been normal since the beginning."

Overton said it is important for the state to discover the mechanism that is causing the oil to reappear because even this highly weathered oil poses a serious threat to the coastal ecology.

"If this was tar balls floating around, that would be one thing, but these reports are of mats of weathered oil, and that can cause serious problems if it gets into the marsh," he said

The reports are a great concern to **wildlife** officials. The Mississippi delta is a primary wintering ground for hundreds of thousands of ducks and geese, some of which already have begun arriving. The West Bay area leads into several shallower interior bays that attract ducks, geese and myriad species of shore and wading birds each winter.

Earlier this month state wildlife officials were expressing optimism the spill would have minimal impact on most waterfowl visitors because little oil had penetrated the sensitive wintering






- 12** Oil spill containment device 'will work,' within weeks after a blowout, project manager says
- 7** Offshore drilling inspection staff to grow by 200, agency director says



Most Active Users

[What's this?](#)

Users with the most **NOLA.com** comments in the last 7 days

- 122**  **xman20002000**
- 114**  **muspench**
- 112**  **nomoboze**
- 88**  **dninc79**
- 78**  **Drunk Painter**

From Our Advertisers

[Advertise With Us >>](#)

NOLA.com on your mobile phone
News, Sports & more!

[click here](#)



Popular Tags

[What's this?](#)

barack obama bobby jindal bp coastal restoration congress energy environment fishing grand isle gulf of mexico mary landrieu minerals management service mitch landrieu new orleans offshore fishing oil rig explosion oil rig explosion gulf of mexico oil spill gulf of mexico 2010 oil spill hearings update oil spill trajectory plaquemines st. bernard st. tammany tourism tp oil spill video

grounds.

Related topics: [bp](#), [oil spill gulf of mexico 2010](#), [wildlife](#)

Sponsored Links

Help Save Wildlife

Learn How Dawn® Is Working To Save Wildlife From The Oil Spill
www.Facebook.com/DawnSavesWildlife

Top 5 Oil Spill Updates!

Get The Latest Updates On The Gulf Oil Spill Right Here!
EOEarth.org

oil spill response

Want oil spill response? Visit To Find oil spill response.
CRUDE-gas-and-Oil.com

Share this story	Story tools
------------------	-------------

More stories in 2010 Gulf of Mexico Oil Spill

Previous story
[NOAA reopens 7,000 more square miles for fishing in the Gulf](#)

27 **Comments** [Feed](#) [Post a comment](#)

View: [Oldest first](#) | [Newest first](#)

1 | 2

[Next comments >>](#)

 **wateronfire9** October 22, 2010 at 10:45PM
[Follow](#)

I just wonder if we will ever be told just what happened before, during and after this spill. Tall tails of fishermen.

[Reply](#) [Post new](#) [Inappropriate? Alert us.](#)

 **chentrails** October 23, 2010 at 1:57AM
[Follow](#)

Why hasn't anyone from British Petroleum been arrested yet? Peter Sutherland, ex-CEO of BP and present director Goldman Sachs, sold 250 million dollars of shares in BP months before the spill. Tony Hayward, CEO of BP at the time of the spill sold 44% of his shares in BP a month before the spill. Halliburton purchased an oil clean-up company called BOOTS & COOTS on April 12, 2010. Can you imagine how many first responders to the BP oil spill clean-up will die because of their exposure to the chemical COREXIT(see 9/11 & Exxon Valdez)?

[Reply](#) [Post new](#) [Inappropriate? Alert us.](#)

 **ApockawayXXV** October 22, 2010 at 10:59PM
[Follow](#)

"The captains did not want to be named for fear of losing their clean-up jobs with BP." So let me get this straight, after what BP has done to us, it's "we" that fear "them?" I'm telling this to everyone that that isn't so outraged by now to get off your ass and actually so something to change this situation, that if you don't, you're the most pathetic of cowards. It wasn't long ago that it was all the rage to put-down the French as "cowards." HA! Look what they're doing over simply raising the retirement age! And here we are, a foreign company comes into our waters and causes perhaps the largest man-made disaster in history, literally takes over our government, stifles free speech, lies about everything and what do we hear from the American people? "I'm afraid I'll lose my crummy job working for the same people that destroyed my life."

Ah, what's the use? Go back to watching your football and don't forget to eat more of that