

Tallahassee



Judson Parker

Potential new deep water oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico-100 mile sheen reported



The Matterhorn SeaStar oil rig, staging area for USCG investigation of a reported 100 mile oil sheen

Photo: D.D.Bryant

Slideshow: New oil slick
3/19/2011 via John Wathen



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The US Coast Guard is currently investigating reports of a potentially massive oil sheen 20 miles north of the Deepwater Horizon oil rig explosion from last April.

According to Paul Barnard, operations controller for the USCG in Louisiana, a helicopter crew has been dispatched to the site of the Matterhorn SeaStar oil rig, owned by W&T Offshore, Inc.

Multiple reports have come in of a sheen nearly 100 miles long and 12 miles wide originating near the site.

Independent pilots, including John Wathen of the Waterkeeper Alliance, and Bonnie Schumaker with Wings of Care, are currently flying out to investigate the spill. Schumaker reports having seen the sheen on Friday, March 18, and confirms that it is rapidly expanding.

A Louisiana fisherman, who has chosen to remain anonymous at this time, also reports fresh oil coming ashore near South Pass, LA, and that cleanup crews are laying new boom near the beach.

The origination point of the sheen, near Mississippi Canyon 243, lies 30 miles southeast of the Louisiana coastline, and extends to Barataria Bay. The Matterhorn oil field, at a depth of 2,789 feet (850 meters) of water, was discovered in 1999, leased and permitted in July 2001, and came into production in

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According to W&T, the field has produced an average rate of 5,200 barrels of oil per day, and has production capacities of 35,000 barrels of oil per day.

Update March 20, 2011: *A Coast Guard officer with a command center in Morgan City, LA, said today the Coast Guard has confirmed that the new oil is not coming from the Deepwater Horizon well but that they have found new oil slicks in the Gulf. Their investigation continues. Additional photos from pilot John Wathen have been released and can be viewed in the slideshow attached to this article.*

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