

An Oil Well Blow-out in Upland Habitats of Louisiana

Abstract

This session provides lessons learned from a 1997 inland oil well blow-out that affected both national forest and private lands. The release went uncontrolled for 8 days, releasing 13,000 barrels of oil and 600,000 barrels of saltwater onto the ground and, combined with natural gas, into an aerial mist/rain. Good response actions limited the spill-affected area to less than 60 acres, in spite of the large volume and uncontrolled nature of the release. Complicating response decisions were an unexpected major rain event with flooding on the ninth day, use of an in-situ burn 16 months post-spill, a mixture of public and private land ownership, endangered red-cockaded woodpecker foraging habitat and several habitat types: upland pines, bottom land hardwood wetlands and riparian (stream).