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texas general land office **Jerry Patterson, Commissioner**

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PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

July 24, 2009

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Texas General Land Office gets South Padre Island back to normal *Beaches almost cleared, but questions still remain about source of spill*

AUSTIN — The tar balls that washed up along South Padre Island beaches this week should be picked up today, according to the Texas General Land Office Oil Spill Prevention and Response team.

“The rapid, firehouse-style response of our oil spill team has gotten this mess cleaned up quickly,” said Texas Land Commissioner Jerry Patterson.

No new oil has washed up and over-flights of the area by the U.S. Coast Guard on Friday morning didn’t reveal any more oil in the water. Raymond Oliveira, area manager of the GLO’s Oil Spill Prevention and Response Program, said crews should finish cleaning up the tar balls on South Padre Island and Boca Chica beaches by Friday afternoon.

Patterson said the cleanup has gone well, but cautioned that since the source of the spill hasn’t been determined yet, more oil may still be out there. Texas General Land Office oil spill team members will continue to monitor the coast for additional oil. Test results that might reveal the source of the spill should be available next week.

Wednesday morning, tar balls began washing up on about six miles of South Padre Island beaches and one mile of beach on Boca Chica.

The Texas General Land Office is coordinating the cleanup with the U.S. Coast Guard, South Padre Island Public Works and Chemical Response & Remediation Contractors. In the last two days, 50 55-gallon drums full of tar balls and sand have been removed from the beach, in addition to six cubic-yard boxes full of the gunk.

“Our Oil Spill Prevention and Response team has worked hard to protect the natural resources of the Texas coast and ensure the safety of South Padre Island residents and tourists,” Patterson said.

Only one bird, a tern, has been found dead from the oil spill.

The beaches are not closed, but people should avoid going near any oil on the beach. Baby oil can be used to clean the skin if contact occurs.

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