

Subsurface Monitor

Sharing science
from the Gulf
oil spill
response

Issue 2 - October 7, 2010

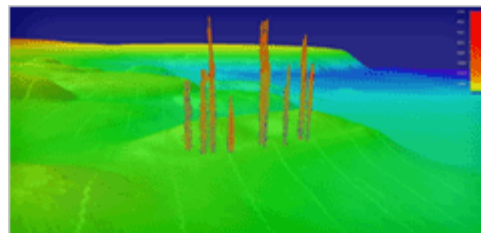
NOAA Ship *Pisces* returns from water and sediment sampling mission

NOAA Ship *Pisces* returned this week from a major sampling mission in the Gulf. While scientific cruises typically takemonths to plan, a concerted effort by academic and government scientists allowed this cruise to be organized in about a week. Lead scientist [Dr. David Valentine](#) of the University of California-Santa Barbara headed the mission to collect water and sediment samples and to study natural hydrocarbon seeps.

Pisces made an arc around the wellhead, revisiting 15 sampling sites where the greatest dissolved oxygen anomalies and relatively high PAH levels had been seen prior to the well being capped. Samples have been sent to some labs collaborating in the effort, including Louisiana State University, California Institute of Technology and East Carolina University, for analysis.

In addition, the *Pisces* team collected water samples at approximately 37 locations on the continental shelf. These samples, along with more samples that [R/V International Peace](#) is collecting on the shelf to the west of the spill and samples collected since May, will be used to develop a broad picture of conditions.

Pisces scientists also collected data on natural hydrocarbon seeps near the wellhead, including water samples, acoustic measurements and observations from tow sleds. Tow cameras take photos of the sea floor to look for evidence of oil and to identify seeps. Acoustic equipment uses sound waves to find gases escaping from the sea floor. Seeps appear as vertical lines on a computer display. The information can be used to prepare 3-D maps of the seeps, such as this one.



Data on natural seeps will help establish the "signature" of oil in the spill area to provide indications of the oil's origin - whether it is from the spill or from natural sources. This information will play an important role in long-term assessments.

The *Pisces* team also collected sediment samples at depths up to 2,000 meters - nearly 1¼ miles below the sea surface. Scientists used multi-core samplers to collect up to eight sediment cores per sampling location. The cores will undergo chemical and other analyses. Other vessels, including the R/V [Ocean Veritas](#) and [Gyre](#), are collecting additional sediment samples on the shelf and in deep



Follow research vessel activities on the Mission Log

water.

Scientific forum brings oil spill researchers together

More than 100 scientists actively conducting oil spill-related research met this week in St. Petersburg, Fla., for a 2-day forum. The [National Science and Technology Council](#) (NSTC) Joint Subcommittee on Ocean Science and Technology (JSOST) sponsored the [conference](#), hosted by the University of South Florida.

Investigators from academia, private research institutes and government agencies participated in the conference. Scientists fostered new collaborations, compared initial results, interacted with Federal agencies and discussed recommendations for longer-term research activities.

The federal agencies comprising NSTC JSOST will use the input from conference participants to help identify information needs and plan short- and long-term research directions.

The NSTC is the principal means within the executive branch to coordinate science and technology policy across the Federal research and development enterprise. JSOST is currently chaired by NOAA's Dr. Steve Murawski, OSTP's Dr. Jerry Miller, and NSF's Dr. Tim Killeen.



NOAA Administrator Dr. Jane Lubchenco meets with Prof. Ed Overton of LSU during visit to the Gulf.

About the subsurface monitoring program

The subsurface monitoring program is a scientific collaboration among academic institutions, government agencies, BP, and other entities in response to the Deepwater Horizon oil spill. The program's goals are to assess the distribution, concentration, and degradation of oil remaining in the water column and/or bottom sediments; evaluate the distribution of dispersants used in oil spill response activities and their break-down products; and identify any additional response requirements that may be necessary to address remaining subsurface oil. The data collected by the subsurface monitoring program will form a valuable foundation for long-term restoration efforts in the Gulf of Mexico.



Useful Links

- [RestoretheGulf.gov](#)
- [GeoPlatform.gov](#)
- [NOAA Mission Log](#)
- [National Oceanographic Data Center \(NODC\)](#)
- [Seafood Safety](#)
- [NOAA Science Missions & Data](#)



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