

Images Provide Estimates of Sea-surface Oil from Deepwater Horizon Spill

1. A new scientific analysis indicates with reasonable confidence the sea-surface volume of oil from the Deepwater Horizon oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico is (INSERT AMOUNT).
2. This amount was derived from analyzing images taken on May 17 using a highly specialized type of equipment known as AVIRIS (Airborne Visible/Infrared Imaging Spectrometer).
3. A team of government scientists (USGS, NASA others?) is using the AVIRIS technology to measure the sea-surface volume of the oil.
4. AVIRIS images are analyzed using complex mathematical formulas that compare how the oil absorbs and reflects light.
5. USGS scientists are analyzing the data to infer the oil-to-water ratio of the oil emulsions, and the thicknesses and basic composition of the oil.
6. AVIRIS technology has never been used during a large oil spill, but this technique was used successfully to characterize the dust from the 9-11 collapse of World Trade Center.
7. This is also the same technology that USGS scientists used to discover water on the Moon.
8. AVIRIS images are more precise than satellite images which can only document the overall extent of the oil but cannot distinguish between the sheen and thick patches.
9. Based on this technology, USGS is producing maps of the locations of the thickest oil. This information will be available to the public on the USGS website.