

FOR RELEASE ON AUGUST 15TH:

Scientific Study Raises Questions over Extent of BP Oil Spill Toxicity and Status of Gulf of Mexico Fisheries

Los Angeles, August 15th, 2013--A collaborative team of independent scientists has just released a research study of various toxic compounds associated with the BP oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico (GOM). The evidence confirms that concentrations of polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs) found in the GOM during and after the BP oil spill reached levels higher than those considered safe for marine life and human exposure. Evidence shows that concentrations of PAHs found in seafood samples were up to 3,800 times greater than thresholds considered safe for human consumption by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). The data used in the independent study is based on samples taken across several media—seafood, fauna and flora, sediment and water—collected in the GOM from the south coast of Texas to west coast of Florida between June, 2010 and November, 2010.

The findings also showed how far the dispersed oil apparently traveled, indicating PAH/TPH toxicity levels found as far away as the coast of Galveston, Texas were substantially higher than levels reported by government agencies for water and sediment, generally used to gauge the state of commercial fisheries and health impacts on the ecosystem.

The study (see link below), which appeared in the peer-reviewed scientific journal *Marine Pollution Bulletin* (MPB) published by Elsevier Ltd, additionally looked at the monitoring techniques used to support assessments made by federal agencies overseeing water and seafood quality during and after the BP spill.

Sammarco, P.W., et al. Distribution and Concentrations of Petroleum Hydrocarbons Associated with the BP/Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill, Gulf of Mexico.

Dr. Paul W. Sammarco, the lead scientist on the paper from the Louisiana Universities Marine Consortium (LUMCON) in Chauvin, LA, pointed out that, “*given the approximately 100-300 million gallons of oil spilled and 1-3 million gallons of Corexit dispersants released, the results from this study are not surprising*”.

Dr. Sammarco went on to say that he believes that the “*dispersants created a patchy dispersal of oil and dispersant beneath the surface of the water, and that the patches were not readily sampled by government scientists and regulators through ‘point sampling’ which is generally used to sample seawater for nutrients and contaminants.*” He believes it is possible that this could have yielded low estimates of petroleum hydrocarbon concentrations in the sub-surface environment leading to some premature sector reopening of GOM fisheries which had been closed as a result of the BP Macondo spill.

The contrast between these independent scientists' data and those of the US Dept. of Commerce National Oceanic and Atmospheric Agency (NOAA) while the spill was still active in May 2010 and extending 4 months after the well was capped, warrants a re-examination of the data, testing methodologies, and oil spill monitoring plans, according to the scientists involved.

Those familiar with the government testing methods and laboratory protocols have suggested that the preponderance of “non-detect” readings reported by NOAA was probably due to a “techniques issue”. Profound differences in the testing methodology and sampling locations can easily cause such variance in the results.

The MPB-published paper pointed out “*The spill began on April 20, 2010. US-Department of Commerce – National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) began closing fisheries on May 2, 2010. It began reopening them, with various spatial and other limits, on June 23. The well was capped on July 15.*”

The question arises “Why would fisheries be re-opened before the BP well

was capped?” It is possible that certain areas tested negatively for petroleum hydrocarbons, but the reasons for that are not fully understood at this time.

The MPB-published paper urges that more monitoring is recommended in the northern Gulf of Mexico, in regions where both oil/gas production and fisheries exploration are being pursued. Continued monitoring of oil in the water column, sediment, marine biota, and seafood would be valuable in helping to determine petroleum hydrocarbon concentrations in the environment and define any potential impacts on the seafood industry.

Distributed by: Lawrence Anthony Earth Organization-Change Oil Spill Response Global Alliance Initiative. For more information go to: <http://protectmarinelifenow.org/global-alliance>

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