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Oil Sightings Continue Along Gulf Coast Despite Federal Assurances of Safety

Beach Goers at Dauphin Island Swim into a Patch of Oil

NEW ORLEANS, La. – Federal officials are standing by reports that only a quarter of the 207 million gallons of oil spilled remain in the Gulf. But residents continue to see repercussions sneaking up along the shoreline. And they continue to log those reports on the Louisiana Bucket Brigade’s Oil Spill Crisis Map.

A news report from FOX10tv.com in Mobile, Ala., posted to the map earlier this week told the story of vacationers at Dauphin Island who swam unknowingly into sludgy patches of oil “like peanut butter.”

“You couldn’t see it on the surface at all, but once we got in the water about waist deep, we started getting it on our feet and our knees and all over us,” one of the beach goers said in the story.

In last week’s LABB press release, we highlighted a citizen’s report of finding oil sinkholes on Gulf beaches. That sighting was corroborated Monday with a news story from the Press Register in Mobile, Ala., in which Orange Beach Mayor Tony Kennon confirmed oil was bubbling up from beneath the sand there as well as at Horn Island, Miss.

While swimmers are concerned about oil lurking below the waves and the beaches, dead fish continue to float to the surface in alarming numbers.

In Biloxi, Miss., a massive fish kill left many wondering if the oil spill was the culprit or if it was just bad timing. “There was a fish kill that covered an eight-mile stretch of the Mississippi coastline with the most intense one-mile stretch from Biloxi to the west,” a citizen report said. “The media reported this as having come from broken netting, but according to a man who has been fishing these waters since 1972, this was unlike anything he had ever seen.”

News stories from the Sun Herald and WLOX in Biloxi claim samples are being tested to determine the cause.

Meanwhile in Pass Christian, officials claim the Gulf dead zone might be to blame for another fish kill. A resident logged this report to the Oil Spill Crisis Map at the end of last week: “Oil came in at Henderson Point and two hours after this there was a fish kill in the harbor. All of the fish were bottom feeders – crab, flounder, mullet, catfish.”

About 20 new reports were logged to the map in the last week, bringing the total to more than 1,600. Oil on shore amounted to seven new reports while oil in the water totaled eight. Marine wildlife affected totaled six new reports. Users can assign multiple categories for each report.

The Oil Spill Crisis Map is a partnership between Tulane University and the LABB, allowing Gulf Coast residents to share personal accounts of oil sightings, health problems, suspicious odors and other relevant information with the public.

Reports can be made and viewed at oilspill.labucketbrigade.org. Mobile phone users can text or call in reports to (504) 27 27 OIL. Reports can also be sent to bspillmap@gmail.com and through Twitter with the hashtag #BPspillmap. If you are in danger or witness an emergency, please contact your local emergency response agency immediately. The Oil Spill Crisis Map is not an emergency response service.

The **Louisiana Bucket Brigade** is an environmental health and justice organization supporting neighborhoods’ use of grassroots action to create informed, sustainable communities free from industrial pollution.

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