DATE: June 15, 2010 16:00:16 CST

U.S. Scientific Team Draws on New Data, Multiple Scientific Methodologies to Reach Updated Estimate of Oil Flows from BP's Well

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Washington - Based on updated information and scientific assessments, Secretary of Energy Steven Chu, Secretary of the Interior Ken Salazar, and Chair of the National Incident Command's Flow Rate Technical Group (FRTG) Dr. Marcia McNutt (Director of the U.S. Geological Survey) today announced an improved estimate of how much oil is flowing from the leaking BP well.

Secretary Chu, Secretary Salazar, and Dr. McNutt convened a group of federal and independent scientists on Monday to discuss new analyses and data points obtained over the weekend to produce updated flow rate estimates. Working together, U.S. government and independent scientists estimate that the most likely flow rate of oil today is between 35,000 and 60,000 barrels per day. The improved estimate is based on more and better data that is now available and that helps increase the scientific confidence in the accuracy of the estimate.

At the direction of the federal government, BP is implementing multiple strategies to significantly expand the leak containment capabilities at the sea floor even beyond the upper level of today's improved estimate. The Lower Marine Riser Package (LMRP) cap that is currently in place can capture up to 18,000 barrels of oil per day. At the direction of the federal government, BP is deploying today a second containment option, called the Q4000, which could expand total leak containment capacity to 20,000-28,000 barrels per day. Overall, the leak containment strategy that BP was required to develop projects containment capacity expanding to 40,000-53,000 barrels per day by the end of June and 60,000-80,000 barrels per day by mid-July.

"This estimate brings together several scientific methodologies and the latest information from the sea floor, and represents a significant step forward in our effort to put a number on the oil that is escaping from BP's well," said Energy Secretary Steven Chu. "As we continue to collect additional data and refine these estimates, it is important to realize that the numbers can change. In particular, the upper number is less certain – which is exactly why we have been planning for the worst case scenario at every stage and why we are continuing to focus on responding to the upper end of the estimate, plus additional contingencies."

Today's improved flow rate estimate brings together the work of several scientific teams and is based on a combination of analyses of high resolution videos taken by ROVs, acoustic technologies, and measurements of oil collected by the oil production ship together with pressure measurements inside the top hat. Over the weekend, at the insistence of Secretary Chu and the science team, pressure meters were added to the top hat to assist with these estimates.

The scientists stressed the need for continued and refined pressure measurement, but emphasized that today's improved estimates have a greater degree of confidence than estimates that were possible prior to the riser cut. There are several reasons for this, including:

1. **More and different kinds of data is available now:** The improved estimates are informed by newly available, detailed pressure measurements from within the Top Hat taken over the past 24 hours. In addition, scientists could draw on more than a week of data about the amount of oil being collected through the top hat.
2. **A single flow is easier to estimate:** Prior to the riser cut, oil was flowing both from the end of the riser and from several different holes in the riser kink. This made estimates – particularly based on two dimensional video alone – more difficult.

"We need to have accurate and scientifically grounded oil flow rate information both for the purposes of the response and recovery and for the final investigation of the failure of the blowout preventer and the resulting spill," said Interior Secretary Salazar. "This estimate, which we will continue to refine as the scientific teams get new data and conduct new analyses, is the most comprehensive estimate so far of how much oil is flowing one mile below the ocean's surface."

"Each of the methodologies that the scientific teams is using has its advantages and shortcomings, which is why it is so important that the scientific teams have taken several approaches to solving this problem," said Dr. McNutt. "Under the leadership of Admiral Allen, we will continue to revise and refine the

flow rate estimate as our scientific teams get new data and conduct additional analyses."

The FRTG was assembled at the direction of National Incident Commander Admiral Thad Allen, and is led by United States Geological Survey Director Dr. Marcia McNutt. The FRTG, and a scientific team led by Energy Secretary Steven Chu, continue to analyze new data and use several scientific methodologies to develop updated estimates of how much oil is flowing from BP's leaking oil well in the Gulf of Mexico.

For information about the response effort, visit www.deepwaterhorizonresponse.com.
