From: Donald F. Boesch [boesch@umces.edu]
Sent: Monday, August 16, 2010 8:10:23 AM
To: 'Terry Garcia'
Subject: RE: Sea Grant Report on spill status

Thanks, Terry. As I am presently working on this budget issue, I read this with great interest. Unfortunately, the authors, most of whom I know and respect, make the very mistake for which they criticize the federal report by using undocumented guesstimates, e.g. their incredibly low degradation rate is pulled from thin air. Many other colleagues in the academic sector are reacting in a similar way as the Georgia folks, in part, frankly, because of their own self interests in pursuing research, but also greatly exacerbated, unfortunately, by the appalling lack of transparency in the NOAA-USGS report.

However, continuing to raise the specter of oil contaminating the Georgia coast at this point is beyond the pale, as is their mention of diminished air quality in Atlanta, for which there is just no evidence. Maybe they should turn their attention to the more realistic problem how water use in Atlanta is damaging Apalachicola Bay on the Gulf Coast. In any case, such wild claims deplete their credibility in my book.

Perhaps the most sensible statement in the report is "Fortunately, natural weathering processes are transforming, diluting, degrading and evaporating the various compounds that make up what we collectively call crude oil." In a particular, the dilution of subsurface oil, which seems to be the focus of their perspective, in the turbulent and dynamic water column, has had to, at this point, render the residual oil to extremely low concentrations with our without biodegradation. Contrast their estimate of biodegradation (5-10%) to the order-of magnitude (90%) dilution of dispersed oil droplets observed within 10 km of the well head. Most of the subsurface oil "plume," most discharged more than two months ago now has been diluted by several orders of magnitude. Their focus on the mass of this residual oil, as opposed to its concentration, which is what pelagic organisms are exposed to, leads them to an unrealistic implication of actual ecological threats posed at this point (the benthic and coastal realms where oil may accumulate and persist are different issues). I am not advocating "the solution to pollution is dilution," but in this case this is the practical reality.

Don

-----Original Message-----
From: Terry Garcia [mailto:tgarcia@ngs.org]
Sent: Sunday, August 15, 2010 11:19 AM
To: Bob Graham; Frances Ulmer; Donald F. Boesch; Reilly, K.; Frances Beinecke; Cherry Murray
Cc: Richard Lazarus; Eric.Roston; Jay Hakes
Subject: Sea Grant Report on spill status

A slightly different take on the amount of oil that remains in the Gulf.

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