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Coral Communities as Indicators of Ecosystem-Level Impacts of the Deepwater Horizon Spill

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ent density layer (North et al. 2011; Spier et al. 2013). After the oil reached the sea surface, natural weathering processes, bioremediation, and the fate of dispersed oil were complex and varied. Oil droplets were transported by currents and wind, eventually settling on the seafloor. These droplets formed a thin, dark, oil-stained layer on the seafloor, which was later referred to as the "oil skin." This oil skin was composed of weathered oil droplets and sand particles. The oil skin was a temporary feature, as it was eventually removed by currents and wind. The oil skin was a significant source of oil for the Deepwater Horizon spill, as it was estimated to contain up to 10% of the total oil released.

Indicate likely areas of exposed hard ground on the deep-sea floor (Roberts et al. 2010). On the basis of the interpretation of seismic reflection data, the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management, Regulation and Enforcement (BOEM) has estimated that 60 discrete areas with carbonate deposits are located in the northern GOM.

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