



Gulf Coast Incident Management Team
1250 Poydras Street, 17th Floor
New Orleans, LA 70113

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July 19, 2011

VIA DELIVERY THROUGH STATE REPRESENTATIVE AND FIRST CLASS MAIL

Mr. Luther Strange
Attorney General
State of Alabama
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Mr. Jim Hood
Attorney General
State of Mississippi
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550 High Street, Suite 1200
Jackson, MS 39201

Mr. James D. "Buddy" Caldwell
Attorney General
State of Louisiana
1885 North 3rd Street
Baton Rouge, LA 70802

Mr. Greg Abbott
Attorney General
State of Texas
300 W. 15th Street
Austin, TX 78701

Ms. Pam Bondi
Attorney General
State of Florida
The Capitol, PL-01
Tallahassee, FL 32399-1050

**Subject: SUBMERGED OIL MATS (SOMS) LOCATED OFF THE COASTLINES OF
AFFECTED COASTAL STATES**

Dear Attorneys General Strange, Caldwell, Bondi, Hood and Abbott:

Thank you for your June 23, 2011 letter, which was also addressed to Secretary Napolitano and BP. The Office of the Secretary has requested that I respond on behalf of the Department of Homeland Security and the Coast Guard.

Please be assured that the Gulf Coast Incident Management Team ("GCIMT") continues to work diligently with your State representatives. I share your concerns related to Submerged Oil Mats ("SOMs") that may be located off the coastlines of your States, and we are working to address this issue in an expeditious manner.

I note your letter's request that the quantity, location, and size of each SOM be determined and reported; and that the SOMs then be removed from the coastlines of the affected states. Current operations to locate and delineate nearshore SOMs are well underway and involve waterborne assets, such as boats equipped with specialized detection equipment, to conduct tactical search plans off the coastlines of affected coastal States. SOMs that have been identified and located immediately adjacent to shore have been and will continue to be removed

using shore-based mechanical means from the beach where it is safe and feasible to do so. The SOMs will be delineated via the best and most practicable methods available; this may be by grid or by other means, as circumstances dictate. As SOMs are located and delineated, the delineations will be available to your state GCIMT representative upon request at any time. Thus, you may obtain the delineation in real-time, as it is compiled or completed.

You also requested an estimation of the level of threat each SOM potentially poses to the coastline. A team of environmental scientists has determined that the oil residue, which includes SOMs, poses a minimal toxicity threat, if any, to human health; and that the SOMs pose a minimal toxicity threat, if any, to aquatic invertebrates and fish. These reports by the Operational Science Advisory Team may be obtained at: <http://www.restorethegulf.gov/release/2010/12/16/data-analysis-and-findings> and at <http://www.restorethegulf.gov/release/2011/03/01/osat-2-fate-and-effects-oil-beaches>. I encourage you to review these documents for more detailed information related to the SOMs.

I am in daily communication with your respective state representatives on the many challenges that we continue to address in responding to the BP oil spill; they also have the latest information on our ongoing studies, searches, and removal efforts related to SOMs, or any other issue related to the oil spill response. In addition, you may contact the GCIMT Legal Officer, LCDR Ted Lampton, at (504) 335-0285 or by cell at (601) 862-8720.

Sincerely,


CAPT Julia Hein, USCG
Federal On-Scene Coordinator

Copy: Alabama SOSC
Louisiana SOSC
Florida SOSC
Mississippi SOSC
Texas SOSC
BP Incident Command
DHS Office of General Counsel