



## Tar Balls found in Florida Keys; Tuesday Conference Call with NOAA Regarding possibility of oil entering Loop Current

Posted by [Gail the Actuary](#) on May 18, 2010 - 12:36pm

Topic: [Environment/Sustainability](#)

Tags: [deepwater horizon](#), [loop current](#), [oil spill](#) [[list all tags](#)]

I listened to a press conference with NOAA administrators this morning regarding the possibility of oil from the oil spill getting into the Loop Current. Some of the takeaways from the press conference:

1. While tar balls have been found in the Florida Keys, test have not yet been performed to determine whether they are from BP's oil spill. They might be from another source.
2. Any oil that does get into the Loop Current will be very dilute and weathered, by the time it gets to Florida. If oil does go this far, tar balls would be typical of the kind of hydrocarbons one would expect, by the time the oil gets this far.
3. The vast majority of the oil in the oil slick is "dozens of miles" from the Loop Current. What is relatively close is the very tip of a tendril of light oil slick extending to the south. According to a map on the NOAA website (shown below the fold), "Ocean models indicate that the band of oil sheens along the souther edge of the plume which is in a counterclockwise eddy could enter the northeastern edge of the Loop Current."

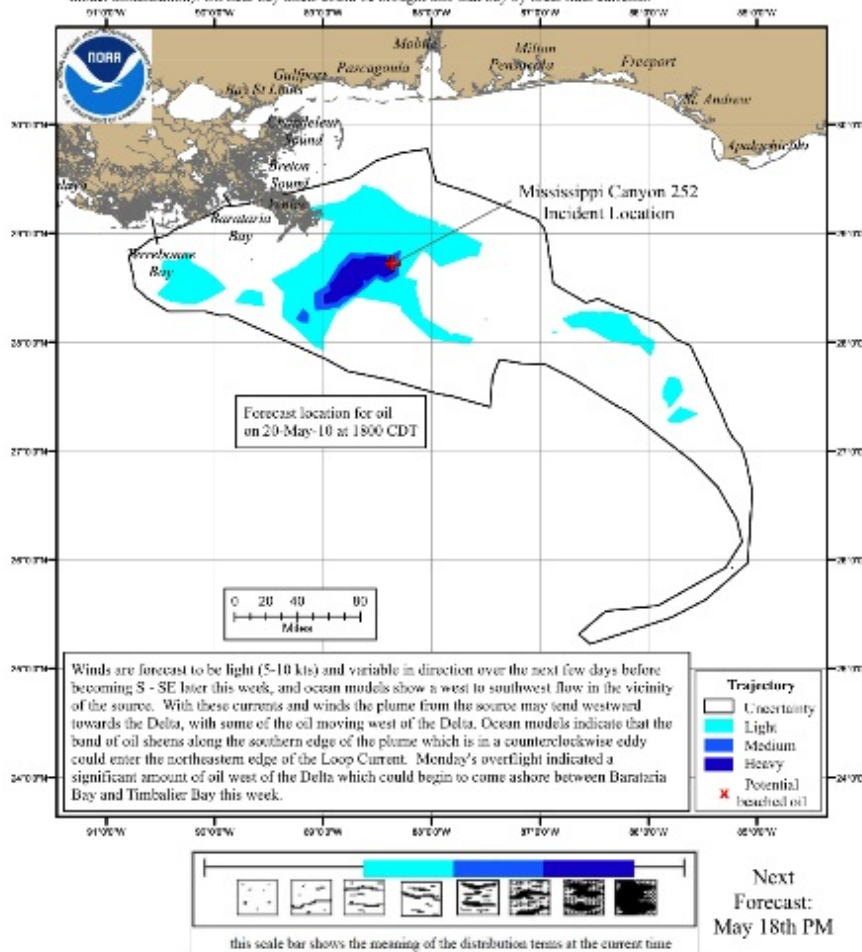
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4. The exact location of the oil slick and of the Loop Current changes over time. NOAA is doing additional monitoring tests, to try to determine with more precision how far apart the tip of the oil slick is from the Loop Current.
5. The behavior of the Loop Current varies at different depths. The top layer seems to moves faster than the lower layers. Based on the speed of the top layer, if oil enters the oil slick, it would take 8 to 10 days to travel to the Florida Keys. During this time, the oil would continue to evaporate and weather, reducing the amount of oil getting to Florida, and changing its nature.
6. Samples of water from the underwater "plumes" have been taken by the Pelican research ship. These samples have been divided and sent to testing centers, but no results are yet available.
7. New fishery closures are being announced today. The total proportion closed now amounts to 19% of federal waters in the Gulf of Mexico. NOAA is also starting a new seafood sampling plan.
8. The [NOAA Website](#) shows the following forecast for the oil slick for Thursday. (Click for larger image).

# Trajectory Forecast Mississippi Canyon 252

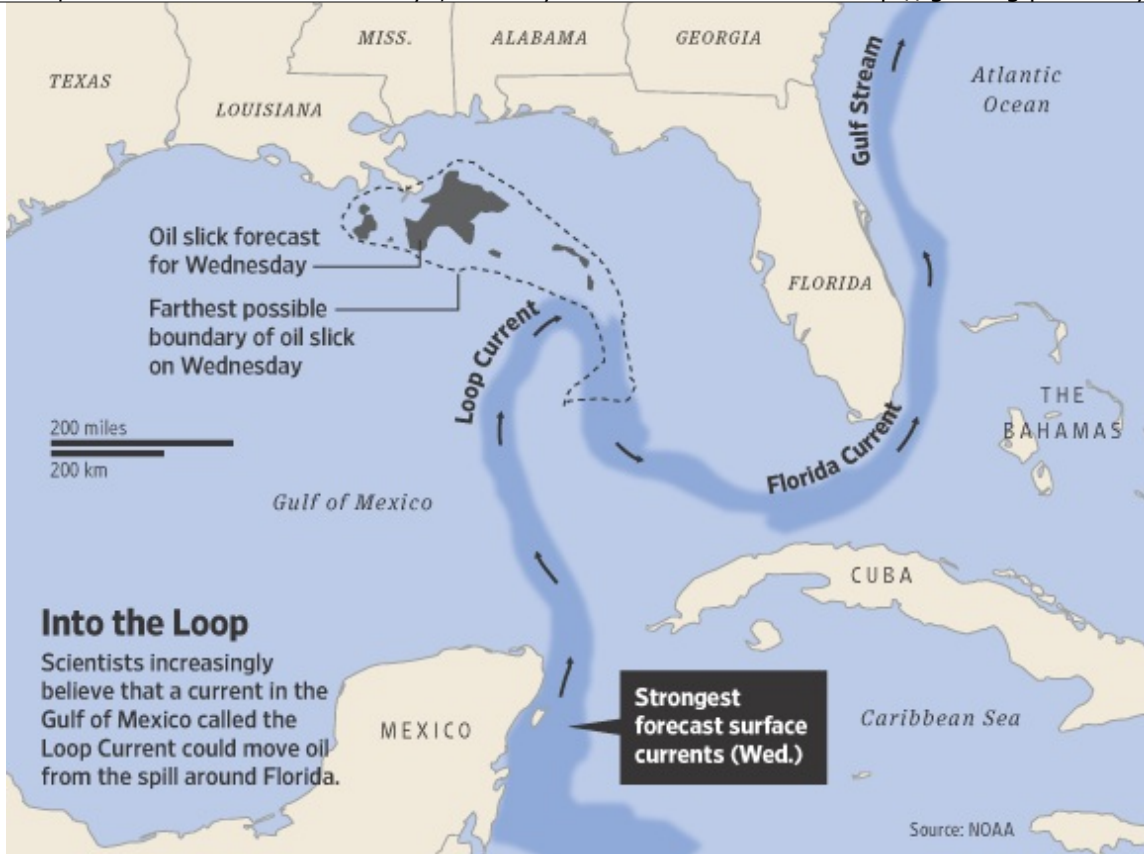
NOAA/NOS/OR&R  
 Estimate for: 1800 CDT, Thursday, 5/20/10  
 Date Prepared: 2100 CDT, Monday, 5/17/10

This forecast is based on the NWS spot forecast from Monday, May 17 PM. Currents were obtained from several models (NOAA Gulf of Mexico, West Florida Shelf/FUSF, Texas A&M/TGLO, NAVO/NRL) and HFR measurements. The model was initialized from Sunday PM satellite imagery analysis (NOAA/NESDIS) and overflight observations. The leading edge may contain tarballs that are not readily observable from the imagery (hence not included in the model initialization). Oil near bay inlets could be brought into that bay by local tidal currents.



## Edit

The Wall Street Journal has a good image of the current and oil slick:



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