



BP's Deepwater oil spill - the Department of Energy papers - and Open Thread

Posted by [Heading Out](#) on June 20, 2010 - 10:00am

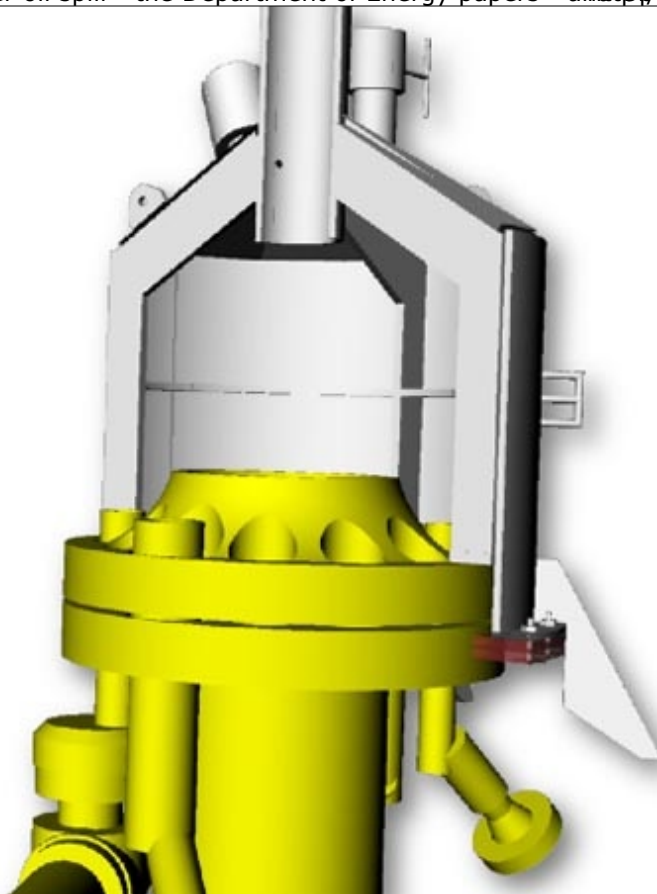
Topic: [Policy/Politics](#)

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The Department of Energy now has a website that shows a number of documents relating to the DWH site. They include this graphic that illustrates the relatively tight fit of the cap around the riser. Below the fold I'll talk about the BOP pressure measurements and Top Kill. Oh, and a little bit about money.



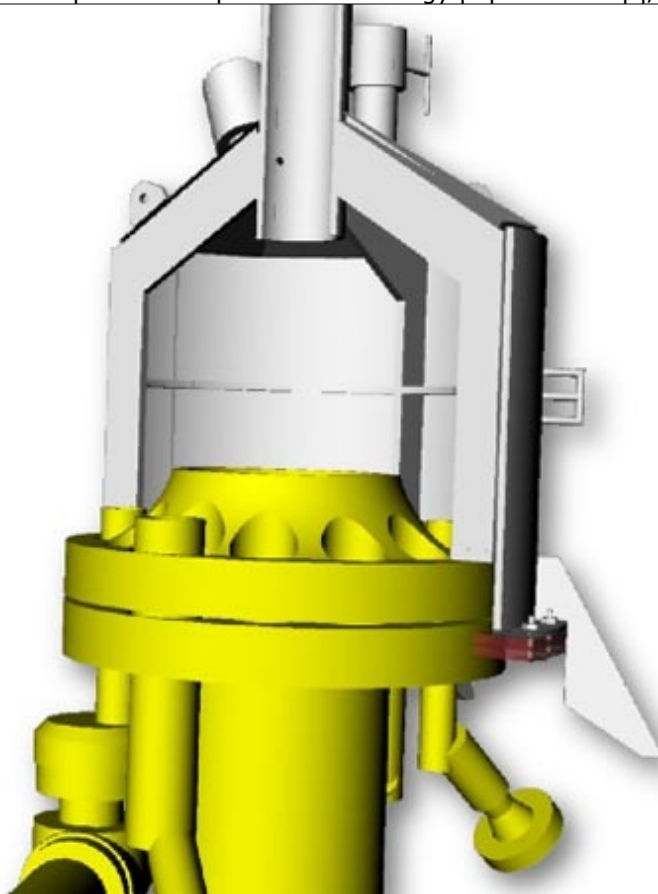
DOE illustration of the [cap on the riser](#)

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The most recent reports of flow from the well are:

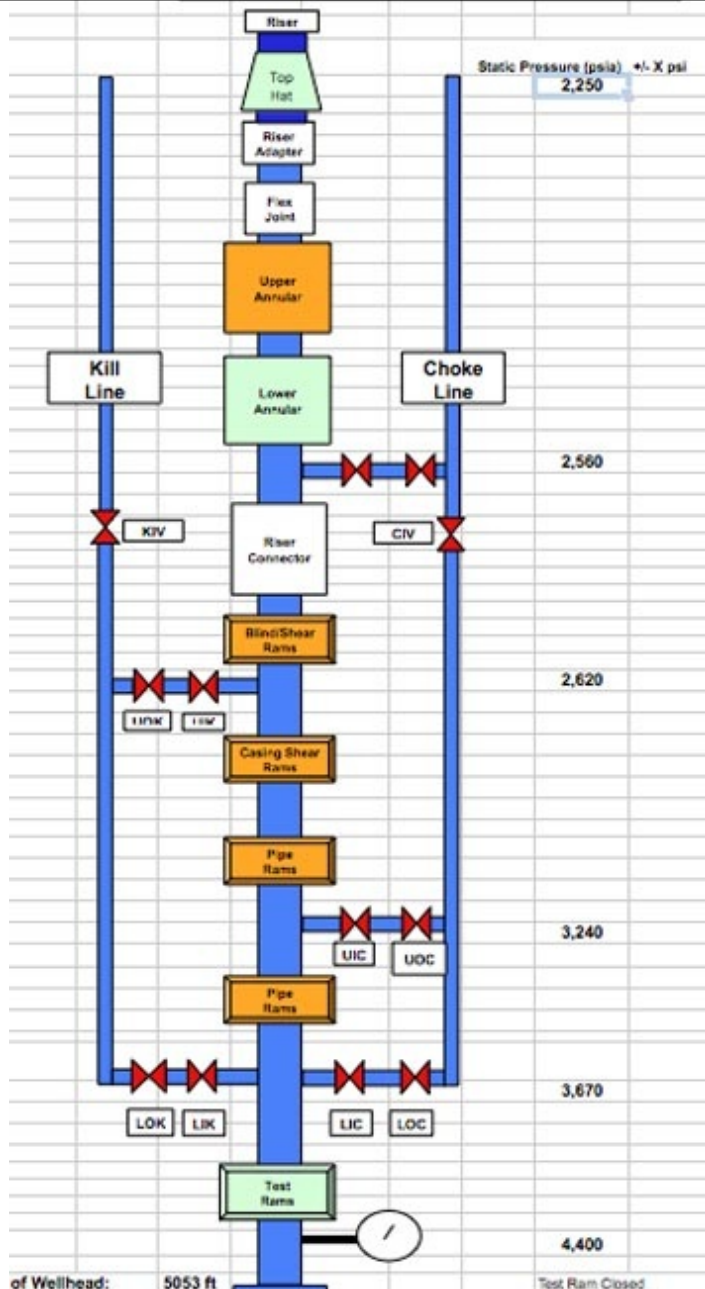
On June 19th, total oil recovered was approx. 21,040 barrels:

- approx. 11,050 barrels of oil were collected,
- approx. 9,990 barrels of oil were flared,
- and approx. 43.4 million cubic feet of natural gas were flared.

Total oil recovered from both the LMRP Cap and Q4000 systems since they were implemented is approx. 249,500 barrels.

As previously reported, volumes were slightly lower on the 19th due to the Enterprise shutdown to clean a flame arrestor and passing of a lightning storm.

I had hoped that would give more of an illustration of the flow path through the BOP but it doesn't show anything that hasn't been posted here on that issue, at least as far as I can see. What it does have, however, is a table that shows the measured pressures at different heights within the BOP, as of 25th of May.



Pressures along the BOP on May 25th (DOE)

There are also more details of the steps in [the Top Kill Operation](#).

Test 1 – Pumped 13,100 bbls of 16.4 ppg at 53 bpm. (May 26)

Test 2 – Pumped 6,800 bbls of 16.4 ppg, 25 bpm with 15 shots of bridging materials. (May 27)

Test 3 – Pumped 9,800 bbls of 16.4 ppg mud at greater than 70 bpm, with 2 shots of bridging materials. (May 28)

Which actually raises a couple of questions. A flow of 17,000 bbl/day is 12 bbl/minute. If I remember there were at least a couple of statements that implied that they had stopped the well flowing oil, and brought it into some sort of balance. One wonders if that were true, and for which, if any of these tests that was accurate.

The reason for the question, going back to the post I wrote on [why Top Kill might have failed](#), is that the bottom of the drill pipe is 3,367 ft below the BOP. While injecting "junk" to seal the well might have had some impact on the annulus around the DP, unless they could first carry the sealing particles down to the bottom of the DP, and then have them be carried back up the pipe, they couldn't seal the leak in the crimped BP. (And that depends in part on the specific gravities they got in the admixture going down the well). The effectiveness also depends on the size consist of the bridging materials.

The higher numbers now being quoted have led the Coastguard to [demand a better plan](#) for dealing with the spill.

The Coast Guard has told BP that its proposed plan for containing the runaway Deepwater Horizon well does not take into account new higher estimates of how much oil is gushing into the Gulf of Mexico. The Coast Guard demanded that the company provide a more aggressive plan within 48 hours.

And that time is about up.

(Should I wonder whatever happened to the [team of experts](#) who were coming up with an alternative?)

He (President Obama) said US Energy Secretary Steven Chu was leading a team of "the world's top scientists, engineers and experts" in devising a contingency plan should the "top kill" attempt fail.

The Administration plan, at the moment, seems to be to get as much cash out of BP as possible, [as soon as possible](#).

In an effort to seize greater control of the gulf oil catastrophe, President Obama is prepared to compel BP executives to set up a multibillion-dollar escrow account to pay damage claims in the region, a senior White House official said Sunday. In a letter to BP Chief Executive Tony Hayward on Sunday, 54 senators, nearly the entire Democratic caucus, called on the company to set aside \$20 billion for cleanup and damages, to be administered by an independent trustee.

But as far as BP coming up with a new plan . . .

Jon Pack, a BP spokesman, said Sunday that the company would respond in a "very timely manner" to the Coast Guard's demand to come up with a better plan to contain the oil, but he added that the company would not make the plan public.

BP's board of directors was scheduled to meet Monday, according to Pack, who would not divulge the agenda.

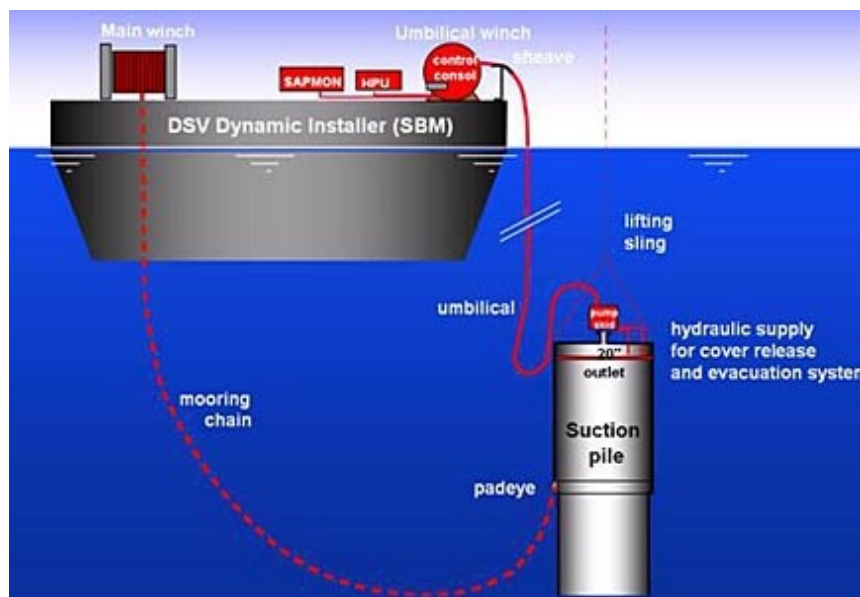
Given that BP has about \$7 billion in available cash, with a number of other obligations (the fine for the spill for starters) there comes a point where even with the best will in the world, BP is going to run out of the cash that more and more folk are demanding. For example the Administration is now demanding that BP carry all the folk that have been put out of work [by the drilling moratorium](#).

A ban on deep-water drilling is set to continue for six months. Salazar has said companies will be able to drill in water depths less than 500 feet once they comply with newly issued safeguards and other yet-to-be-unveiled rules for exploration plans and environmental studies. But it could take weeks — or months — for companies to make the changes and federal regulators to approve them.

You can't comply with "yet-to-be-unveiled rules" until they are unveiled. The impact of this is going to extend well beyond just the drilling companies themselves, BP has drawn a line over paying that at the moment, but we'll see what pressure the President can bring to bear this week, when he meets with them.

But I will close by re-iterating the concern that I expressed when I wrote about the Hurricane season approaching. The way that this is developing doesn't bode well for the ability of the industry to be able to bounce back from any serious damage to Gulf rigs following a Hurricane, of the sort we saw in 2005. If the Gulf supply is compromised, and unable to recover because of regulation, this could be a very interesting election season.

And one last thing, for those who wondered what a suction pile is, since one has just been fielded. Here is [a graphic](#), showing you how it is used.



It would also appear that the Loch Rannoch has [made it to the site](#). This is one of the transfer tankers that will be used to collect oil from the more permanent risers as they get installed this week. (H/t LogPile)



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