



BP's Deepwater Oil Spill - Methane Levels Unusually High - and Open Thread

Posted by [Gail the Actuary](#) on June 24, 2010 - 11:13pm

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One issue we have read about recently is very elevated methane levels in dissolved sea water, near where the oil and gas are escaping currently in the Gulf of Mexico. Approximately 40% of the oil/gas mixture that is escaping is natural gas, and it is some of the natural gas that seems to be dissolving in the water.

The most recent report on this issue is from John Kessler, Professor of Oceanography at Texas A & M University. He [reports](#) that near the surface, levels of methane are normal, but "Below approximately 1,000 meters, the concentration of natural gas and methane in the ocean waters jumps by a factor of one million." In [other areas](#), methane concentrations were said to be 100,000 times normal levels.

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[According to Kessler](#), "At some locations, we saw depletions of up to 30 percent of oxygen based on its natural concentration in the waters. At other places, we saw no depletion of oxygen in the waters. We need to determine why that is."

Earlier in June a team of scientists lead by Samantha Joye of University of Georgia also found very high methane concentrations in some areas, farther from where the rig was originally located. She spoke of methane levels [10,000 times](#) background levels. Her discussions were in the context of oil and gas plumes. She mentioned reduced oxygen levels as well, which are still being

This seems to be a story that is still developing. Both teams of scientists are still analyzing data, and more information may be announced in the next weeks or months.



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