



BP's Deepwater Oil Spill - Closing in on the Well - and Open Thread

Posted by [Heading Out](#) on June 29, 2010 - 10:35am

Topic: [Environment/Sustainability](#)

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Well with Alex [trundling off towards Mexico](#), the second area of concern having dissipated, and the two +3 earthquakes in Iceland being North of the island, or up around Loki, the worry over the impact of natural hazards can be set back just a little today. Which is helpful, given that the relief well is approaching the point where it might soon bring this sorry episode a lot closer to the end game.

Total recovery from the BP site has been relatively consistent in the immediately recent past:

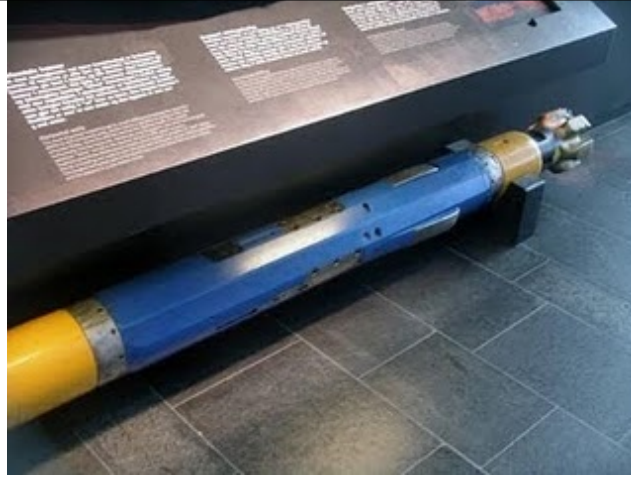
For the last 12 hours on June 27 (noon to midnight), approximately 8,340 barrels of oil were collected and approximately 4,100 barrels of oil and 28.8 million cubic feet of natural gas were flared.

On June 27, total oil recovered was approx. 24,450 barrels:
approx. 16,275 barrels of oil were collected,
approx. 8,175 barrels of oil were flared,
and approx. 56.2 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. 438,000 barrels. An additional 22,000 barrels were collected from the RIT tool earlier in May bringing the total recovered to approx. 460,000 barrel.

Connections for the first free standing riser [have been completed](#) and this will be connected to the Helix Producer – “a redundancy measure also taken under the direction of the Federal Government.”

The first relief well has now [drilled to a depth of 16,545 ft](#) – which puts it within about 150 ft of the point where the first connection may be tried, so I suspect the drill might be being turned horizontal. (Remember that it has to hit with an accuracy of about an inch). They may be steering it with a device called an [Autotrak](#) system where, just behind the drill bit (which is rotating – as are the main pipe segments – yellow in the picture below) a non-rotating piece of equipment is located (blue) that has three small rams that can push out against the well bore and direct the drilling head over in the direction required.



Autotrak assembly (Oil Museum in Stavanger) – you can see one of the pads pushed out as though it was pushing the head over.

This also implies that the last cement job was tested out satisfactorily, after the cement had set.

Update by Gail Tues. am [According to Bloomberg](#), Alex may result in some delays in additional oil collection:

BP needs about three more days to connect a new cap that will feed crude from the leaking Macondo well to the Helix Producer, a vessel that can capture 20,000 barrels to 25,000 more barrels a day beyond the London-based company's current containment capacity, said senior vice president Kent Wells.

As the work can only be completed in flat seas, Alex could cause a seven-day delay in connecting the Helix, he said. The work was to be completed by July 7, he said yesterday.

The waves may swell to as high as 12 feet in 36 hours, pushing oil into the Gulf Coast wetlands, Coast Guard Admiral Thad Allen, the U.S. government's national incident commander, said. Allen said he doesn't think current operations to capture spilled oil will be affected.



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