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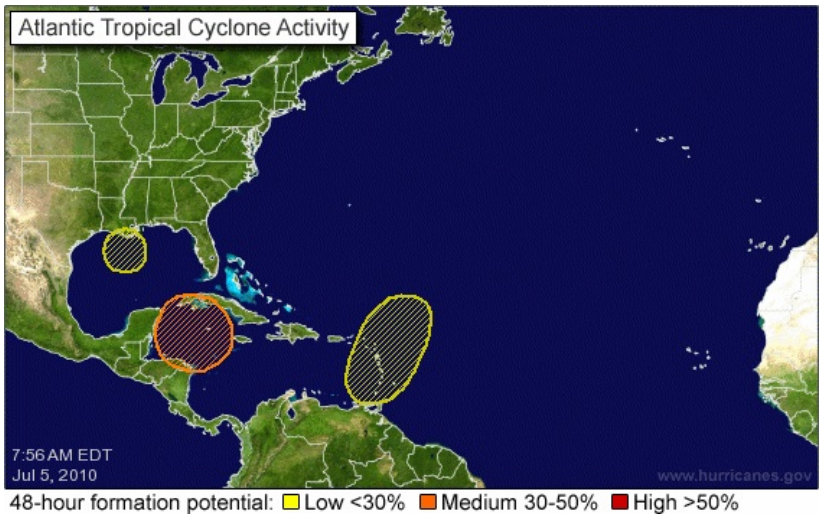
BP's Deepwater Oil Spill - July 5 - and Open Thread

Posted by Heading Out on July 5, 2010 - 10:42am
Topic: Environment/Sustainability
Tags: deepwater horizon, oil spill [list all tags]

Yesterday, I enjoyed the hospitality of the University of New Hampshire, and their local Rotary Club at a July Fourth Celebration, after a family get-together earlier. I hope you all had as Happy a Fourth as we did, and that you equally well enjoy the coming week.

I will, however, add the latest picture from the Gulf of the weather situation (courtesy of the National Hurricane Center):



The potential of sequential storms raising the wave levels around the oil spill site, and thereby delaying the connections of the new riser systems has to be worrying, so I hope that they will be able to replace the cap and get the system into production this week. Based on Chuck Watson's comment of yesterday afternoon, making that much progress this week may not be possible, however.

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> The low pressure system that has been moving over the Gulf and oil spill response area should be making landfall over Louisiana late Monday. Some skimming is restarting, but seas are still choppy and operations limited. The connection from the Helix Producer I platform to the well is still being delayed, as waves must be 3ft or less. There is another system off the coast of Belize that is becoming better organized. Models are showing it developing into a tropical storm and following a track similar to Alex. Not good news - this promises another week of unsettled weather, and the potential for a tropical storm

> (perhaps 35%) or even a hurricane (10% chance) transiting the Gulf in 4 to 5 days, sending another rash of waves over the response area. - *Chuck Watson - 5:40 pm July 4*

News from the site includes the information that the "A Whale" tanker that sucks in oily water, separates it and stores the oil, while discharging the water, is now under test, and has been all weekend, to see if it can collect the 500,000 bd of oil (perhaps they mean oily water) that has been reported.

The "A Whale."

The water is drawn in through vents into the ballast area of the tanker, and is then fed further into the vessel.

> "The oil water will be coming through those jaws, going through those gates," said Chief Officer Moham Bhist, as he gestured toward the grilled openings cut into in the bow, about a foot tall.
>
> The oil-water mix will be pumped through those openings into holding tanks, where simple science takes over. Like a giant decanter, the oil will float to the surface, where it will be skimmed off. The remaining water then will be pumped back into the Gulf.

The initial relief well is now at 17,400 ft, though if one goes back to the briefing that Kent Wells gave and I reported earlier the last casing run was supposed to be made at around 17,100 ft. And I gather that this hasn't happened yet, since, once it was done, then the last couple of hundred feet would be a straight run over with the mud motor and PDC bit to penetrate the wild well (WW).

Rather, if you go back to that post and the numbers on the wall in the command center

illustration (rather than the graphic), those noted that the casing would be run at 17,758 ft TVD (true vertical depth). At the time I suggested that the correction should be to the 17,100 ft figure, but obviously I picked the wrong alternative of the two choices. However if the well depth achieved is as the Unified Command Center report, then the well has another 300 ft to drill before they ream the bottom of the well and run that final casing, and then complete the connection to the original well. (If the weather holds up, and if they can get the cap and connections done this week, then perhaps we are closer than is being admitted). However if one takes this number and compares it to the story two days ago where

> The first relief well for the Macondo blowout is drilling at about 16,817 feet measured depth and is as much as a week ahead of schedule, the head of the US response said Friday. . . . . .Thad Allen said at a press briefing that Transocean semi-submersible rig Development Driller 3 had to drill about 600 vertical feet before hitting the target zone for the intercept.

(16,847 + 600 = 17,447 ft . . . hmmm! Maybe they will be running that casing on Monday or Tuesday???)

As for the oil collected:

> For the first 12 hours on July 4 (midnight to noon), approximately 8,500 barrels of oil were collected and approximately 3,965 barrels of oil and 28.2 million cubic feet of natural gas were flared.
>
> On July 3, total oil recovered was approx. 25,195 barrels:
> • approx. 17,020 barrels of oil were collected,
> • approx. 8,175 barrels of oil were flared,
> • and approx. 57 million cubic feet of natural gas were flared.