

GULF SCIENCE MONITOR

SHARING SCIENCE FROM THE GULF OIL SPILL RESPONSE

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NOAA Ship Updates

Three **Pascagoula**, Mississippi-based NOAA ships are currently conducting studies in the Gulf of Mexico. NOAA Ship **Gordon Gunter** is underway on a survey to collect data on fish and marine mammals, including **Bryde's whales**. NOAA Ship **Pisces** is studying the abundance and distribution of pelagic fish species, and is collecting ichthyoplankton and seafloor organism samples. NOAA Ship **Oregon II** is underway on a research cruise to study the abundance and distribution of seafloor-dwelling marine life, collect ichthyoplankton and water samples, and measure dissolved oxygen.



New chemical test developed for dispersant in seafood – all samples test within safety threshold

NOAA and FDA have developed and are using a **chemical test** to detect dispersants used during the spill in Gulf fish, oysters, crab and shrimp. To ensure consumer confidence in the safety of Gulf seafood, NOAA and FDA added the dispersant test to the rigorous sensory analysis process already in use. Every seafood sample from reopened waters has passed sensory testing for contamination with oil and dispersant.

Using the new test, scientists have **tested** 1,735 tissue samples including more than half of those collected to reopen Gulf of Mexico federal waters. Only a few showed trace amounts of dispersant residue (13 of the 1,735), well below the **safety threshold** of 100 parts per million for finfish and 500 parts per million for shrimp, crabs and oysters. As such, they do not pose a threat to human health.

The new test detects dioctyl sodium sulfosuccinate, known as DOSS, a major component of the dispersants used in the Gulf. DOSS is also approved by FDA for use in various household products and over-the-counter medication at very low levels. The best scientific data to date indicates that DOSS does not build up in fish tissues.

NRDA Update

NOAA has launched a **new website** about the Deepwater Horizon BP Oil Spill Natural Resource Damage Assessment (NRDA). With modern design and updated functionality, the site includes several new **fact sheets**, a **calendar of events**, **frequently asked questions**, a public **e-mail list sign up** and a **video overview of NRDA**.

Ask a responder: Dr. Sam Walker, NOAA

Dr. Sam Walker, the chief scientist of the Subsurface Monitoring Unit, recently shared his thoughts about the coordinated response in a short **interview**. In addition to talking about the scientific aspects of the spill, he noted: "We remind ourselves every day that our greatest responsibility is meeting the needs of the Gulf citizens and ensuring the health of this important ecosystem."





Federal & Academic Scientists Return from Deep-sea Research Cruise in Gulf of Mexico

Scientists Observe Damage to Deep-sea Corals

Government and academic scientists on a multi-week **expedition** to explore deep-sea coral habitats in the Gulf of Mexico recently observed evidence of recent damage to corals and associated communities of marine life. At a site approximately seven miles southwest of the wellhead, researchers on NOAA Ship **Ronald H. Brown** visually observed a brown substance and dead and dying corals at a depth of roughly 4,600 feet. Laboratory analyses will help scientists determine what caused the effects, whether the substance is oil, and whether it is consistent with the Deepwater Horizon release. More details on the observations can be found on NOAA's [website](#).



Useful Links

- [RestoreTheGulf.gov](#)
- [GeoPlatform.gov](#)
- [NOAA Mission Log](#)
- [National Oceanographic Data Center \(NODC\)](#)
- [Seafood Safety](#)
- [NOAA Science Missions & Data](#)



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