**Responders review scientific report to guide ongoing cleanup and mitigation actions**

NEW ORLEANS - As planned and in coordination and consultation with state and local partners, the federal government's response framework for the Deepwater Horizon BP oil spill will transition on Friday, allowing for long-term response operations to be overseen by regional U.S. Coast Guard units rather than surge forces.

Capt. Lincoln Stroh will assume duties as the Federal On-scene Coordinator from Rear Adm. Paul Zukunft and the Unified Area Command, which Zukunft led, will transfer oversight of cleanup operations to the existing Gulf Coast Incident Management Team as part of the Coast Guard’s 8th District.

Stroh has been working alongside Zukunft and the UAC for several weeks in preparation for a smooth transition. He will report to the Coast Guard's 8th District Commander, Rear Adm. Mary Landry, who leads all Coast Guard operations in the Gulf Coast from her headquarters in New Orleans. This transition to the permanent regional command structure will ensure that response activities continue to effectively target the areas requiring cleanup.

Zukunft has served on the response since June 4, and relieved Rear Adm. James Watson as the FOSC on July 12. He will return to his permanent assignment at U.S. Coast Guard headquarters in Washington, D.C., as assistant commandant for marine safety, security and stewardship.

"It has been my honor to serve with more than the 47,000 responders from the federal, state, tribal, local, private and volunteer sectors who aggressively and diligently fought the worst oil spill in US history," said Zukunft. "The passion and commitment of these responders to mitigate the environmental and economic impacts of this spill has been awe inspiring and something I have observed during each of the hundreds of oil spill site visits that I made during these past six months. The unity of effort among our local stakeholders has evolved to provide seamless and extremely well coordinated operations."

Stroh has been acting as an assistant to Zukunft since Nov. 13. As the FOSC, Stroh will serve as the representative of the federal government in charge of overseeing the cleanup of recoverable oil from the BP Deepwater Horizon oil spill. More than 6,400 total personnel and 360 vessels continue to actively work on the oil spill response.

Additionally, in conjunction with the transition, a scientific report identifying the location and distribution of subsurface oil was provided to the Federal On-Scene Coordinator on Thursday. The report, produced by the interagency Operational Science Advisory Team, provides findings based on more than six months of subsurface monitoring in the Gulf, and gives the response organization detailed information about where recoverable oil remains to guide efforts moving forward.

The report includes chemical analysis of nearly 17,000 water and sediment samples collected between May and October. In the very near shore, scientists observed oil mats or indications of oil mats in shallow, sub-tidal areas. Traces of oil were also found in deepwater sediments near the wellhead. Based on this information, the FOSC has directed response teams to focus assessment and recovery efforts on the potentially recoverable near-shore oil.

This report is not intended to quantify the remaining oil nor determine the fate of unrecoverable oil. It is also not intended to evaluate long term damage caused by the spill. Rather, it will guide responders and allow clean-up workers to respond most effectively as they continue to clean up any remaining recoverable oil.

In all sampling there were no exceedances of the Environmental Protection Agency’s (EPA) human health benchmark and no exceedances of the EPA’s dispersant benchmarks. Approximately one percent of samples taken since Aug. 3 exceeded aquatic life benchmarks.  Of these, only sediment samples taken within two miles of the wellhead were consistent with the Deepwater Horizon source. Sediment samples with above-normal levels of oil compounds were found as far as six miles away from the wellhead, but could not be conclusively fingerprinted as oil from the Deepwater Horizon source.

The report, "Summary Report for Sub-sea and Sub-surface Oil and Dispersant Detection: Sampling and Monitoring," includes analytical chemistry data from 17,000 samples, making it the most comprehensive data set and analysis yet completed since the Deepwater Horizon BP oil spill in April. Although no recoverable offshore oil was identified through this sampling effort, continued sampling and monitoring activities will be conducted as part of the Natural Resource Damage Assessment (NRDA) process. In keeping with the Federal Government's commitment to transparency and collaboration, all the data that were analyzed in this report are available online at restorethegulf.gov.
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To view the report and associated data, please visit <http://www.restorethegulf.gov/release/2010/12/16/data-analysis-and-findings>.

For more information about the OSAT report, contact Jennifer Austin, NOAA, at (202) 302-9047.

For questions about the UAC to IMT Transition, contact the Joint Information Center at (713) 323-1670.                                                          ###