

OPERATIONAL SCIENCE ADVISORY TEAM (OSAT-3)
Unified Command

Investigation of Recurring Residual Oil in Discrete
Shoreline Areas in Louisiana



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Executive Summary

Extensive field investigations and response activities have been conducted in the past three years along the Louisiana coastline following the Deepwater Horizon MC252 Spill of National Significance (MC252 spill). These activities have resulted in many locations meeting endpoint criteria defined in the Deepwater Horizon Shoreline Clean-up Completion Plan (SCCP) (2011). However there are some remaining discrete areas of shoreline that have experienced periodic remobilization of weathered oil (“re-oiling”) which has prevented or delayed these segments from reaching the endpoint criteria. The program outlined in this document was initiated to integrate the various types of data collected during the Response and utilize these data, aerial photographs, and output from hydrodynamic models to provide the Federal On-Scene Coordinator (FOSC) with information on the likely source(s) of residual oil and the mechanism(s) whereby re-oiling may be occurring in these specific shoreline locations in Louisiana.

The third Operational Science Advisory Team (OSAT-3) was chartered to provide a science-based review of data collected during the MC252 spill response; to conduct directed studies and sampling as necessary to evaluate source(s), transport, and deposition of weathered residual oil from the MC252 spill; and to recommend additional operational activities to more effectively recover this material. The decision on whether or not this oil is amenable to removal actions¹ under the provisions of the *Clean Water Act*, the *Oil Pollution Act of 1990*, and the *National Oil and Hazardous Substances Pollution Contingency Plan* lies with the FOSC. The OSAT-3 charter outlined five tasks:

Task 1. Evaluate the trends observed in frequency, rate and potential for remobilization of oil on segments.

Task 2. Determine and record the locations and typical shoreline profiles and morphology for likely source(s) of residual oil or origin of the surface residual balls (SRBs).

Task 3. Define or determine the mechanisms whereby re-oiling phenomena may be occurring.

¹ The Oil Pollution Act of 1990 (OPA 90) defines a removal action as “containment and removal of oil or a hazardous substance from water and shorelines or the taking of other actions as may be necessary to minimize or mitigate damage to the public health or welfare, including, but not limited to, fish, shellfish, wildlife, and public and private property, shorelines and beaches.”

Task 4. Investigate the potential for mitigating actions that may be taken to reduce these potential occurrences and, to the extent mechanisms are identified, evaluate their feasibility, and the net environmental benefit of employing such methods.

Task 5. Recommend a path forward in order to reach SCCP guidelines or appropriately manage identified areas through alternative methods.

The OSAT-3 team used a three-pronged approach to define the sources and mechanisms of shoreline re-oiling associated with the segments evaluated in the Louisiana Area of Responsibility (AOR):

- Evaluation of existing observation and material collection data to validate and characterize re-oiling conditions across the varied shoreline types in the AOR over time.
- Development of hydrodynamic models to assess the mobility, transport, and deposition of residual oil and native sediment.
- Evaluation of the potential for formation and persistence of weathered oil deposits by evaluating changes in beach and marsh morphology since initial shoreline oiling.

Integrated assessments of these data (both spatial and temporal) were conducted during multiple review sessions with coastal experts and participating state and local response and natural resource representatives from February through August 2013. These sessions addressed shoreline segments that did not meet SCCP endpoint criteria as of June 1, 2012, as determined by the Gulf Coast Incident Management Team (GCIMT), as well as segments that did meet endpoint criteria, but were of continuing concern to the state and local response and natural resource representatives as identified during the review sessions (438 of the 1,398 segments in the Louisiana AOR evaluated by the OSAT-3 team).

Based on the initial integrated assessment, the OSAT-3 team determined that sufficient data and Geographic Information System (GIS) capabilities were available to evaluate the formation and persistence of weathered oil deposits across the AOR. The FOSC directed that Tasks 4 and 5 be separated from OSAT-3 and integrated into an operational project called the Buried Oil Project (BOP), which was executed in parallel. The intent of the BOP was to expedite delineation and recovery activities, where feasible, in areas identified as more likely to contain buried oil deposits. The BOP team regularly received data and guidance from the OSAT-3 team, and provided additional information on current field conditions. This report presents the

results of OSAT-3 activities and notes where results were forwarded for further evaluation under the BOP. The results of the BOP are summarized in a report included in Appendix D.

Summary of Key Findings:

- Repeated beach profiles and aerial imagery collected in the AOR documented that many beaches were in a highly erosional state (lower elevation) when weathered oil was coming ashore during 2010. As a result, much of the initial oil was buried in the intertidal zone as the beaches accreted over the following months. Elevated water levels associated with tropical storms and hurricanes deposited incoming oil and remobilized previously buried oil deposits above the intertidal zone. The potential for the formation and persistence of weathered oil deposits in the AOR is thus a function of initial oiling(s) coupled with coastal hydrodynamics / geomorphology (erosion and accretion) and MC252 spill response activities.
- Re-oiling patterns and dominant mechanisms vary across shoreline segments and can vary within a segment depending on conditions. Periods of low re-oiling observations may not indicate the absence of source material, as concentrated deposits do not break up and remobilize if covered by sand. Conversely, increases in collections/observed shoreline re-oiling are not a definitive indication of concentrated sources of material at that location. Significant variability in the percent of weathered oil in collections was observed across the AOR, therefore, assessments of collected material need to account for the total weight of material removed as well as the percent oil in the collection.
- All field evidence and modeling results (wave energy, sediment suspension, oil/sand mixing) support the hypothesis that buried oil deposits formed landward of the first sand bar on Gulf-facing beaches and did not form in deeper offshore areas or in shallow bays. Buried oil deposits are found in protected areas and near inlets and are generally associated with anchored boom, marsh vegetation and peat platforms.
- Four major mechanisms of weathered oil remobilization were identified:
 - (1) Cross-shore (perpendicular to the shoreline) transport of material broken off of submerged oil mats (SOMs) in the intertidal zone in close proximity to the stranding;

- (2) Cross-shore transport and/or uncovering of diffuse material referred to as surface residual balls (SRBs) or patties (depending on size), in the intertidal and nearshore subtidal zones;
 - (3) Longshore (parallel to shore) transport and deposition of SRBs from diffuse sources; and
 - (4) Simple uncovering or exposure of material (buried since initial oiling and/or residual oil from cleanup operations).
- Differences in wave energy and sediment composition along protected areas such as marshes and mud flats compared to Gulf-facing beaches results in sediment/oil mixtures with different characteristics in these environments. Compared to Gulf-facing beaches, native sediments in these low wave energy environments are generally smaller in size (silt and clay instead of sand) or highly organic (peat). Recurring oiling in these areas is associated with uncovering and localized migration (vertical and lateral) of remnant oil.
 - Hydrodynamic modeling results indicate that, with the exception of tidal inlets, larger SRBs and patties (>2.5 cm in diameter) are redistributed to distant down-current locations only during storm conditions (offshore waves greater than 2 meters). This modeling also indicates that some regions are more conducive to accumulation of smaller residual material than others.
 - From initial oiling up to Hurricane Isaac (August 2012), beach elevations did not generally drop below levels (erosional state) observed at the time of initial oiling. Post-storm field assessments, aerial imagery, and beach profile data collected immediately following Hurricane Isaac documented shoreline areas that have undergone sufficient erosion (vertically and laterally) to cause breakup and/or redistribution of the initial sand/oil deposits. Post-Isaac assessments also documented exposed and intact SOMs that were subsequently removed by Operations.
 - The pronounced shoreline differences observed using aerial and oblique images collected immediately following Hurricane Isaac coupled with data from post-storm SCAT and Operations activities provided a foundation for an integrated assessment of the natural uncovering and/or removal of SOMs on Gulf-facing beaches. Extensive

surveys (SCAT, Snorkel SCAT, and Operations) during Response provide evidence that diffuse deposits are widespread across the segments evaluated by OSAT-3 in this AOR. Most shoreline re-oiling is due to the uncovering and/or cross-shore transport of small, diffuse material nearshore. Because this material is less mobile than the surrounding sand, it is likely to become buried and exposed under normal sand transport processes, thereby lengthening the time it may take to move onshore.

- There are isolated and identifiable areas in the segments evaluated by OSAT-3 where submerged or buried oil deposits may remain. Field investigations by the BOP documented diffuse SRBs in all of these areas, and buried oil deposits were delineated and removed from 5 of the 13 segments. As a result of natural processes, Response efforts, and OSAT-3/BOP activities, the potential for extensive (larger than sampling grid) buried oil deposits to remain within the AOR is low.
- Not all remnant MC252 oil has been removed from this AOR due to a combination of ecological, operational and safety considerations. Most of the re-oiling in this AOR is from diffuse secondary sources being reworked by coastal processes, and that pattern is likely to continue. Further residual oil remobilization of some segments in the AOR may occur, but the conditions needed to remobilize (and the locations of these re-oiling occurrences) are generally predictable. One area of uncertainty relates to resolution of potential buried oil remaining in association with relic peat and clay platforms in the nearshore areas across the AOR.

1.0 Introduction

The purpose of this report from the third Operational Science Advisory Team (OSAT-3) is to provide the Federal On-Scene Coordinator (FOSC) for the Deepwater Horizon MC252 Spill of National Significance (MC252 spill) with information on the likely source(s) of residual oil and the mechanism(s) whereby remobilization of residual oil (“re-oiling”) may be occurring in specific shoreline locations along the Louisiana coastline affected by the MC252 spill (Appendix A). This information is intended to inform the FOSC decision-making on potential operational actions that can be taken to identify, delineate, and recover this residual material more effectively from targeted shoreline segments that have been delayed in endpoint criteria defined in the *Deepwater Horizon Shoreline Clean-up Completion Plan* (Unified Command, 2011) (<http://www.restorethegulf.gov/sites/default/files/u306/Signed%20SCCP1.pdf>).

The coastline was divided into segments by the Shoreline Cleanup Assessment Technique (SCAT) teams during the MC252 spill response in order to provide (1) a reference system for the location of oiled areas, and (2) a detailed documentation of the shore zone. SCAT teams conducted surveys along the coastal areas of St Tammany, Orleans, St Bernard, Plaquemines, Jefferson, Lafourche, Terrebonne, St Mary, Iberia, Vermillion, and Cameron Parishes in the Louisiana AOR during the MC252 spill response. A total of 1,399 segments were defined by SCAT in the Louisiana AOR (Table 1.1) and varied in length from 10 to 181,711 meters, with a median of 4,627 meters. Segments were numbered based on a prefix (LATB = Louisiana Terrebonne Parish) followed by numbers based on the subdivision of the parish and alongshore sequence (LATB04-008-10).

Shoreline segments that failed to meet the *Shoreline Clean-up Completion Plan* (SCCP) endpoint criteria as of June 1, 2012 and shoreline segments that met endpoint criteria but remained a continuing concern to the state and local response and natural resource representatives were evaluated in the OSAT-3 process (438 segments, Figure 1.1²). Segments in St Tammany/Orleans, St Bernard, Plaquemines, Jefferson, Lafourche, and Terrebonne Parishes were evaluated by the OSAT-3 science team and are discussed in this document. All segments with any reported heavy or moderate oiling (portions of segments) during SCAT

^{2 2} Larger versions of each of the figures presented in this document are available in Appendix H. Additionally, all maps and associated data can be viewed at <http://www.restorethegulf.gov/>

surveys of surface oiling condition were evaluated by OSAT-3.

Parish	Total # of Segments ^a	# Segments Evaluated by OSAT-3
St Tammany	15	0
Orleans	13	3
St Bernard	199	60
Plaquemines	444	149
Jefferson	174	101
Lafourche	162	60
Terrebonne	198	65
St Mary	40	0
Iberia	55	0
Vermillion	66	0
Cameron	32	0
Total for AOR	1398	438

^aSegments defined by SCAT during response activities

Table 1.1 MC252 spill response shoreline segments in the Louisiana AOR evaluated by OSAT-3.

These segments span a wide range of:

- Environmental settings (e.g. sediment type[s], wave energy, tidal range, currents, vegetation, and erosion/deposition patterns)
- Shoreline activities not associated with the MC252 spill response (e.g. beach renourishment, dredging, jetties, and culverts)
- Oiling histories (e.g. frequency, degree, and consistency of initial oiling)
- MC252 spill response activities (e.g. nearshore booming and oil removal operations).



Figure 1.1 Overview of segments in the Louisiana Area of Responsibility (AOR) that were evaluated by the OSAT-3 team.

As of June 1, 2012, remobilized residual oil on the shorelines across this AOR is primarily SRBs. SRBs are a mixture of mainly sand and 4-20 percent weathered oil. There are some areas in the AOR with little sand, where weathered oil mixed with or was stranded on finer grained, organic sediments, such as marshes and relic peat platforms. Chemical testing as part of the OSAT-2 study (2011) showed that the chemicals of concern from a human health and an ecotoxicity standpoint have largely been depleted due to the extensive weathering that the oil has undergone since its release (see <http://www.restorethegulf.gov/release/2011/03/01/osat-2-fate-and-effects-oil-beaches>)

Oil was deposited along the shoreline in three zones: subtidal, intertidal, and supratidal (see Figure 1.2). Repeated beach profiles and aerial imagery collected in the AOR documented that many beaches were in a highly erosional state (lower elevation) when weathered oil was coming ashore during 2010. As a result, much of the initial oil was buried in the intertidal zone as the beaches accreted over the following months. Elevated water levels associated with tropical storms and hurricanes deposited incoming oil and remobilized previously buried oil deposits above the intertidal zone.

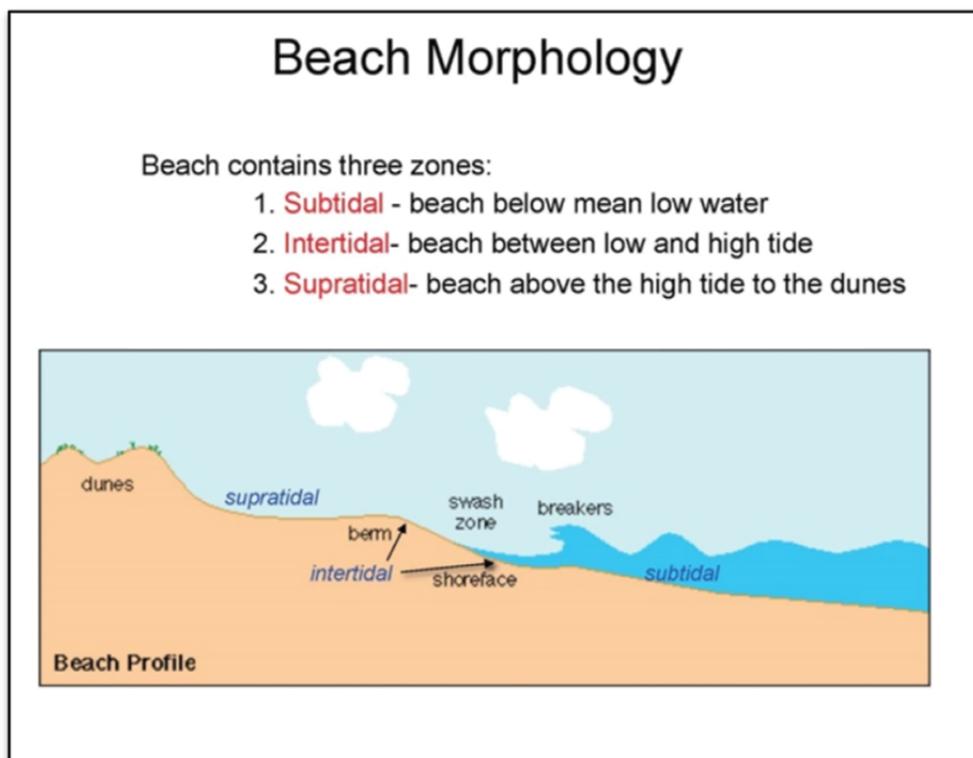


Figure 1.2 Shoreline zones. From OSAT-2 (2011).

In addition to sandy beach areas, there is remnant oil mixed with fine grained sediments or soaked into highly organic sediments (peat) in the more protected marshes and mud flats in this AOR (Figures 1.3 and 1.4). As described in the *MC 252 Stage III SCAT-Shoreline Treatment Implementation Framework for Louisiana* (2010): “The vegetated habitats affected by the DWH spill are mainly dominated by three species: *Spartina alterniflora* (smooth cordgrass); *Avicennia germinans* (black mangrove); and *Phragmites australis* (Roseau cane, common reed). Smooth cordgrass is generally the dominant lower intertidal salt marsh vegetation. It varies from dense stands, to broken and open marshes, and can occur as a narrow fringe to extensive salt marsh platforms. In Louisiana, black mangroves are present on barrier island (back barrier) salt marshes and also in the more southern salt marshes, both as continuous stands of stunted black mangrove and in association with smooth cordgrass. Roseau cane occurs as dense, tall stands primarily along the major channels of the Mississippi River along the Birdsfoot.”



Figure 1.3 Stranded oil associated with fringing marsh vegetation.
Photo taken 8/14/2010 in Segment LATB04-046-30. Heavy oiling in a portion of this segment was documented by SCAT survey.

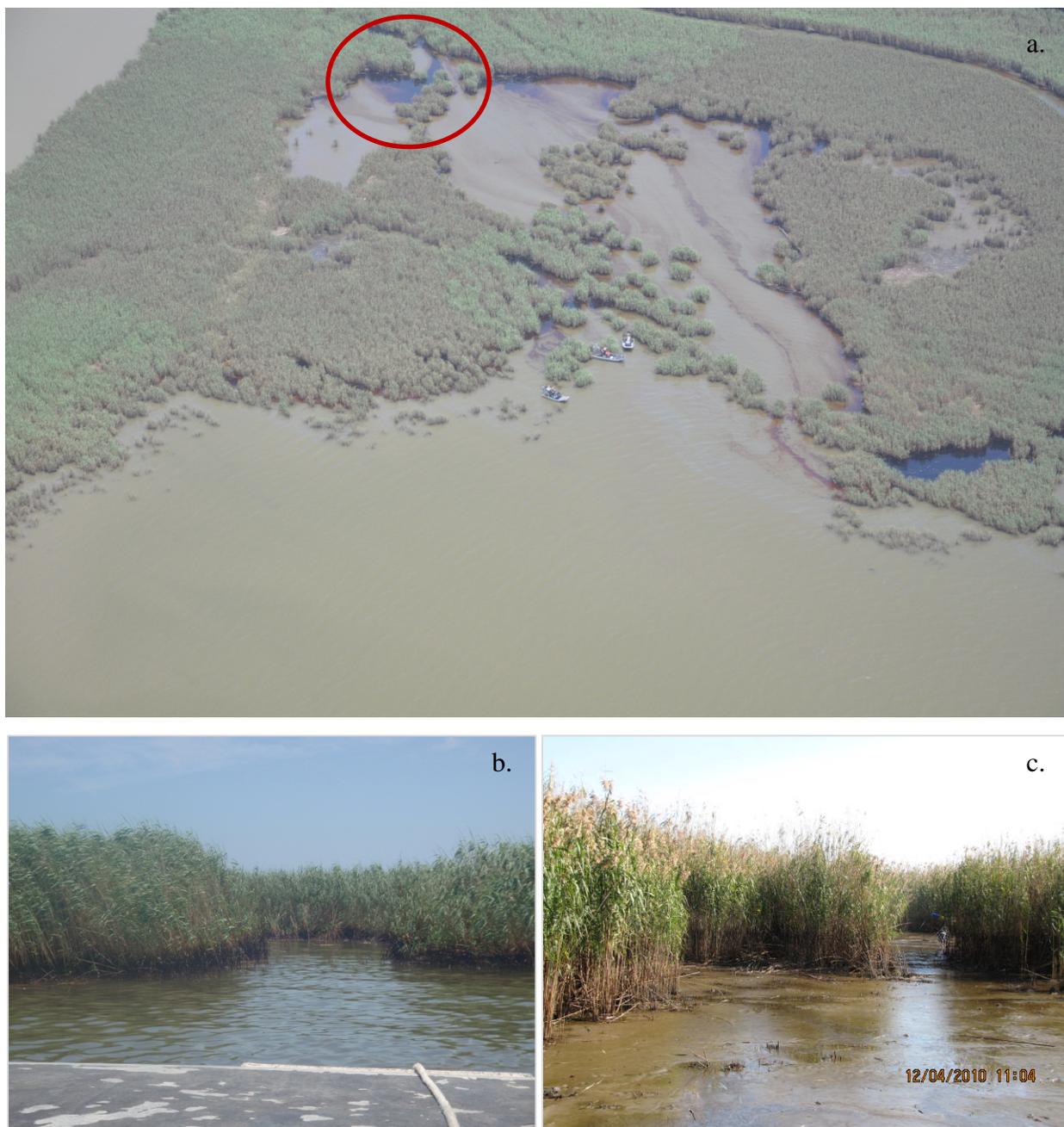


Figure 1.4 Remnant oil associated with fringing marsh vegetation in Segment LAPL10-004-90. Panel a) photo taken 5/19/2010, Panel b) taken 7/12/2010, and Panel c) taken 12/04/2010 in the highlighted area. Heavy oiling of this area was documented by SCAT surveys. Oil trapped in very protected marsh areas soaks in and moves out of organic soils causing re-oiling of soil surfaces and sometimes standing vegetation with rising water levels and increased temperatures. Root channels and animal burrows increase the connectivity between surface and subsurface.

For the purposes of this report, three forms of residual oil/sand mixtures were identified in the sandy intertidal and shallow surf-zone along the Louisiana AOR. There is also remnant oil associated with organic sediment (marshes and peat platforms) (Figures 1.3 and 1.4).

(1) **Submerged oil mats (SOMs).** SOMs are primary deposits (undisturbed since initial stranding, amalgamation, and burial) in the subtidal and intertidal zones with a surface area greater than 1 square meter. They formed under two scenarios: 1) when weathered oil at the water surface at the time of initial oiling reached either a shallow environment with sufficient energy to facilitate entrainment of sand by the oil, and therefore settle, or 2) when surface oil arriving near coastlines was stranded and seeped into the sand on receding tides. Later, these primary deposits may have been covered by sand. SOMs observed during the MC252 spill response were generally meters in cross-shore width, meters to tens of meters in alongshore length, and up to tens of centimeters thick (Figure 1.5). In many locations, SOMs are associated with relic marsh (peat) platforms (Figure 1.6).



Figure 1.5 Partially uncovered submerged oil mat (arrow) that has been delineated (see stakes) in Segment LALF02-018-10 on Fourchon beach. Wisner Foundation photo taken 9/30/2010.

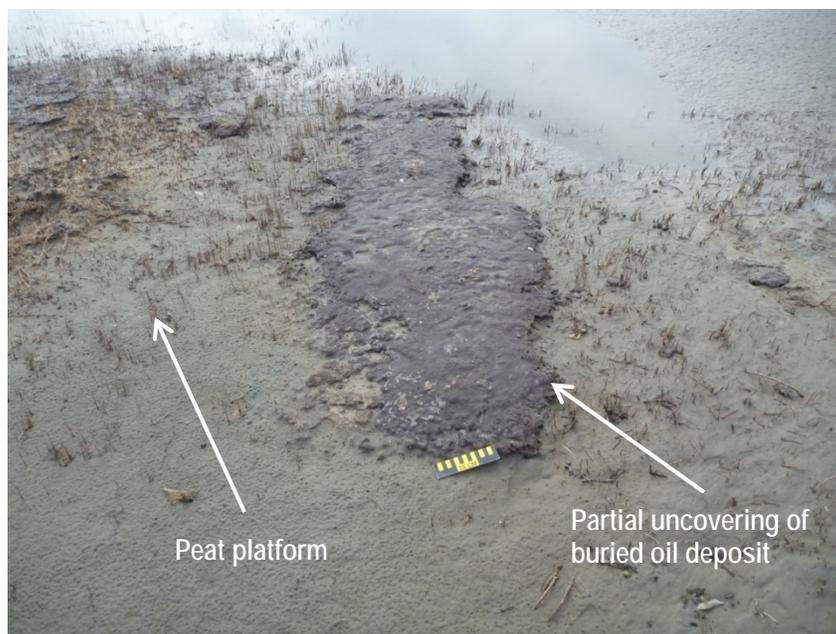


Figure 1.6 Uncovering of buried oil deposits associated with peat platform.
Photo taken 10/15/2012 in Segment LATB04-010-10.

- (2) **Patties.** Patties can be found across all tidal zones and have a diameter ranging from 10 centimeters to 1 meter, and can be primary or secondary deposits (fragments of primary deposits transported from initial depositional location). Primary patty deposits are commonly found in lower energy environments, such as the back side of barrier islands or along mainland beaches and marshes (with sand) although they have been documented on Gulf-facing beaches (Figure 1.7).



Figure 1.7 Patty-sized deposits observed in Segment LATB04-004-10.
Photo taken 12/16/2010.

(3) **Surface residual balls (SRBs).** SRBs can be found across all tidal zones and have a diameter of less than 10 centimeters. In general, most SRBs are secondary deposits resulting from weathering of larger deposits, but it is possible some formed during initial oiling (Figure 1.8).



Figure 1.8 Surface residual balls (SRBs) in intertidal zone of beach on Segment LATB04-010-10. Photo taken 10/15/2012.

The OSAT-3 team used the following process to define the source and mechanisms of re-oiling associated with shoreline segments evaluated in the Louisiana AOR:

- Characterized shoreline conditions at the time of oiling through review of detailed aerial images, georectified photographs, beach profiles, and information derived from the SCAT teams.
- Applied hydrodynamic models developed specific to the AOR to refine understanding of formation, mobilization, transport and deposition of sand/oil mixtures associated with re-oiling.
- Used time-sequential aerial imagery to examine shoreline erosion and accretion since initial oiling in evaluation of the potential for concentrated buried oil deposits as a source of re-oiling.
- Based on this evaluation, coupled with an extensive assessment of available SCAT and operational data, sources and mechanisms for re-oiling were defined and areas with a higher potential for contribution by concentrated sources of buried oil were identified for subsequent evaluation by the BOP team.

The final products of OSAT-3 are (1) a segment-by-segment characterization of re-oiling, including spatial databases of all data evaluated, and (2) identification of specific areas within shoreline segments that may contain SOMs in the intertidal and nearshore area. This information was provided by the OSAT-3 team to the BOP team as the foundation for developing plans for delineation and removal of potential deposits of residual oil. The areas investigated by the BOP team and an overview of the investigations are discussed in Appendix D.

2.0 Methods

At the beginning of the OSAT-3 project, the state and local response and natural resource representatives submitted a preliminary list of the highest priority segments that had not met SCCP endpoint criteria as of June 1, 2012 and segments of continuing interest to the representatives. The OSAT-3 science team conducted an initial review of SCAT and Operations data for the identified segments. The data demonstrated a general decreasing trend in material collections by Operations crews as well as a decrease in the degree of re-oiling as reported by SCAT teams.

A number of factors not related to sources of residual oil can influence daily material collections and observations including tide level, time since last survey, debris on beach obscuring SRBs and periodic access restrictions due to environmental and/or cultural resource issues. Periods of low re-oiling observations could not be used as a definitive diagnostic for the absence of a concentrated source, such as a SOM, as SOMs have been located in some segments in the AOR after extended periods of low material recoveries (Figure 2.1). Conversely, increases in re-oiling within a segment may also not be indicative of the presence of SOMs.

Re-oiling is due to the interaction among multiple sources and varied mechanisms. Therefore, examination of re-oiling patterns alone would not be sufficient to fully determine sources and mechanisms of re-oiling across the AOR. During the initial evaluation, two main issues emerged as essential to understanding residual oil remobilization and potentially identifying source deposits included: 1) longshore transport and deposition of sand/oil mixtures and 2) formation and persistence of SOMs. Specifically:

- Can SRBs move long distances alongshore (from one segment to another)?
- If so, how do differences in the clean-up methods influence the time it will take for segments to return to baseline conditions?
- Are there unknown SOMs in deeper offshore areas or in shallow bays that could be a source of continued shoreline re-oiling?
- Are there additional data/methods available to reduce uncertainty related to the persistence of SOMs and other buried oil deposits?

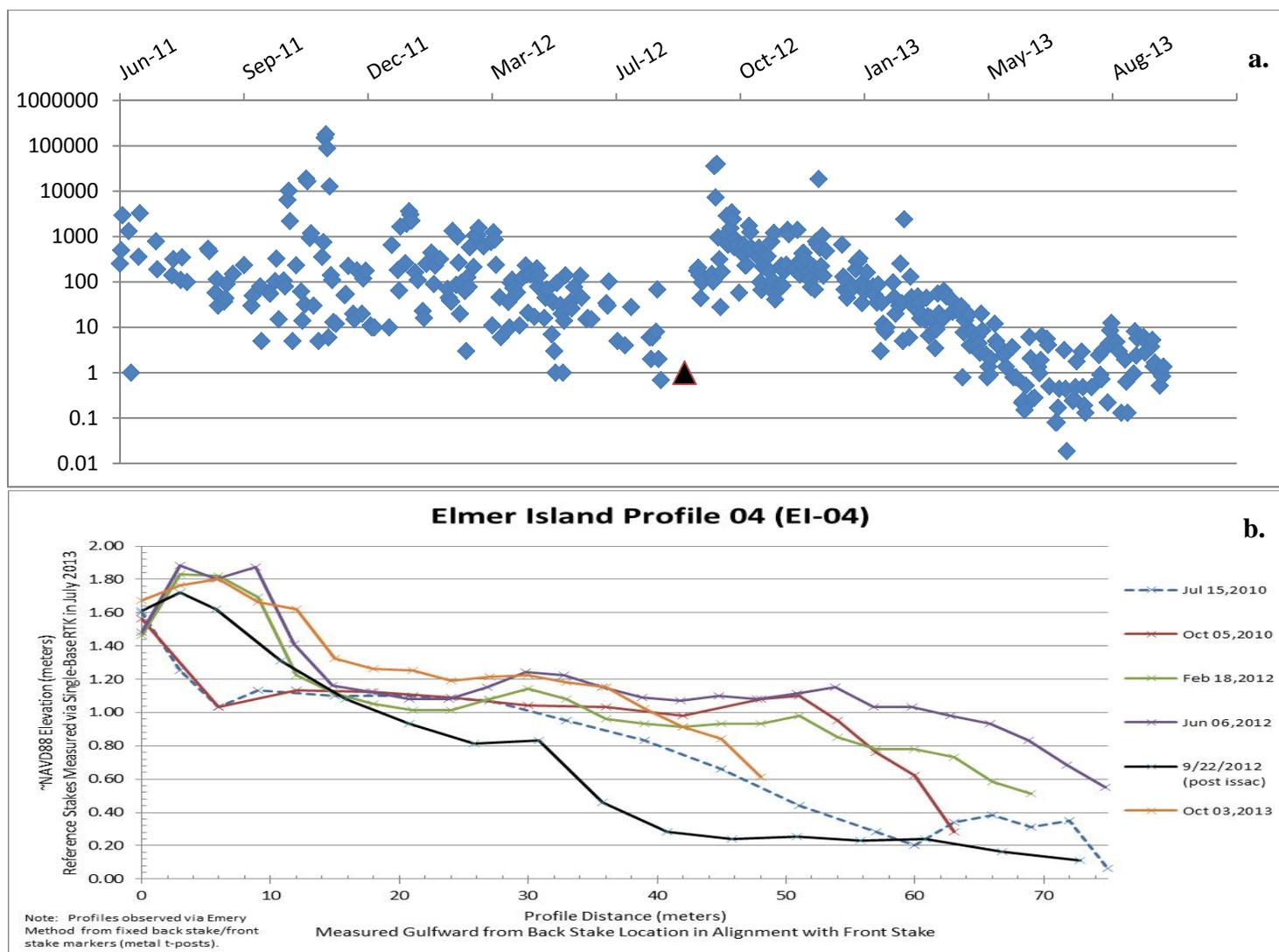


Figure 2.1 Pounds collected (a) and beach profiles (b) from Zone E-4 (part of segment LAJF01-002-10) and beach. Note the period of decreasing collection from Jan 2012 – August 2012. SOMS discovered during post-storm surveys conducted after Hurricane Isaac (August 29, 2012 red triangle) were removed. Note the overburden measured after July 15, 2010 through June 6, 2012. Elevations were above the level during initial oiling until Hurricane Isaac.

Additional studies were conducted to address information gaps related to longshore transport of SRBs and the formation/persistence of SOMs. Under the direction of the OSAT-3 Science team, coastal experts developed modeled estimates of the mobility and transport of native sediment and SRBs based on wave conditions across the AOR since initial oiling. Results of these models provided boundaries on remobilization, transport, and deposition processes associated with re-oiling. In addition, potential SOMs persistence through time was evaluated by mapping changes in shoreline morphology since initial oiling using high-resolution aerial images collected just prior to and through the MC252 spill response.

The OSAT-3 team included a wide range of specialists, including information technologists, GIS analysts, and subject matter experts. The team developed an infrastructure for effective data management, visualization and analysis. The concurrent acquisition, processing and integrated analysis of multiple data sets was necessary for the development of timely, fit-for-purpose products. No individual component used in the analysis was considered determinative. A weight-of-evidence process that accounted for the strengths and weaknesses of different lines of evidence was utilized to arrive at a consensus on the relevant sources and mechanisms for re-oiling of individual segments across the varying shoreline types in the AOR.

2.1 Overview of Integrated Assessment

The OSAT-3 team integrated information and data from these main areas:

- Operations and SCAT data, which provided information on re-oiling.
- Hydrodynamic models to assess the mobility, transport, and deposition of residual oil and native sediment.
- Evaluation of the potential for formation and persistence of SOMs by evaluating changes in beach morphology since initial shoreline oiling in areas amenable to the formation of SOMs.

The data evaluated by OSAT-3 included output from hydrodynamic models for sediment and SRB mobilization and transport, wave energy and sediment suspension processes associated with SOM formation, interpretation of aerial images to understand shoreline morphology during initial oiling and changes over time, oiling history (SCAT data), data associated with removal of material from segments (Operations), beach profile data (Appendix C), and important ancillary information (wind, waves, and tides).

The aerial imaging and GIS system utilized by OSAT-3 facilitated spatial and temporal integration of an unprecedented amount of oil spill response data. For example, the GIS system allows immediate access to orthoimagery (Figures 2.2); oiling history; more than 1 million georeferenced, time-stamped photographs (Figure 2.2); and SCAT subsurface oiling records (Figure 2.3). In addition to data access, the system allows spatial and temporal examination of multiple data sets, notably the depths of subsurface investigations related to amount of overburden / erosion since initial oiling.

Integrated assessments of the data and information (both spatial and temporal) were conducted during multiple review sessions with coastal experts and participating state and local response and natural resource representatives from February through August 2013. Based on the available data, the OSAT-3 team determined that local diffuse sources are responsible for most but not all of the re-oiling. In addition to these local sources, review of the SCAT data provided evidence of longshore transport and deposition of small SRBs along segments near tidal inlets. The potential for distant sources to contribute to re-oiling across the AOR due to longshore transport and deposition was evaluated based on the output of the hydrodynamic models.

The contributions, mechanisms, and locations of more concentrated deposits (SOMs and other buried material) were evaluated by first examining the potential for their formation utilizing oiling history and nearshore morphology at the time of initial oiling. Next, the OSAT-3 team evaluated the persistence of these areas through time by mapping changes in shoreline morphology utilizing high-resolution imagery and beach profiles.

An integrated assessment of the contributions of local diffuse, concentrated, and more distant sources provided a more thorough understanding of the complexity of the sources and mechanisms associated with shoreline re-oiling in this AOR.



Figure 2.2 Location and examples of georeferenced photographs in areas around Segment LATB-008-10 (West Timbalier Island western end). The maximum oiling category based on SCAT surface surveys is also shown. Panel a) is a photograph taken on 8/6/2010 of a patch of heavy oiling trapped by marsh/peat near the recurved spit. Panel b) is an aerial photograph of the Segment taken on 9/3/2012.

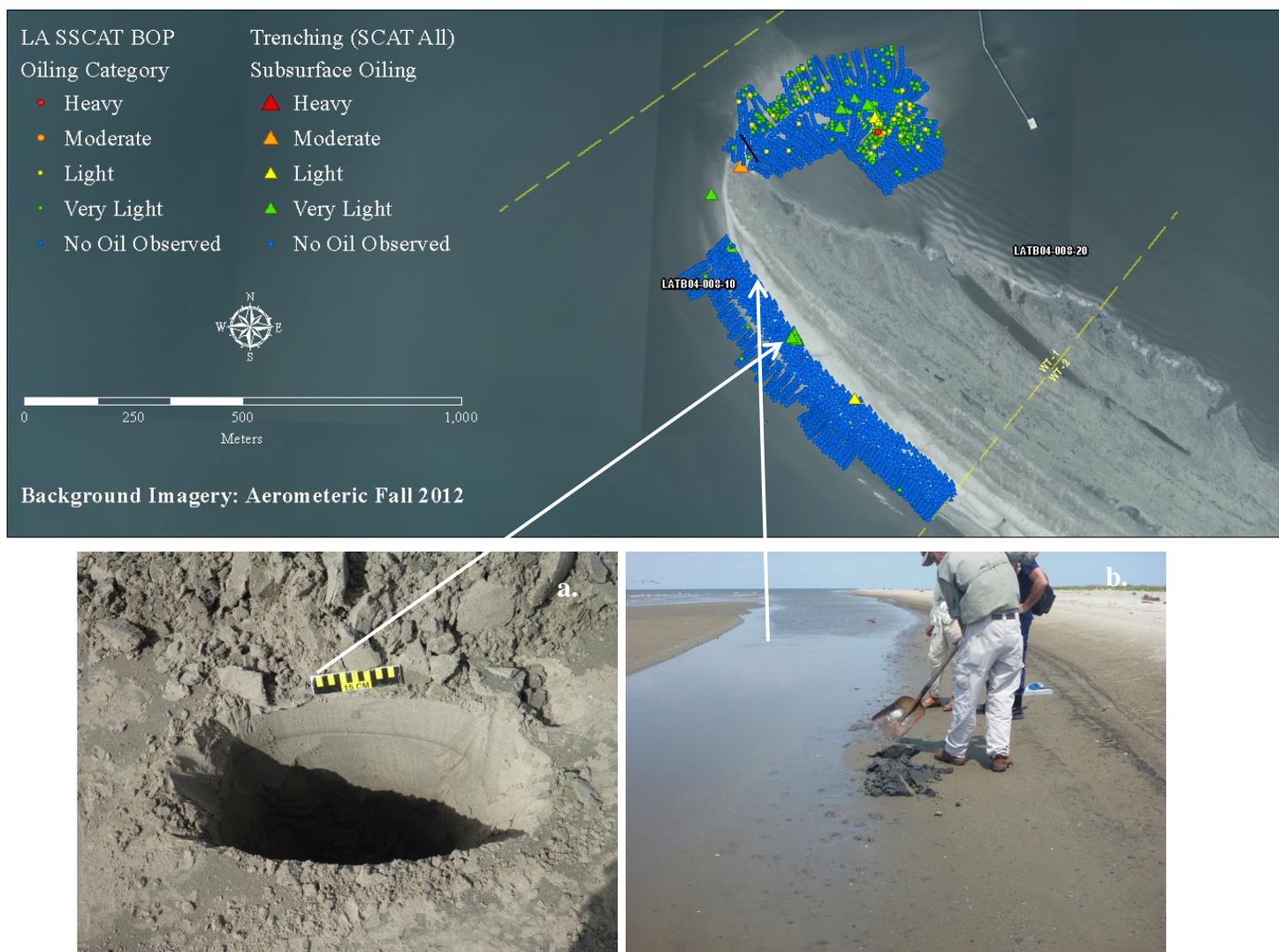


Figure 2.3 Location of SCAT (triangles) and snorkel SCAT (circles) coded by oiling condition.

Panel a) documents SCAT subsurface assessments (photo taken 11/12/2011). The pit had very light observable oil. Symbols denote location and oiling condition observed during MC252 spill response activities. Panel b) shows SCAT activities (photo taken 8/17/2011) in an area with heavy oiling observed in prior SCAT surveys. The areas of dense sampling were conducted in areas identified by OSAT-3 and assessed as part of the BOP.

2.2 Evaluation of Field Data to Determine Characteristics of Segment Re-Oiling

The primary data sources used to evaluate re-oiling in the segments of interest were provided by the MC252 spill response SCAT and Operations teams. The Operations data included a daily record of material collections by segment in the AOR. Material collections data included recovery location, the amount of material collected (in pounds), the method of material recovery (i.e., manual or mechanical), the angularity of the material collected, and in some cases, the size of the material collected. Operations activities provided additional data on the location of surface or sub-surface oiled material (including SOMs, SRBs, and stained sand) observed in beach areas in specific portions of the AOR (Appendix D).

SCAT survey data used in the evaluation included surface and subsurface assessment of oiling condition. Augmenting the shoreline SCAT surveys, field teams also conducted surveys in the subtidal zone (snorkel SCAT). The focus of the subtidal snorkel SCAT was to locate and delineate SOMs in the AOR to guide Operations activities (Appendix B). During the OSAT-3 review process, knowing the Z component (elevation relative to mean sea level) was important to better understanding the characteristics of SOMs relative to shoreline morphology. As a result, OSAT-3 recommended that the snorkel SCAT data collection process include this additional parameter; and this was implemented in subsequent snorkel SCAT assessments.

The SCAT teams characterized oiling by category (no oil to heavy oiling), as defined in the *Nearshore and Shoreline Stage I and Stage II Response Plan* (NOAA 2010a) (http://gomex.erma.noaa.gov/layerfiles/23155/metadata/houma_cumulative_scat.htm). SCAT datasets included whether oiled material was observed, the oiled material location, number of materials found (if known), size of material, and if relevant, weight of material removed from a segment. The raw SCAT data evaluated in this report are found on the Environmental Response Management Application (ERMA®) Gulf Response website, at <http://resources.geoplatform.gov/news/mapping-response-bp-oil-spill-gulf-mexico>.

Time series data of material weight, material size, and SCAT oiling category for each segment were evaluated by the OSAT-3 team for spatial and temporal patterns across the range of shoreline types in the AOR. It should be noted that SCAT and Operations teams did not always recover all of the material observed during segment surveys. These data were evaluated within

the context of antecedent wind and wave patterns obtained from nearby NOAA observation stations, oiling history during the time oil was coming ashore, and characteristics of the material found (e.g., angularity and degree of weathering). In addition, photographs taken during the MC252 spill response (including many provided by the state and local MC252 spill response and natural resource representatives) were examined. GIS layers were developed for georeferenced photographs to allow easy sorting (by date, location, or activity) and viewing.

2.3 Development of Hydrodynamic Models to Evaluate Potential Longshore Transport

A subgroup of coastal experts (Appendix E) designed a set of objectives to address the potential for SRB movement alongshore. The specific objectives of this subgroup's effort were to:

- Identify spatial patterns in longshore current direction and velocity
- Identify zones of convergence and longshore current reversal
- Identify potential sediment and SRB sinks
- Estimate SRB movement along the coast
- Determine the influence of tidal currents on SRB mobility and transport in the vicinity of tidal inlets.

The underlying approach was to develop and analyze numerically modeled estimates of the mobility and transport of sand and SRBs. Numerically modeling a time series of wave and current conditions from the start of the MC252 spill to the time of the OSAT-3 study would prohibit results from being easily extended to future time periods. Therefore, a scenario-based modeling approach was established. Wave conditions over the 25-month period from April 2010 to May 2012 were analyzed along the Gulf Coast from Florida through Louisiana. Two separate modeling efforts for the Louisiana AOR are included in the report provided by the University of New Orleans Pontchartrain Institute for Environmental Sciences (Appendix E). The modeling approach utilized for OSAT-3 is standard for the industry and has widespread application to hydrodynamics, sediment transport and morphology in estuarine and coastal environments.

The characterizations of wave scenarios, the time-weighted average of SRB mobility and potential alongshore flux, and the inlet tidal dynamics cases have been archived in GIS format. SRB and sand mobility were estimated by comparing the modeled wave- and current-induced bottom shear stress to critical values. SRBs were characterized using six size classes: 0.03

centimeters, 0.5 centimeters, 1.0 centimeters, 2.5 centimeters, 5.0 centimeters, and 10.0 centimeters. SRBs or sand grains will begin to move when the shear stress force associated with the combined action of waves and currents exceeds a size- and density-specific critical threshold value. These threshold values were estimated using a semi-empirical Soulsby-Van Rijn relationship (Soulsby 1997). The Soulsby-Van Rijn method accounts for currents, which are the dominant forces in longshore transport, and waves, which contribute a stirring action that keeps particles in motion and allows them to move with current velocities otherwise too weak to support transport. Localized turbulence and wave-to-wave variations can cause any individual particle to move at calculated stress values below threshold; however, the formulations used, on average, have been found to be accurate for surf zone calculation (Deigaard and others, 1991; Soulsby and others, 1993).

Variation in weather conditions affecting SRB mobility and transport was modeled with a total of 80 scenarios defined with five wave height bins bounded by 0.0 meters, 0.5 meters, 1.0 meters, 1.5 meters, 2.0 meters, and 5.0 meters, and 16 wave direction bins, each spanning 22.5 degrees, from 0° to 360°. The scenarios were compared to a time series of wave conditions taken from National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Wavewatch III operational model output at the location of NOAA buoy 42040 located 64 nm south of Dauphin Island, AL. For each scenario, a representative time in the record was chosen that best matched that scenario. The corresponding output was used to drive the boundary conditions of a higher-resolution coupled wave-flow model. Variations in water levels were accounted for in the time-series simulations. Water levels imposed at the model boundaries were obtained from the TPXO (version 7.2) global tide model, which uses a numerical tidal model and satellite-derived observations of tide elevation to produce tidal constituents (Egbert and Erofeeva 2010).

Bathymetry was supplied by the northern Gulf Coast digital elevation map (Love et al. 2012).

Where available, these data were supplemented with additional sources including:

- Topographic Lidar: Louisiana Coast, Lake Pontchartrain and Mississippi Barrier Islands Lidar (NOAA 2010b)
- U. S. Geological Survey Barrier Island Comprehensive Monitoring Program (Kindinger et al., 2013)
- Digital elevation models derived from stereo-imagery collected during the MC252

spill response.

The range of hydrodynamic conditions was assumed to be well represented by the scenario approach; the validity of this assumption was quantified by comparison of reconstructed waves to observations within the model domains. The shear stress, mobility, and potential flux calculations have been applied to solid, sand-sized, round particles, and were assumed to be valid for SRBs that are sand/oil aggregates and may be non-spherical and sparsely distributed. The use of a range of critical stress values was designed to capture this uncertainty associated with particle shape and mobility. Cross-shore transport or processes in the extremely shallow swash zone were not explicitly accounted for in the model conditions. Static bathymetry was used to resolve sea-floor sand features (e.g., sand bars) 30 meters in size or greater, and that resolution was further smoothed to an alongshore grid spacing of 250 meters, assuming that variable bathymetry and smaller scale features resulted in a small impact to large-scale longshore transport patterns. The boundary conditions supplied by larger scale models were tested and were assumed to be accurate.

Mobility of sand was calculated to determine the potential for burial and uncovering of residual oil. The potential alongshore flux in the surf zone was also calculated for each critical stress level and SRB size class in order to identify locations of decreasing flux and hence an increased likelihood of deposition. Flow characteristics, including maximum and median surf zone, longshore current, and locations of current convergences and decelerations in the direction of flow were used to identify more probable areas of deposition for each of the 80 scenarios of wave conditions. In addition, time-weighted averages of SRB mobility and potential alongshore flux were calculated to identify likely long-term alongshore distribution patterns.

The results of the numerical modeling allow specific conclusions to be drawn for a given time period of interest based on the scenario evaluated or on scenario-averaged results that indicate patterns in alongshore currents and their gradients, sediment and SRB mobility and potential transport, gradients, and complexities associated with tidal inlets under specific conditions. The modeling results were used by the OSAT-3 team to evaluate potential SRB redistribution, burial and uncovering to provide a better understanding of the alongshore processes and movement of SRBs in the AOR.

The hydrodynamic model output (GIS data layers) for sand and SRB mobility for each of the 80 wave scenarios and time-weighted averages can be used to evaluate sources and mechanisms of re-oiling in the future (if they occur). The modeling reports (Appendices E and F) provide detail beyond the scope of this report. Data are available at <http://restorethegulf.gov>.

2.4 Utilization of Aerial Imagery to Evaluate Potential SOM Formation and Persistence

High-resolution, multi-epoch aerial imagery provided a primary source of information on the physical shoreline configuration in the AOR at the time of initial oiling and on changes to shoreline/nearshore morphology thereafter. In total, nine epochs (limited periods of time during which specific seasonal aerial image acquisition efforts were undertaken) were utilized (Table 2.1). Source imagery immediately prior to/coincident with initial oiling/stranding (May/June 2010) was acquired by the NOAA National Geodetic Survey (NGS) Remote Sensing Division. In addition, the United States Department of Agriculture, Farm Service Agency conducted an unrelated collection of aerial imagery that included the AOR as part of their ongoing National Agricultural Imagery Program (NAIP). Although the resolution of the NAIP imagery is less than that of NOAA NGS response imagery, it was useful in that it was also collected near/during the time of initial oil stranding. Subsequent to initial oil landfall a consecutive series of Fall and Spring aerial image-acquisition efforts was undertaken by AeroMetric, Inc., under contract to BP (cooperative agreement reached by the Trustees and BP representatives on the Natural Resource Damage Assessment [NRDA] Aerial Imaging Technical Work Group³). All NRDA imagery used meet American Society for Photogrammetry and Remote Sensing Class 2, 1:2,400 scale accuracy requirement that provides a quality of co-registration beyond that needed for this project. Details on the image collection and processing are provided in Appendix G.

The quality of imagery enabled the capture of the apparent land-water interface (LWI) that was digitized from the respective orthoimage data sets of each epoch at a constant interpretive scale of 1:1,200. This work was conducted by the OSAT-3 team. All of the referenced aerial image data sets (with the exception of NAIP) were collected with sufficient overlap to support 3D stereoscopic compilation. The limited relief, shallower slopes, and reduced water clarity present in the Louisiana AOR restricted the use of 3D compilation and analysis, especially in

³ http://www.gulfspillrestoration.noaa.gov/wp-content/uploads/2011/02/2010_10_11_AERIAL_IMAGERY_Shoreline_and_SAV_Requests.redacted.pdf

regard to through-water collection of terrain data in the intertidal and near-shore sub-tidal zones. Where feasible, direct (non-automated) stereoscopic evaluation was done.

<i>MC252 Spill Response Aerial Imagery Acquisition</i>		
NRD Project Name	Acquisition Start Date	Acquisition Completion Date
NOAA MC252 2010 *	5/5/2010	6/14/2010
USDA NAIP 2010**	5/5/2010	8/2/2010
NRDA Fall 2010	10/7/2010	10/21/2010
NRDA Spring 2011	4/28/2011	7/30/2011
NRDA Fall 2011	9/27/2011	11/11/2011
NRDA Spring 2012	4/23/2012	6/3/2012
BP-Sponsored NRDA Pre-Isaac 2012	8/25/2012	8/27/2012
NOAA Post-Isaac 2012	8/31/2012	9/3/2012
NRDA Fall 2012	8/25/2012	10/30/2012
Composite Date Range	5/5/2010	10/30/2012
* Note that this listing does not reflect all NOAA NGS pre-oiling acquisitions. ** Not collected as part of the MC252 Spill Response The referenced imagery can be found at Environmental Response Management Application (ERMA®) Gulf Response interactive viewer, at http://resources.geoplatform.gov/news/mapping-response-bp-oil-spill-gulf-mexico NRDA imagery collected by AeroMetric, Inc.		

Table 2.1 Imagery used in evaluation of potential SOM formation and persistence.

The potential for SOMs to persist through time since initial oiling was evaluated utilizing multiple data sets. These include the aerial imagery described in Table 2.1, oblique photographs; beach profile data; and observations/assessments by field teams. The aerial imagery and imagery derivatives (as described in Appendix G) were evaluated sequentially to assess apparent change in the 2D LWI and the impact of erosional and depositional processes. The greatest change in shoreline morphology across the AOR was observed following Hurricane Isaac (August 2012).

Three-dimensional airborne topographic Light Detection and Ranging (LiDAR) data were collected over the Caminada Headlands (Fourchon Beach, Elmer's Island) on December 14, 2012 at a nominal point spacing of nine points per square meter. A digital elevation model (DEM) of the bare-ground surface having a vertical accuracy of approximately nine centimeters was generated from the raw LiDAR data at a 0.5 meter horizontal grid interval. Following Tropical Storm Karen (October 3-6, 2013), remnant oil was found in the vicinity of a former breach closure on Fourchon Beach (Breach 2, Operations Zone PF-3). In order to further evaluate auger and Snorkel SCAT observations made along the headland and at other former breach closures, the LiDAR-derived DEM data were integrated with temporally coincident (i.e.,

within two months of LiDAR acquisition) auger and Snorkel SCAT data. The LiDAR DEM elevation corresponding to the recorded horizontal position of a given auger or Snorkel SCAT observation was used to compute the approximate North American Vertical Datum 1988 (NAVD88) elevations of the sample depths originally measured from the local ground surface, thereby providing a common, fixed vertical reference from which field observations could be more fully evaluated.

2.5 Hurricane Isaac Influences on Potential Re-Oiling

High wave energy conditions associated with storm events results in significant changes in shoreline morphology due to remobilization and transport of native sediment. During these events, buried oil is likely to become exposed, redistributed, and/or exhumed.

Storm Synopsis

Isaac was a tropical storm system that developed into a Category-1 hurricane a few hours before making landfall in southeastern Louisiana on August 29, 2012 (NOAA 2013) (Figures 2.4 and 2.5). A mid-level blocking ridge of high pressure to the northwest of the hurricane caused the forward progress of Isaac to slow down as it approached the coast of Louisiana. This prolonged the strong winds, storm surge, and heavy rains along the northern Gulf coast. The eye of Hurricane Isaac made first landfall along the coast of Louisiana at Southwest Pass (Segment LAPL05-001-20) on the mouth of the Mississippi River around 0000 UTC August 29th (7 p.m. CDT, August 28th) with maximum sustained winds of 70 knots. The center then shifted westward back over water and made a second landfall just east of Port Fourchon, Louisiana (Segment LALF02-014-10), around 0800 UTC (3 a.m. CDT) on August 29th (Figure 2.6).

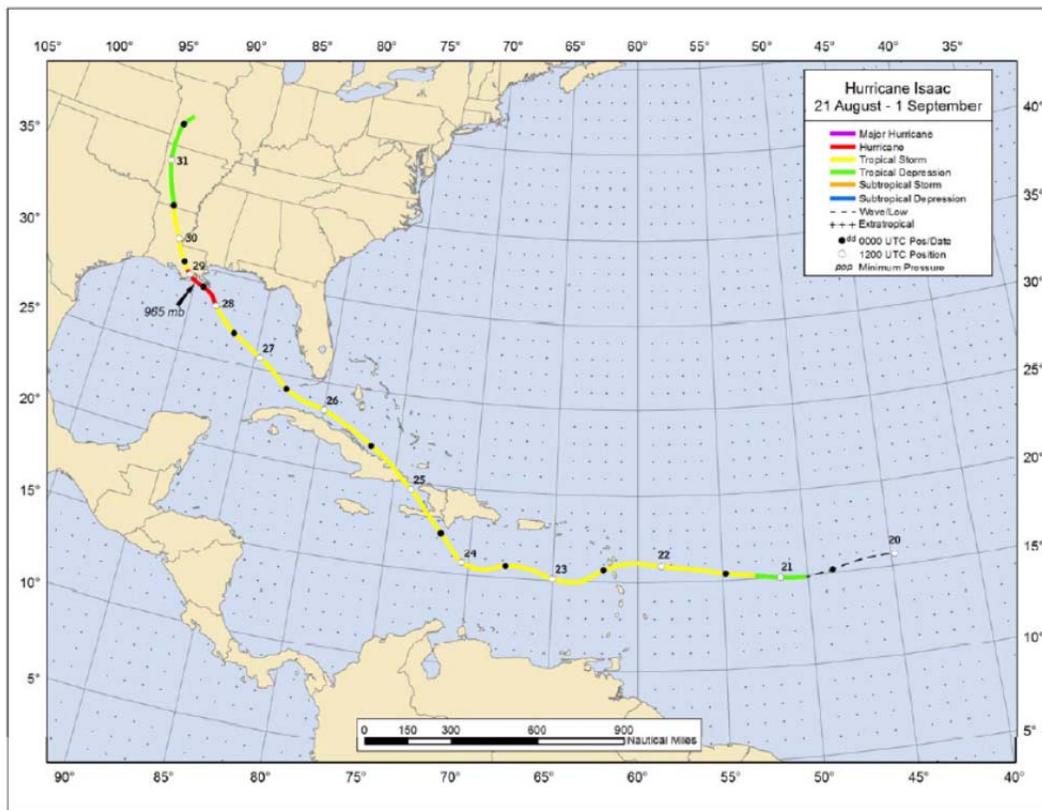


Figure 2.4 Best track position for Hurricane Isaac, 21 August – 1 September 2012 (NOAA 2013).

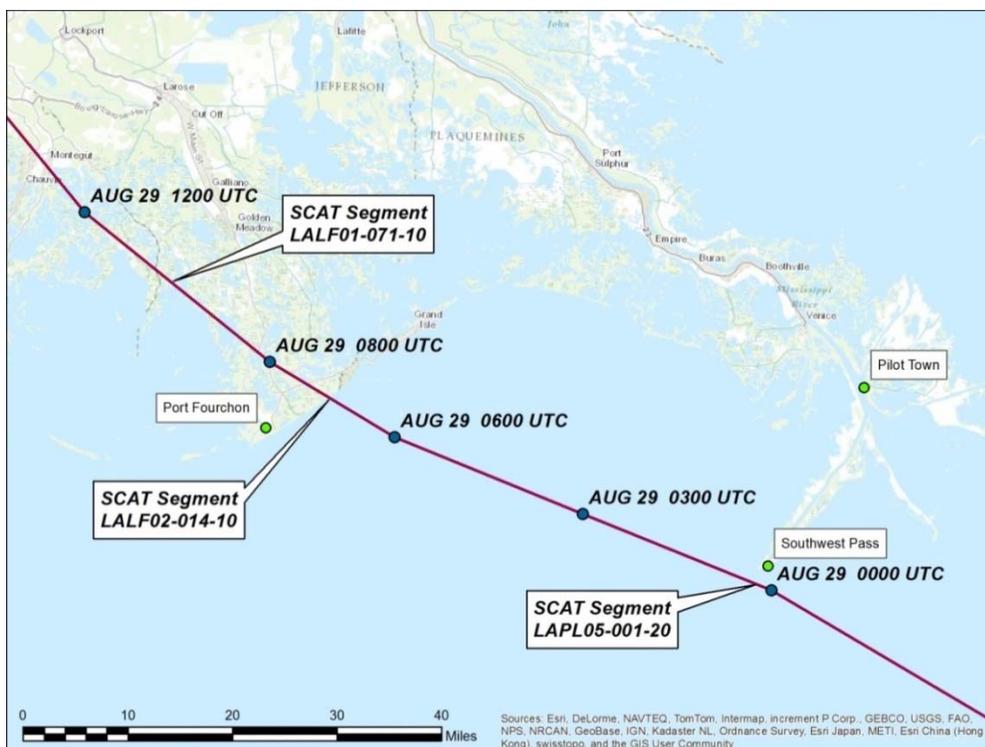


Figure 2.5 Detailed track position for Hurricane Isaac (2012) through the Louisiana Area of Responsibility.

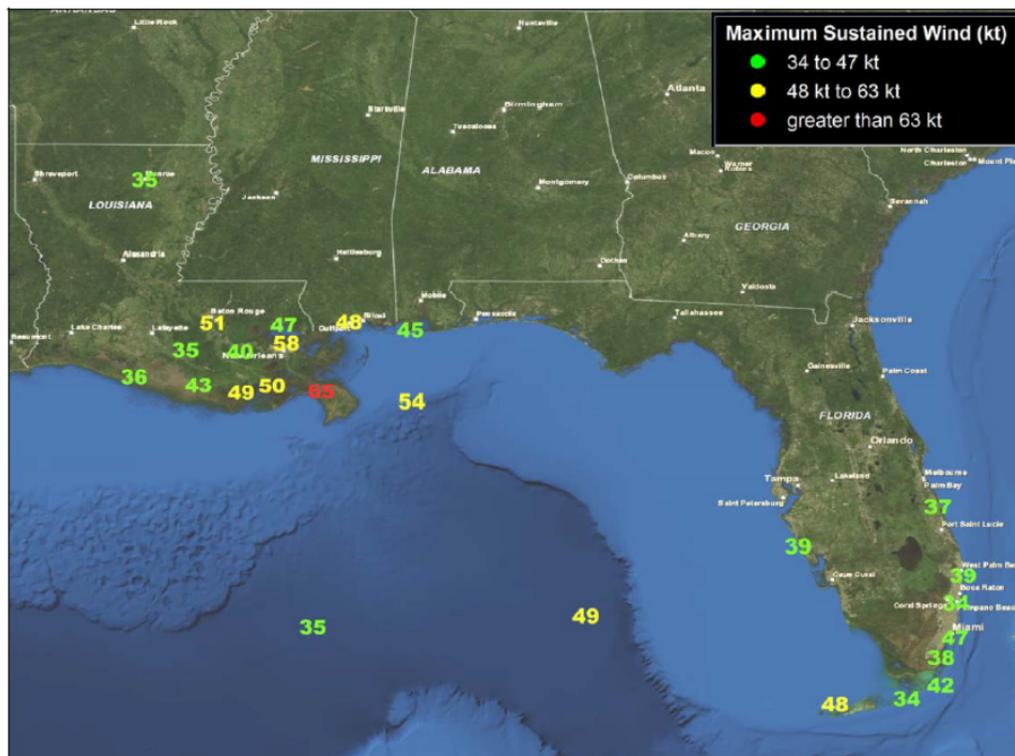


Figure 2.6 Select observations of sustained tropical-storm-force or greater winds (in knots) in the Gulf of Mexico and over the southeastern United States during Hurricane Isaac (NOAA 2013).

Isaac's large wind field and slow movement at and near the time of landfall led to extensive storm surge flooding and coastal damage, especially along the coasts of southeastern Louisiana, Mississippi, and Alabama. The highest storm surge measured was 11.03 feet above normal tide levels at Shell Beach, Louisiana. A storm surge of 6.69 feet was measured at Pilot Town, Louisiana, near the mouth of the Mississippi River, and a surge of 4.28 feet was observed at Grand Isle (Figure 2.7). The shoreline changes associated with Isaac were expected to drastically reshape the beaches and dunes of barrier islands and Gulf-facing shorelines along or near its path. Storm impact is affected by the intensity and duration of local storm surge and wave attack, variability in coastal topography, local shore slope and aspect, beach and dune elevations, and vegetation/land cover conditions (USGS 2013).

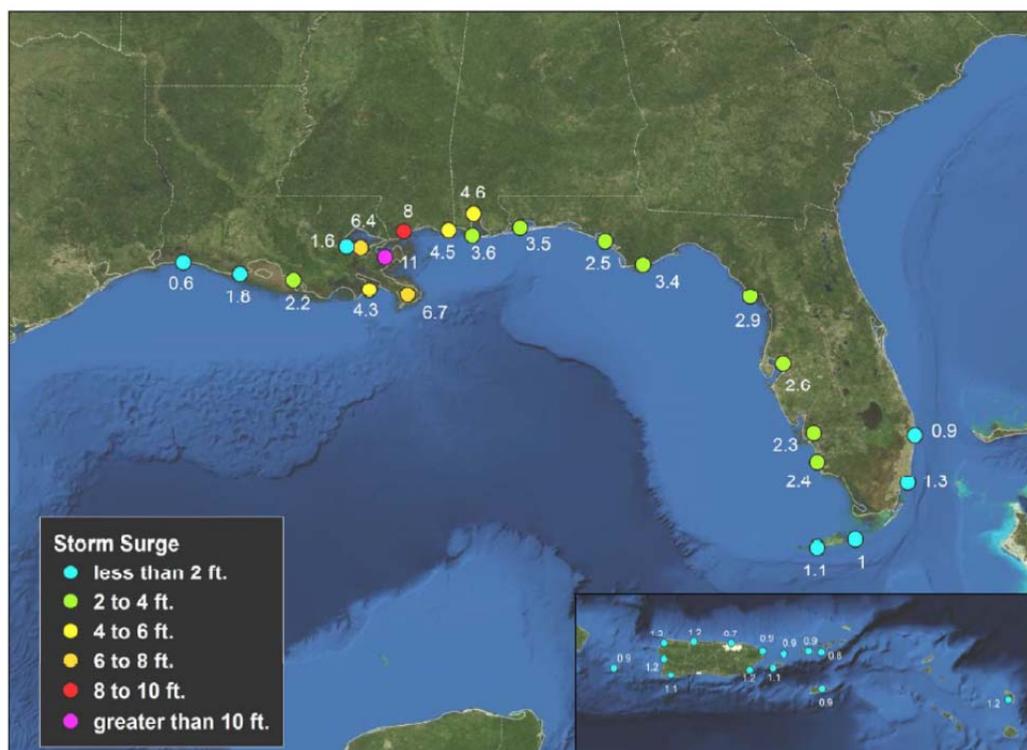


Figure 2.7 Storm surge (above normal tide levels) for Hurricane Isaac (NOAA 2013).

Observed Impacts of Hurricane Isaac

Hurricane Isaac changed much of the landscape of the spill response due to the severe erosion that has occurred along most of the barrier shores, as evidenced by numerous breaches, extensive and consistent shoreline retreat, and preponderance of washovers. Observed impact of Hurricane Isaac across the AOR based on post-storm SCAT surveys included (D. FitzGerald personal communication):

- Beach erosion and shoreline recession dominate barrier impacts
- Most barrier islands experienced washovers
- Many shorelines were breached, especially Elmer's Island, Fourchon beach, South Pass Spit. Grand Terre-2, Grand Terre-1, Grand Isle were not breached
- Shorelines with plentiful sand supplies (i.e., Grand Isle, Trinity) had deposition along upper beach
- Breach structures along Fourchon remained intact and oiled sediment may still exist along the front of these bulkheads and revetments
- Dredge spoil piles at West Timbalier have been partly reworked by storm waves
- Small breaches will likely close quickly; large ones will persist for months/years.

The degree of shoreline change discernible in the aerial imagery prior to Hurricane Isaac was not

always sufficient to determine SOMs persistence, if formed during initial oiling. Subsequent to Hurricane Isaac, shoreline erosion evident in aerial imagery was more pronounced (Figure 2.8). Observations of shoreline erosion coupled with post-storm SCAT and Operations field surveys supported an integrated assessment of the persistence of SOMs in the AOR.

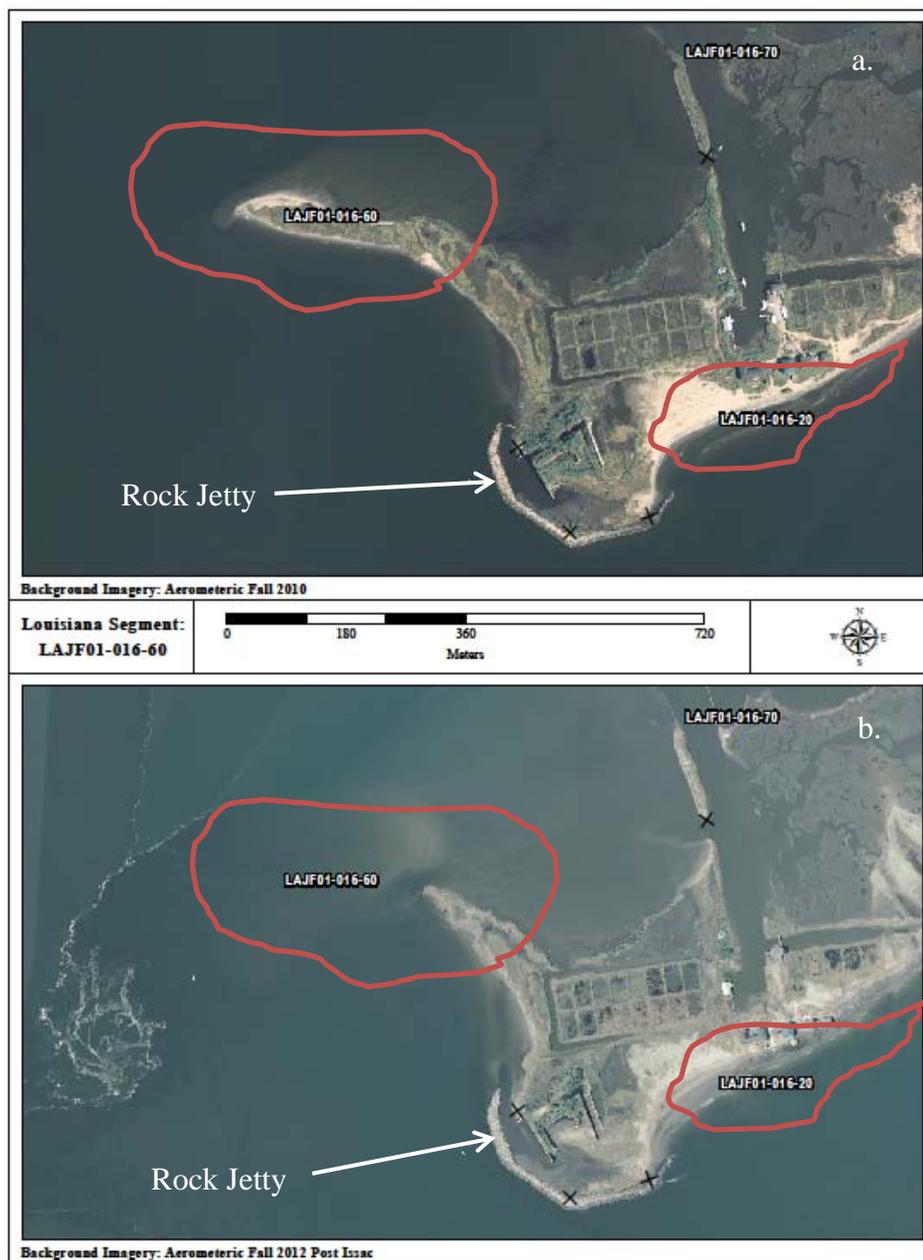


Figure 2.8 Aerial imagery over Fort Livingston, Jefferson Parish, Louisiana. Panel a) collected Fall 2010 just after initial oiling and Panel b) Fall 2012 after Hurricane Isaac. Note the extensive erosion of the peninsula and areas east of the rock jetty.

2.6 Evaluation of Potential SOM Formation and Persistence

The objective of this activity was to identify areas where there is higher potential for SOMs to remain in the AOR. Data analysis show that nearshore areas at the time of initial oiling that were similar (e.g., morphology, depth, and distance from shoreline) to locations where SOMs were confirmed and that did not display evidence of being eroded since initial oiling were considered more likely to have SOMs remaining. In addition to the modeling results and aerial imagery analysis, SCAT and Operations data were evaluated to provide a more comprehensive assessment of SOM formation and persistence.

MC252 spill response efforts in the AOR prior to the OSAT-3 process documented SOMs as deposits that were generally parallel to the shoreline and located between the first sand bar and the upper intertidal zone on Gulf-facing beaches but not in deeper zones or in protected bays (OSAT 2010, GCIMT 2010, GCIMT 2011, Wang et. al 2010). Given the importance of SOMs as potentially actionable sources of recurring oiling, the potential for SOMs to form in deeper water and in inland bays was investigated using output from the hydrodynamic models (described above) to corroborate/refute findings from previous investigations conducted earlier in the MC252 spill response. Sand/oil mixing processes were examined using analysis of wave energy dissipation during the initial oiling window coupled with modeled estimates of sediment suspension. Details of approach and findings can be found in Appendix F. Modeling results support the premise that energy required to mix sand and oil to form SOMs on Gulf-facing beaches is confined to the zone of breaking waves and associated run-up inside the first sand bar. These findings corroborate field data collected in the AOR as part of the MC252 spill response for both the presence of SOMs in the nearshore areas and the absence of SOMs offshore and in shallow bays; consequently all subsequent assessments of SOMs as sources of recurring oiling were focused in the nearshore.

Mats formed on Gulf-facing beaches when weathered oil at the surface reached a shallow environment with sufficient mixing to facilitate entrainment and when surface oil was stranded and seeped into native sediment on receding tides. Additionally, documented SOMs were also observed in locations with different characteristics than most of the SOMs located along Gulf-facing beaches. In low-wave energy areas, nearshore booming during the MC252 spill response increased the contact time with marsh vegetation. SOMs also formed by trapped oily material in

relic peat/clay platforms. All available oblique photographs and field data collected during the time weathered oil was moving onshore were reviewed to provide additional detail.

Four criteria were established by the OSAT-3 team to evaluate the potential for formation of SOMs in areas not surveyed across the AOR:

- Combination of wave energy, sand, and oiling history that matches conditions associated with SOMs formation, as predicted by the hydrodynamic models
- Morphological characteristics similar to areas with documented SOMs
- Documented history of > 5 centimeters and angular SRBs in the intertidal zone that may indicate a SOM is present in the vicinity
- Evidence of anchored boom, breach closures, marsh vegetation, and peat platforms (based on aerial reconnaissance) that could trap oil in shallow, low energy locations, thereby increasing potential for SOMs formation in these areas (Figures 2.9 and 2.10).



Figure 2.9 Weathered oil trapped by boom and vegetation.

In low-wave energy areas, boom and vegetation trapped oil, increasing the contact time with sand thereby enhancing the formation of submerged oil mats (SOMs) and patties. Photo taken 5/21/2010 at Segment LALF02-013-10.



Figure 2.10 Breaches acted as conduits for Gulf-ward trapping of weathered oil.

Photo taken 5/20/2010 at LALF02-013-10. Along Fourchon Beach, breaches were closed by MC252 spill response activities to prevent oil intrusion into adjacent marshes. These areas rapidly accreted, burying concentrated accumulations of trapped oil.

Shoreline segments were evaluated for the potential for SOMs to persist, assuming they formed following initial oiling. First, lateral changes in the position of the apparent LWI were examined directly/sequentially from or near the time of initial oiling and through each subsequent aerial image epoch on the GIS/stereo-workstation (Appendix H). An example series of imagery, associated LWI data, and example beach profiles (Figures 2.11 and 2.12).

Locations where the LWI had prograded Gulf-ward since the time of initial oiling (i.e., where the imagery indicated the shoreline had accreted since the time of oiling) were considered candidates for the persistence of SOMs, assuming they formed.



Figure 2.11 Aerial imagery along Segment LAJF01-002-10.

Panel a) shows Fall 2010 just after last of the floating oil washed ashore and Panel b) shows Fall 2012 after Hurricane Isaac. Notice the extensive overwash area in the southwest corner of the segment and general erosion of the fore dune area.

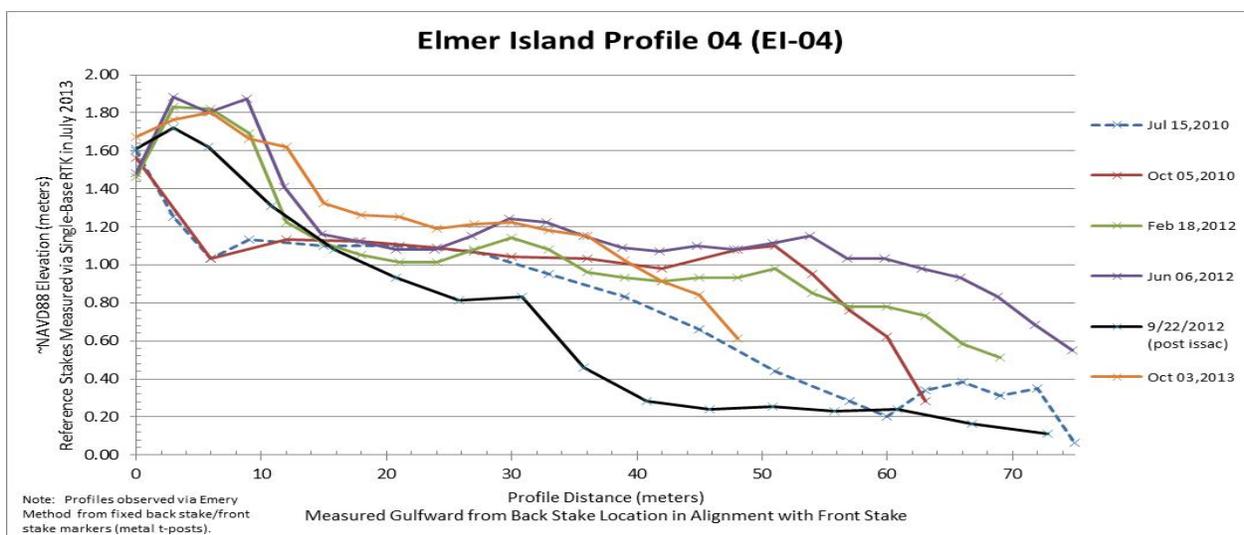
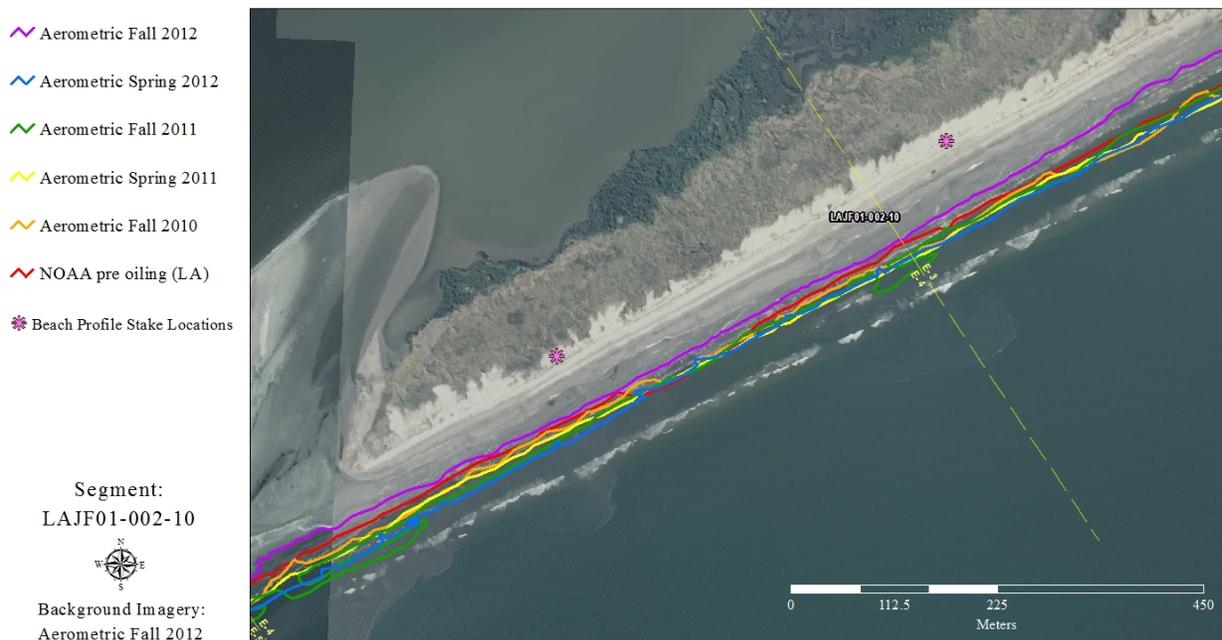


Figure 2.12 Landwater interface and beach profile data along Segment LAJF0-002-10. Beach profile data provided supporting evidence that the beach eroded below levels present during initial oiling.

After examining changes in the shoreline morphology, data from subsurface surveys (SCAT, Snorkel SCAT, and Operations) were evaluated in conjunction with the aerial orthoimagery. In addition, aerial photographs taken during the period that oil was coming ashore, and geocoded field photographs taken by SCAT and Operations, provided visual evidence of oiling conditions during the course of the MC252 spill response. Altogether, this provided a comprehensive assessment of the potential formation and persistence of SOMs across the AOR. Areas that did not display evidence of erosion since initial oiling and did not have sufficient subsurface data to

evaluate the potential for buried mats to remain were identified during OSAT-3 review sessions. These areas were mapped and provided to the BOP team for further investigation (Appendix D).

Because it is unlikely that SOMs formed in all of the areas identified as having similar characteristics to documented deposits, and it is further likely that erosion occurred in some locations between image collections used in the analysis, this approach was considered the most inclusive and conservative (i.e., this approach likely overestimated the potential formation and persistence of SOMs in the AOR). One area of uncertainty relates to resolution of potential buried oil remaining in association with breaches that were closed off during Response along Gulf-facing segments of Fourchon Beach and relic peat and clay platforms in the nearshore areas across the AOR.

After examining changes in the LWI, data from subsurface surveys (SCAT, Snorkel SCAT, and Operations) were evaluated in conjunction with the aerial orthoimagery (Figure 2.12). In addition, aerial photographs taken during the period that oil was coming ashore, and geocoded field photographs taken by SCAT and Operations, provided visual evidence of oiling conditions during the course of the MC252 spill response. Altogether, this provided a comprehensive assessment of the potential formation and persistence of SOMs across the AOR.

2.7 Integrated Assessment of Sources and Mechanisms for Re-Oiling

Integrated assessments of the data and information were conducted during review sessions with participating state and local response and natural resource representatives and coastal experts. Maps are provided for all segments submitted by the State On-Scene Coordinator (SOSC) and evaluated by the OSAT-3 science team (Appendix H). These maps show data used during the review sessions, including pre-oiling imagery, the landward extent of the LWI (if delineated), location of available photos, SCAT trenching/augering data, Operations augering data, and snorkel SCAT data. The OSAT-3 science team consulted with coastal experts and field-level personnel (SCAT teams, Operations teams, state and local MC252 spill response and natural resource representatives, U.S. Coast Guard, private land owners, and university researchers) to gain a better understanding of recurring oiling of shorelines. Environmental Response Management Application (ERMA) provides a geospatial representation of the data used in the OSAT-3 report. Along with the mapping, attached to the layer is a summary of the collections

and SCAT data used to support the analyses. These data can be found at <http://www.restorethegulf.gov>.

The most essential task for OSAT-3 was assessing the potential for SOMs and buried oil to be ongoing or future sources for recurring oil. If SOMs were unlikely to persist in close enough proximity to contribute to recurring oiling for the segment of concern, then focus was shifted to assessment of potential and conditions favorable for longshore transport and deposition based on results from the hydrodynamic models. This assessment was followed by a thorough examination of segment-specific data and consultation with field-level personnel on re-oiling conditions, limitations of the data, and characteristics of the material. The combined efforts of the OSAT-3 team, state and local response and natural resource representatives, and local experts provide the basis for a determination of the likely source(s) and mechanism(s) for recurring oiling for every segment evaluated.

3.0 Results and Discussion

In order to understand the re-oiling sources and mechanisms across the AOR, integrated assessments (spatial and temporal) of multiple data sets were required. The complexities of recurring oiling causing segments to not meet SCCP endpoint criteria are associated with the interaction among multiple potential sources (local or distant, diffuse or concentrated, supratidal, intertidal, or subtidal) and varied mechanisms (uncovering, remobilization, cross-shore transport, and longshore transport). These assessments were conducted during working sessions with participating state and local response and natural resource representatives and coastal experts and utilized the GIS capabilities developed to support the OSAT-3 project.

The OSAT-3 team applied a weight-of-evidence process that accounted for the strengths and weaknesses of different lines of evidence to arrive at a consensus on the relevant sources and mechanisms for re-oiling of individual segments. As part of the assessments, the OSAT-3 team consulted with coastal experts and field-level personnel (SCAT teams, Operations teams, state and local MC252 spill response and natural resource representatives, U.S. Coast Guard, and university researchers) to gain a better understanding of recurring oiling of shorelines in the AOR.

Within a segment, multiple sources and mechanisms may contribute to re-oiling. The relative contribution of different sources and mechanisms can vary within a segment depending on conditions.

Based on the integrated assessments, four major types of re-oiling across the Louisiana AOR were observed:

- Cross-shore transport/uncovering of diffuse material referred to as surface residual balls (SRBs) or patties (depending on size) in the intertidal and nearshore subtidal zones (most prevalent mechanism for re-oiling).
- Cross-shore transport of material broken off of submerged oil mats (SOMs) in the intertidal zone in close proximity to the stranding (limited extent).
- Longshore transport and deposition of SRBs from diffuse sources occurring predominantly during storm events (limited extent).
- Simple uncovering/expression of material of all sizes (buried since initial oiling

and/or residual oil from cleanup operations). In marshes, surface re-oiling is associated with localized migration (vertical and lateral) of material trapped in-place since initial oiling.

Focused efforts to find buried oil (buried since deposited) include aerial and ground-based visual surveys after storms, focused augering and Snorkel SCAT (see Appendices C, D, and H). All of these survey efforts were highly successful in locating buried oil mats onshore and in the nearshore, as well as delineating areas that contained diffuse SRBs, and areas with no oiled sediment. Extensive subsurface investigations provide evidence that diffuse deposits of < 2.5 centimeters material are widespread and that larger SRBs, patties and SOMs are isolated across the segments evaluated by OSAT-3 in this AOR.

Based on review of SCAT survey data and photos, combined with records of material removed by Operations, small SRBs are the most common form of re-oiling material observed in the segments investigated along beaches in this AOR. An analysis of material from 114 collections of small SRBs along Grand Isle, LA during August 2011 documented 32 percent non-oiled material in the waste stream. Subtracting out sand and shell, 5.8 percent of the weight of material collected was weathered MC252 oil (Appendix I).

Modeling results suggest that, under the most commonly observed low-energy wave conditions, larger SRBs (>2.5 centimeters) are not likely to move very far alongshore. This finding suggests that under non-storm conditions, large SRBs from one source location will not be redistributed to other alongshore locations. SRBs are likely to become buried and exposed under normal sand transport processes because they are less mobile than native sediment, thereby lengthening the time SRBs take to move onshore. Deposition of SRBs (and sand) will occur in areas of convergences in longshore currents (e.g. flow reversals), in areas of spatially decelerating longshore currents, and in areas where the shear stress forces drop below critical thresholds to initiate or maintain SRB movement. Model results showed that spit-platforms and recurved spits (sediment deposition around the end of a spit in a hook shape – see Figure 2.2) can be fairly active environments, and will likely remain as such until nearby sources of SRBs are diminished. In addition, model results also confirmed that offshore winds with a fetch in excess of 20 km can generate waves that can reach 0.5 – 1 m in height, which further creates active transport along recurved spits and spit-platforms. As a result, these environments may either naturally accumulate

SRBs (if a source is present updrift), and are likely to experience burial of material that is already there (having arrived from a previous transport event).

As a result of natural processes, MC252 spill response efforts, and OSAT-3/BOP activities, the potential for extensive (larger than sampling grid) buried oil deposits to remain along Gulf-facing beaches across this AOR is low. Extensive surveys (SCAT, Snorkel SCAT, and Operations) during the MC252 spill response provide evidence that diffuse deposits are widespread across the segments evaluated. The predominant mechanism for shoreline re-oiling is due to the uncovering and/or cross-shore transport of small diffuse material nearshore. Because this material is less mobile than the surrounding sand, it is likely to become buried and exposed under normal sand transport processes, thereby lengthening the time it may take to move onshore. Long-shore transport and deposition of remnant sand/oil deposits will occur in areas near tidal inlets likely increasing the frequency or recurring oil along these areas.

A segment-by-segment summary of pertinent information utilized and a statement on likely sources and mechanisms for re-oiling for the 438 segments in the Louisiana AOR evaluated by OSAT-3 is provided in Appendix H. Every segment identified by SCAT with moderate or heavy surface oiling in St Tammany/Orleans, St Bernard, Plaquemines, Jefferson, Lafourche, and Terrebonne Parish was evaluated by the OSAT-3 science team (Table 3.1). Aerial imagery and locations of data for all segments submitted to BOP (13 segments) and other selected segments representative of the range of shoreline types and recurring oiling conditions in the AOR are provided in Appendix H. An overview of the findings and discussion of examples for each parish is provided below.

3.1 Segments Identified for BOP Evaluation

An integrated assessment was performed across the AOR to evaluate the sources and mechanisms of re-oiling. As discussed above, recurring oiling along some segments is due to a combination of the identified sources and mechanisms. Based on this comprehensive assessment, diffuse deposits of material are widespread across the shoreline types present in the AOR that were evaluated by OSAT-3 and contribute to re-oiling in every segment investigated. The formation and persistence of SOMs is limited to isolated areas along Gulf-facing beaches.

Max oil in segment based on SCAT surveys	LAOR	LASB	LAPL	LAJF	LALF	LATB
Heavy	2	28	97	27	41	34
Moderate	1	19	38	15	6	21
Light	0	7	7	13	7	2
Very Light	0	2	3	10	1	0
Moderate Tar Balls	0	0	1	0	1	0
Light Tar Balls	0	0	0	0	0	1
NOO	0	4	3	36	4	7
Segments evaluated by OSAT-3	3	60	149	101	60	65
Total number of segments	13	199	444	174	162	198

Notes:

NOO – no observed oiling

LAOR – Orleans Parish

LASB – St Bernard Parish

LAJF – Jefferson Parish

LAPL – Plaquemines Parish

LATB – Terrebonne Parish

LALF – Lafourche Parish

Table 3.1 Number of segments with maximum oiling designation based on SCAT field surveys in the Louisiana Area of Responsibility (AOR) evaluated by OSAT-3.

Although the shoreline and nearshore areas have undergone normal erosion/deposition cycles, there are isolated (smaller than segment) areas that based on the aerial imagery do not appear to have eroded to a depth necessary to remove SOMs, if they formed. Given the importance of SOMs as potentially actionable sources of recurring oiling, the most essential task for OSAT-3 was identifying areas with the highest probability for their formation and persistence.

As part of the overall assessment of sources and mechanisms, areas with morphology similar to known SOMs during the time oil was coming ashore and that may not have eroded since that time were delineated. In an effort to remove SOMs from the environment in as expeditious a manner as possible, the delineated areas were prioritized based on a combination of characteristics including size, spatial density, proximity to known SOMs, density/validity of snorkel SCAT data, and oiling/operational history. A list of segments where these high priority areas were identified is presented in Table 3.2. The location and extent of these “target areas” were provided to the BOP team for further evaluation. An overview of the BOP, including status and results of investigations in each of the target areas identified by OSAT-3 is provided in Appendix D. Information gathered through BOP activities was provided back to the OSAT-3 science team and used to verify and refine the assessment process. For example, the material found in segment LAJF01-024-10 associated with the clay outcrop at the time of oiling prompted a complete review of the aerial photography and SCAT segment reports for the area to determine if similar areas may exist in the AOR.

LATB04-008-10 (Terrebonne) (Op zones WT-1 and WT-2*)	LAJF01-024-30 (Jefferson) (Op zone GT1-12)
LATB04-008-20 (Terrebonne) (Op zone WT-1)	LAPL01-001-10 (Plaquemines) (Op zones GT2-7, GT2-8, and GT2-9*)
LATB04-010-10 (Terrebonne) (Op zone WT-9)	LAPL01-002-10 (Plaquemines) (Op zone GT2-25)
LATB04-010-20 (Terrebonne) (Op zone WT-9)	LAPL01-009-20 (Plaquemines) (Op zone WCH-10)
LALF01-036-20 (Terrebonne) (Op zone WT-14)	LAPL01-003-10 (Plaquemines) (Op zones WCH 12, WCH-11*, WCH-17, and WCH-16*)
LALF01-031-20 (Terrebonne) (Op zone WT-14)	LAPL01-005-30 (Plaquemines) (Op zones WCH-19 and WCH-20*)
LAJF01-024-10 (Jefferson) (Op zones GT1-10 and GT1-11)	

* A feature starts in adjoining segment to west and carries that ID, but overlaps into segment flagged.

Table 3.2 List of segments containing high priority areas for further evaluation under the Buried Oil Project.

3.2 Parish-Focused Assessment Results

A segment-by-segment summary of pertinent information utilized and a statement on likely sources and mechanisms for re-oiling for the 438 segments in the Louisiana AOR evaluated by OSAT-3 is provided in Appendix H. All data utilized as part of OSAT-3 are available on <http://www.restorethegulf.gov>. The material below provides a more detailed summary of the integrated assessments for the four major types of re-oiling in this AOR.

Segments Evaluated in St Tammany/Orleans Parishes

Three of the 38 segments in St Tammany/Orleans Parishes had heavy and/or moderate surface oiling observed by SCAT during July to September 2010 (Figure 3.1). Note that 2 of the segments with Orleans SCAT codes (LAOR) are located in St Tammany Parrish. Only portions of each of these three segments appear to have been oiled (Figure 3.2) and no oil was observed on any portion of 20 segments. Removal actions and natural attenuation resulted in no observable oil during SCAT surveys conducted after September 2, 2010. All segments were designated as *Removal Action Deemed Complete* (RADDC) by the FOSC before OSAT-3 began. Segments in this parish were evaluated to provide an overview (spatial and temporal) of data

collected during the MC252 spill response to state and local resource representatives present during review sessions. Review of these segments also provided important context for other segments in the AOR. No recurring oiling issues were noted in this Parish during review sessions.



Figure 3.1 Segments in Orleans Parish evaluated by OSAT-3.



Figure 3.2 SCAT oiling map for Segments LAOR01-002-10, LAOR-003-10 and LAOR01-004-10 in St Tammany/Orleans Parishes.

The maximum oiling category based on SCAT surface surveys and boom deployed is also shown. Panel a) is a photograph taken on 7/13/2010 of a patch of heavy oiling trapped by vegetation. Panel b) is a photograph of tarballs along a sandy section (7/13/2010).

Segments Evaluated in St Bernard Parish

OSAT-3 evaluated 60 out of 199 shoreline segments in St. Bernard Parish (Figure 3.3). Of the sixty segments reviewed, 45 had heavy and/or moderate oiling reported and 4 had no observable oil during any SCAT survey (Table 3.1). The 4 no-observed oiling (NOO) segments evaluated were in close proximity to segments with reported oiling (Figure 3.4). Fifteen of the segments were located in the Breton National Wildlife Refuge (Chandeleur Islands) and were reviewed with representatives of the relevant Federal resource agency.

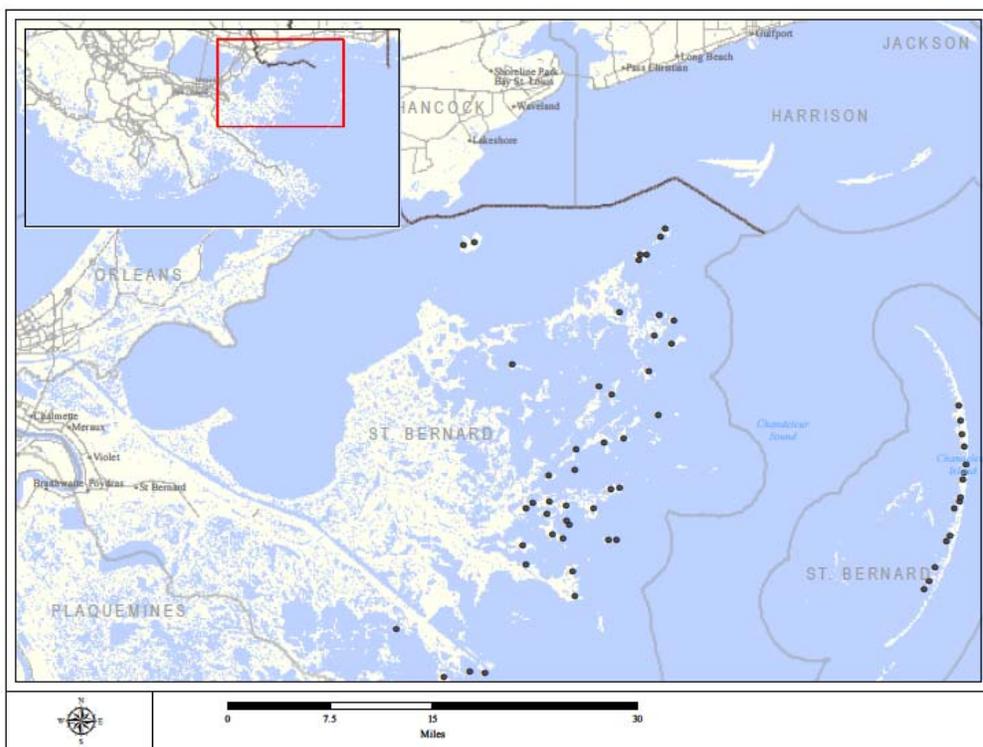


Figure 3.3 Segments in St Bernard Parish evaluated by OSAT-3.

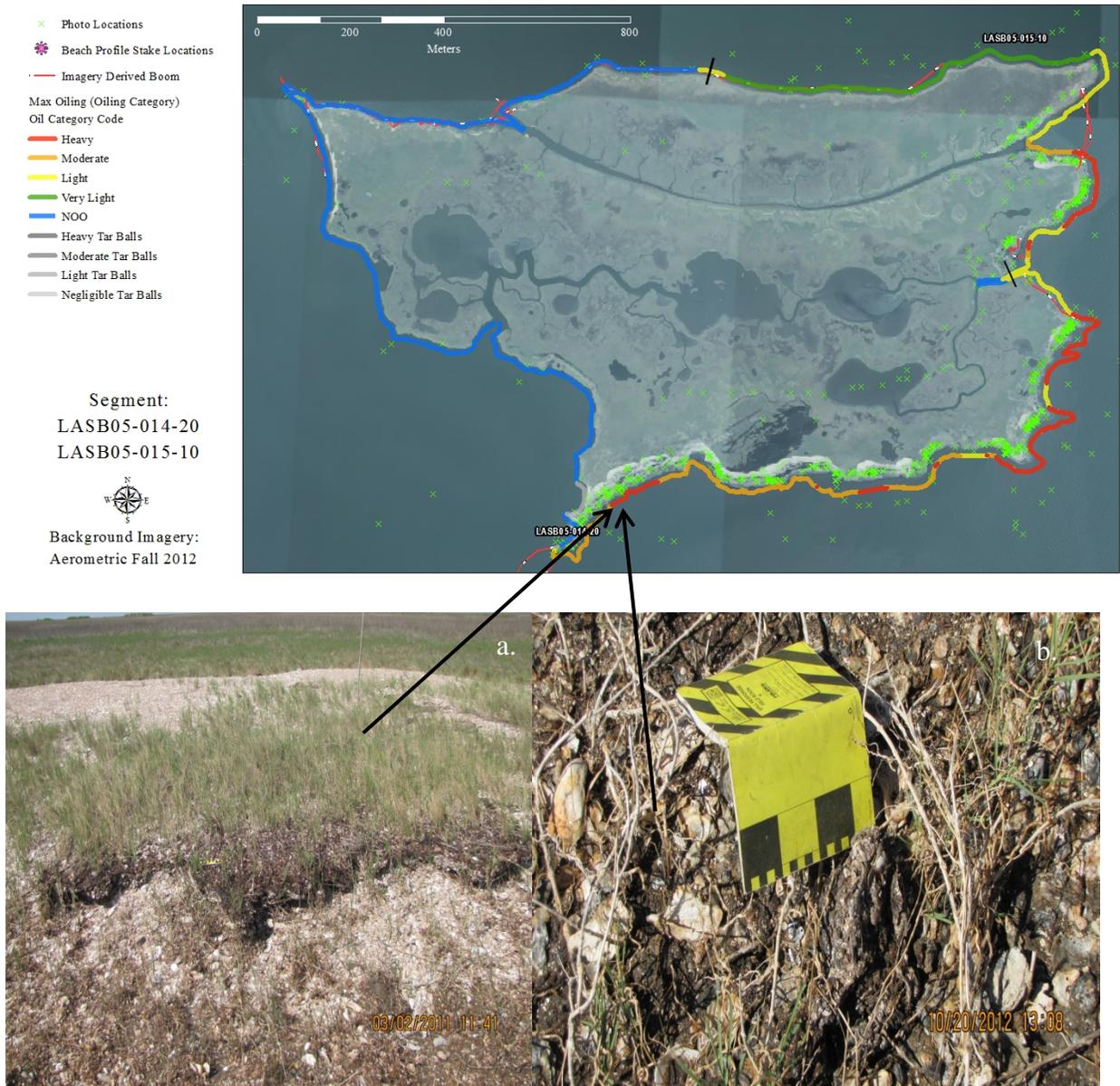


Figure 3.4 Maximum oiling classifications in Segments LASB05-014-20 and LASB05-015-10 in St Bernard Parish based on SCAT surveys.

The maximum oiling category based on SCAT surface surveys and boom deployed is also shown. Panel a) is a photograph taken on 3/2/2011 of a mat along the marsh fringe in a section on the south-western end of the island. Note the shell berms along the shoreline (white areas). Panel b) shows more weathered material from the same location (photo taken 10/20/2012).

Review of the available data focused on concerns related to weathered oil remaining in marshes. For example, the OSAT-3 team reviewed locations where SCAT reported weathered oil mixed/buried in shell berm sediments along exposed marsh shorelines (Figure 3.5), particularly where boom may have held oil in place. Along these shell berm areas, very little accretion was observed from initial oiling through the Fall 2010, therefore, the burial of any oiled material would likely be localized and not extensive. SCAT teams observed several areas of shell/oil mixtures ranging in size from 0.5 x 1.5 m up to 2 x 35 m during a post-Isaac survey (September 10, 2012) along the heavy oiled locations (red highlight) in Figure 3.4. These shell/oil areas were removed manually to reduce impacts to the shoreline and vegetation. The shoreline did not display evidence of extensive erosion post-oiling, therefore, buried material not removed during Response is the source of remnant oil observed in the most recent SCAT surveys (9/23/2013 and 11/4/2013). The remnants of shell/oil mixtures are being reworked/degraded by wave action and exposed along the shoreline (shell berms) with some smaller material transported by wave action into the adjacent marsh. The OSAT-3 science team did not identify any areas in the 60 segments evaluated in this Parish to be further investigated as part of the BOP.



Figure 3.5 Oily material mixed with shell hash in Segment LASB05-015-10.
Photo taken 10/12/2010.

Segments Evaluated in Plaquemines Parish

OSAT-3 evaluated 149 of 444 shoreline segments in Plaquemines Parish (Figure 3.6). Of the segments reviewed, 135 had heavy and/or moderate oiling reported and 3 had no observable oil during any SCAT survey. The NOO segments and those with less than heavy/moderate oiling were in marshes/mangroves in close proximity to segments with heavy oiling.

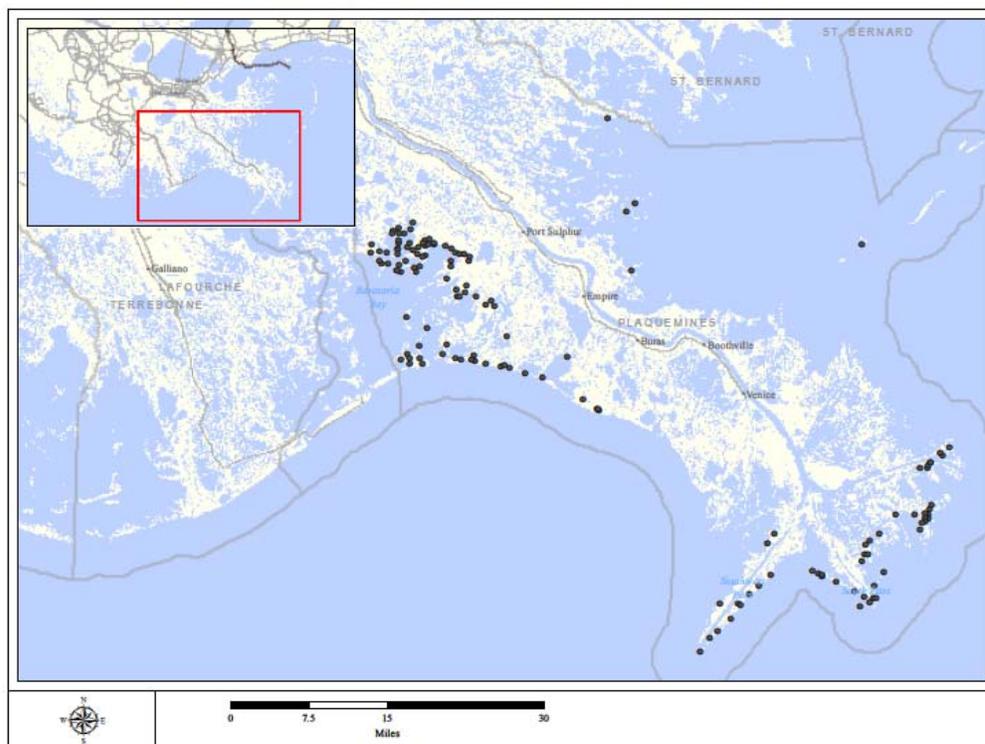


Figure 3.6 Segments in Plaquemines Parish evaluated by OSAT-3.

Most of the segments investigated in Plaquemines Parish were in marshes. Except for marshes adjacent to tidal inlets, re-oiling in marshes is due to the exposure (local erosion) and vertical migration (root channels and animal burrows) of material deposited on the marsh surface during initial oiling. An example of a *Phragmites*-dominated marsh (freshwater) in segment LAP110-004-90 (Middle Ground) is shown in Figures 1.4 and 3.7. Figure 3.8 shows a brackish marsh in northern Barataria Bay. Re-oiling in marshes is due to the exposure (local erosion) and vertical migration (root channels and animal burrows) of material deposited on the marsh surface during initial oiling. Marshes adjacent to tidal inlets are likely to have smaller SRBs deposited from upcurrent locations due to longshore transport.

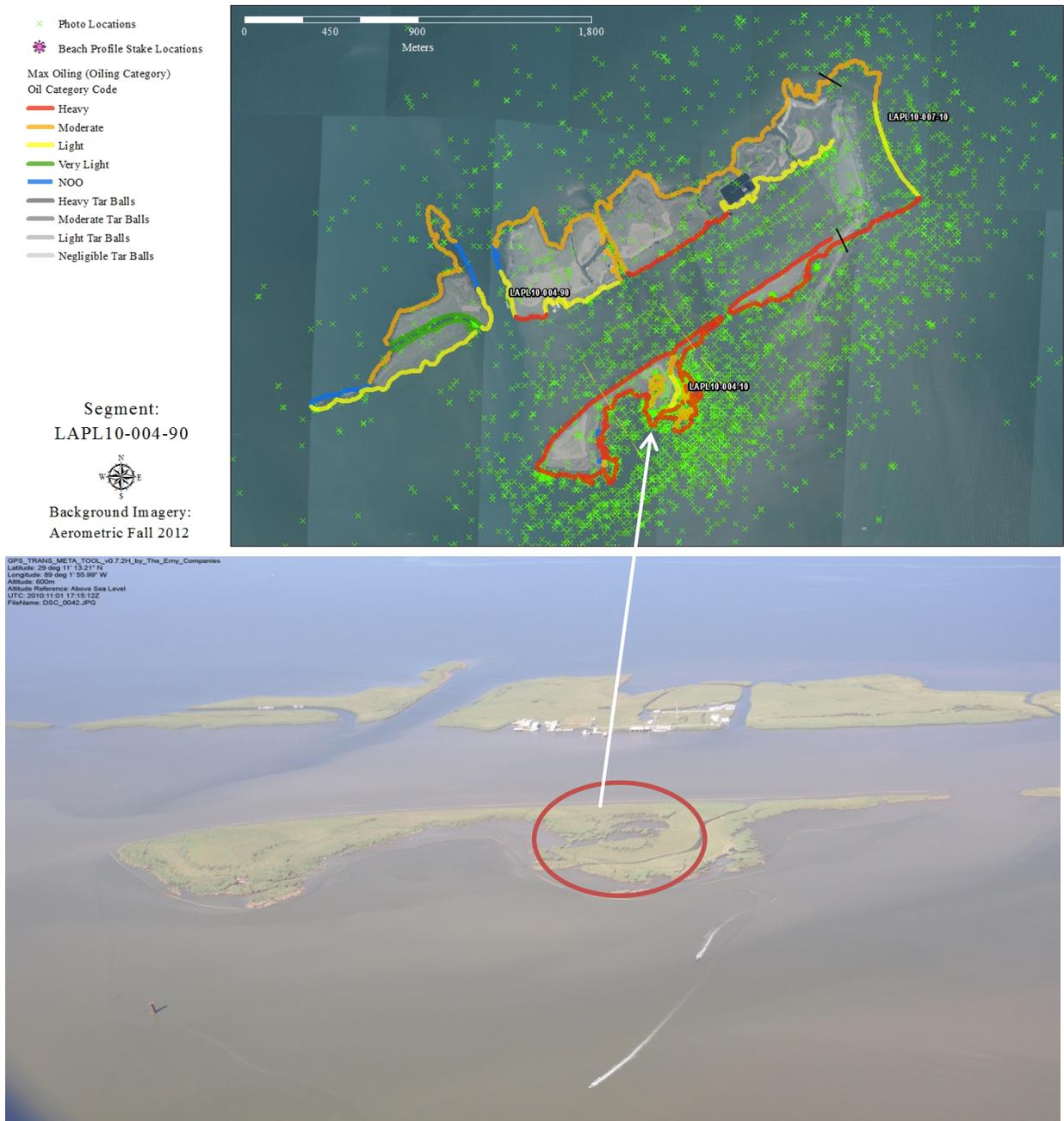


Figure 3.7 Maximum oiling classifications in Segment LAPL10-004-90 in Plaquemines Parish based on SCAT surveys. Panel a) is an aerial photo of Segment LAPA10-004-90 taken 11/1/2010. Note the highlighted area which is protected from wave action and oil stranded during initial oiling remains in place. Detailed photos from the highlighted area are shown in Figure 1.4.

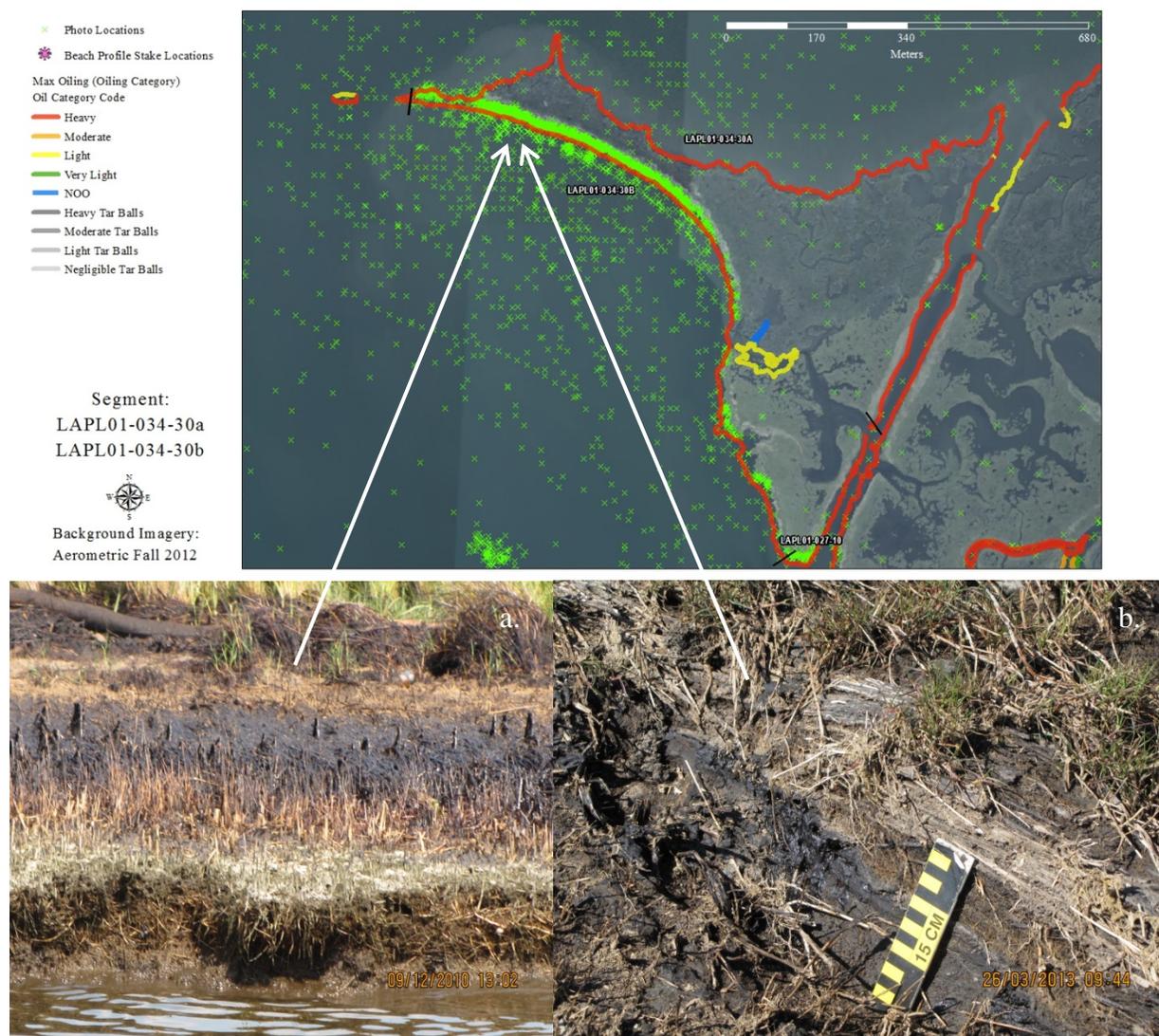


Figure 3.8 Maximum oiling classifications in Segment LAPL01-034-30 in Plaquemines Parish based on SCAT surveys.
 Panel a) shows weathered oil shortly after stranding near marsh edge (photo taken 9/12/2010). Panel b) shows a close-up of remnant oil stranded in peat soil with numerous root channels (photo taken 3/26/2013).

Although many areas along Gulf-facing beaches in Plaquemines Parish experienced considerable erosion post initial oiling, there were isolated areas where erosion was not significant enough (based on examination of images and photographs) to remove buried oil. For example, along Segment LAPL01-001-10, there were areas with erosion, while other areas showed accretion or were undergoing renourishment activities (Figure 3.9). Areas that did not display evidence of erosion in five Gulf-facing beaches in Plaquemines Parish were investigated as part of the BOP. Extensive subsurface investigations both onshore (augering) and nearshore (Snorkel SCAT) were conducted in areas identified during OSAT-3 review sessions (Figure 3.10). Buried oil was

discovered and removed from two of the five segments in Plaquemines Parish during the BOP investigations.

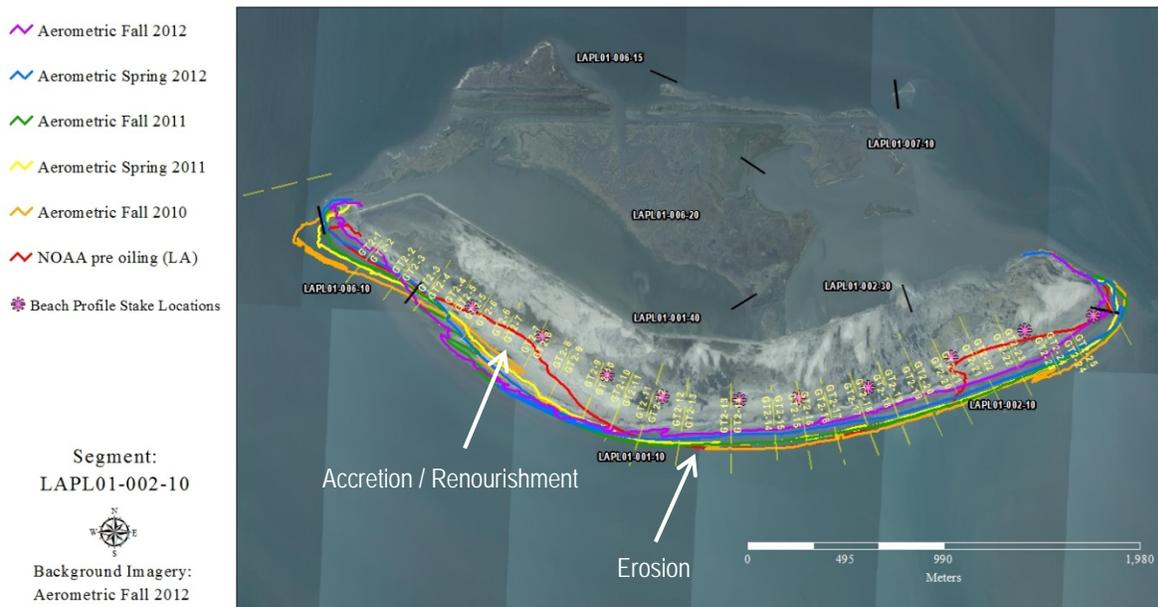


Figure 3.9 Land-water interface (LWI) data used to represent changes in shoreline morphology within Grand Terre II (Segments LAPL01-006-10, LAPL01-001-10, and LAPL01-002.10).

Note the beach profile locations shown. Beach profile data was used in conjunction with aerial surveys to evaluate shoreline change. Active beach re-nourishment activities were on-going during the period of initial oiling.

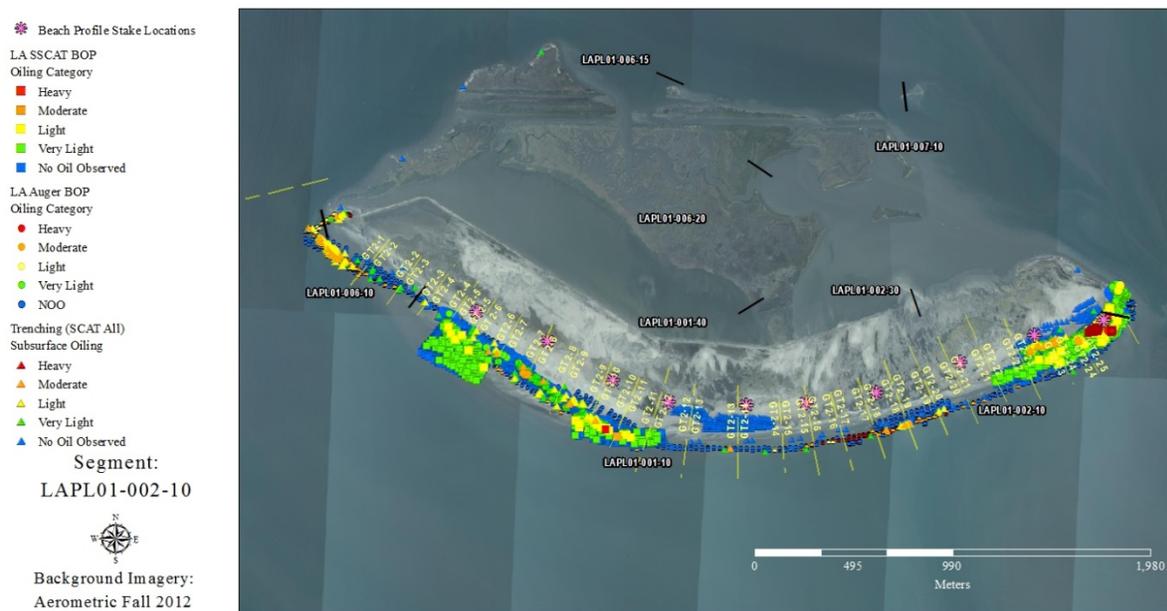


Figure 3.10 Location of subsurface investigations along Grand Terre II (Segments LAPL01-006-10, LAPL01-001-10, and LAPL01-002.10).

Extensive subsurface investigations were performed along areas that did not show evidence of erosion based on evaluation of shoreline change.

Segments Evaluated in Jefferson Parish

OSAT-3 evaluated 101 of 174 shoreline segments in Jefferson Parish (Figure 3.11). Of the segments reviewed, 42 had heavy and/or moderate oiling reported and 36 had no observable oil during any SCAT survey. The NOO segments and those with less than heavy / moderate oiling based on SCAT were located in marshes/mangroves in close proximity to segments with heavy oiling.

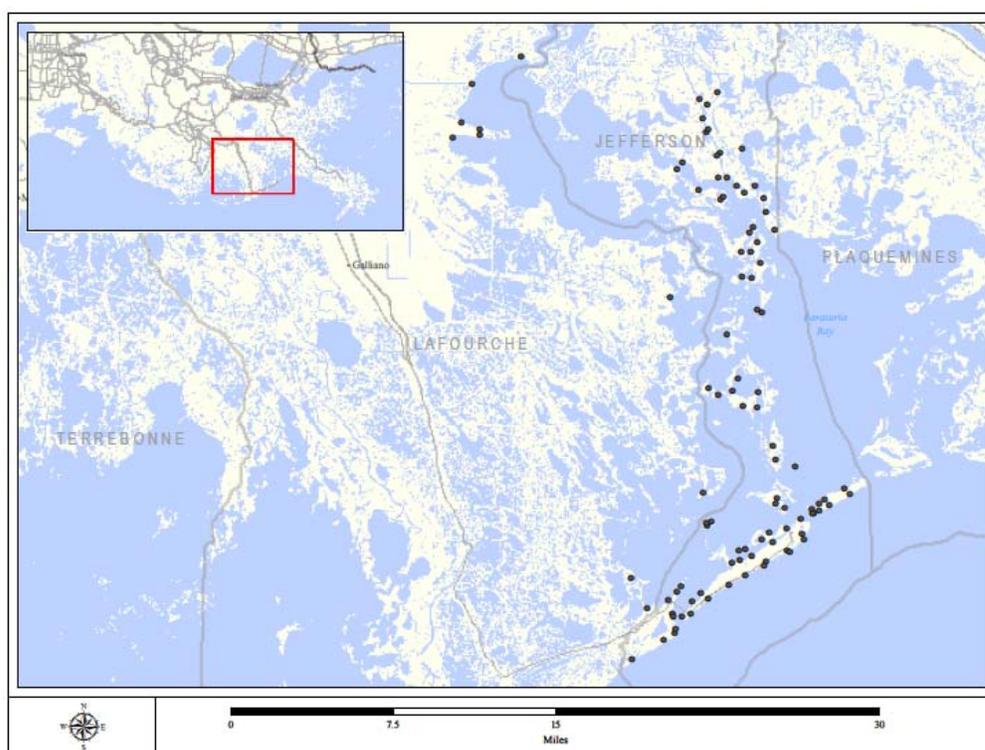


Figure 3.11 Segments in Jefferson Parish evaluated by OSAT-3.

Most of the segments investigated by OSAT-3 in Jefferson Parish were in marshes. Except for marshes adjacent to tidal inlets, any re-oiling that may occur along these marsh segments will be due to the exposure (local erosion) and vertical migration (root channels and animal burrows) of material deposited on the marsh surface during initial oilings. All marsh segments in Jefferson Parish had met SCCP endpoints prior to being evaluated by OSAT-3.

Although many areas along Gulf-facing beaches in Jefferson Parish experienced considerable erosion after initial oiling, there were isolated areas where erosion was not significant enough (based on examination of images and photographs) to remove buried oil (if present). Areas in 2

Gulf-facing beach segments in Jefferson Parish were investigated as part of the BOP (Table 3.2). Buried oil was discovered and removed from one of these segments.

Figure 3.12 shows the LWI for segment LAJF-01-024-10 where oil was removed during the BOP. Although some erosion was noted in aerial overflight photos taken days after Hurricane Isaac, it did not appear to be sufficient to remove remaining buried deposits, if present. As such, the entire length of this segment was investigated as part of the BOP. Diffuse deposits were noted along the entire length of the segment and heavy deposits (mats) were found and removed. Photographs taken during the time of initial oiling(s) in the location where buried deposits were found show oil stranded atop relic clay platforms near the vegetation (Figure 3.13). These clay platforms are more resistant to wave action than sandy areas and it appears some resisted erosion (even through Hurricane Isaac) and were found during the BOP investigations.

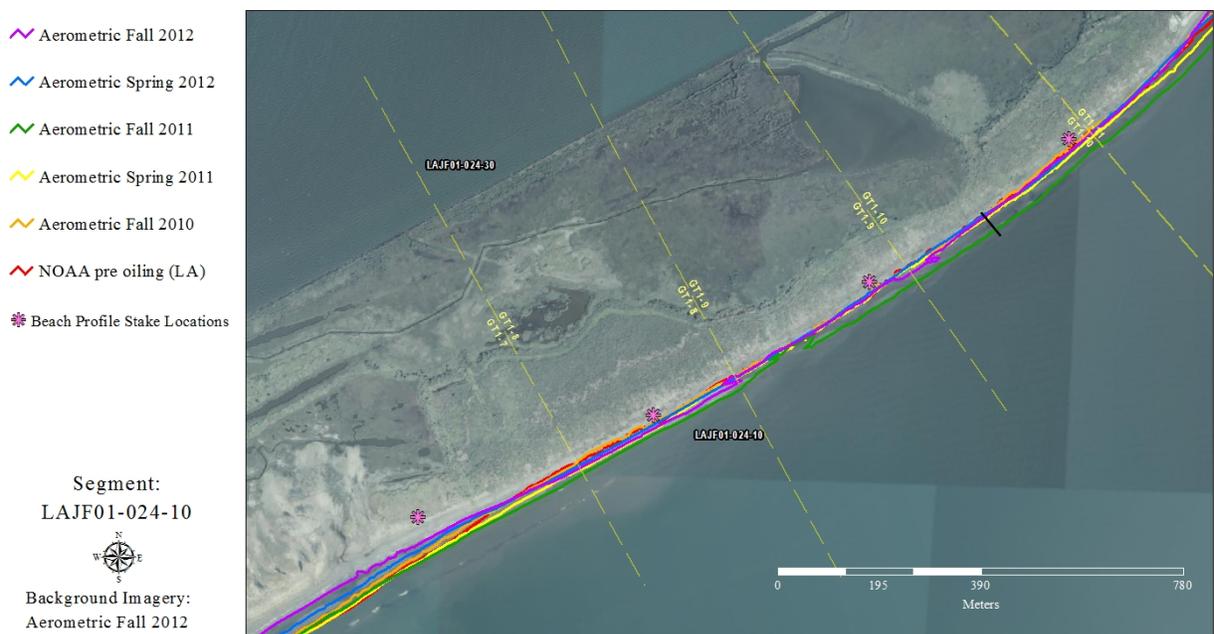


Figure 3.12 Land-water interface (LWI) data used to represent changes in shoreline morphology within Segment LAJF-01-024-10.

Note the beach profile locations are shown. Beach profile data was used in conjunction with aerial surveys to evaluate shoreline change. Little erosion was evident in this segment.

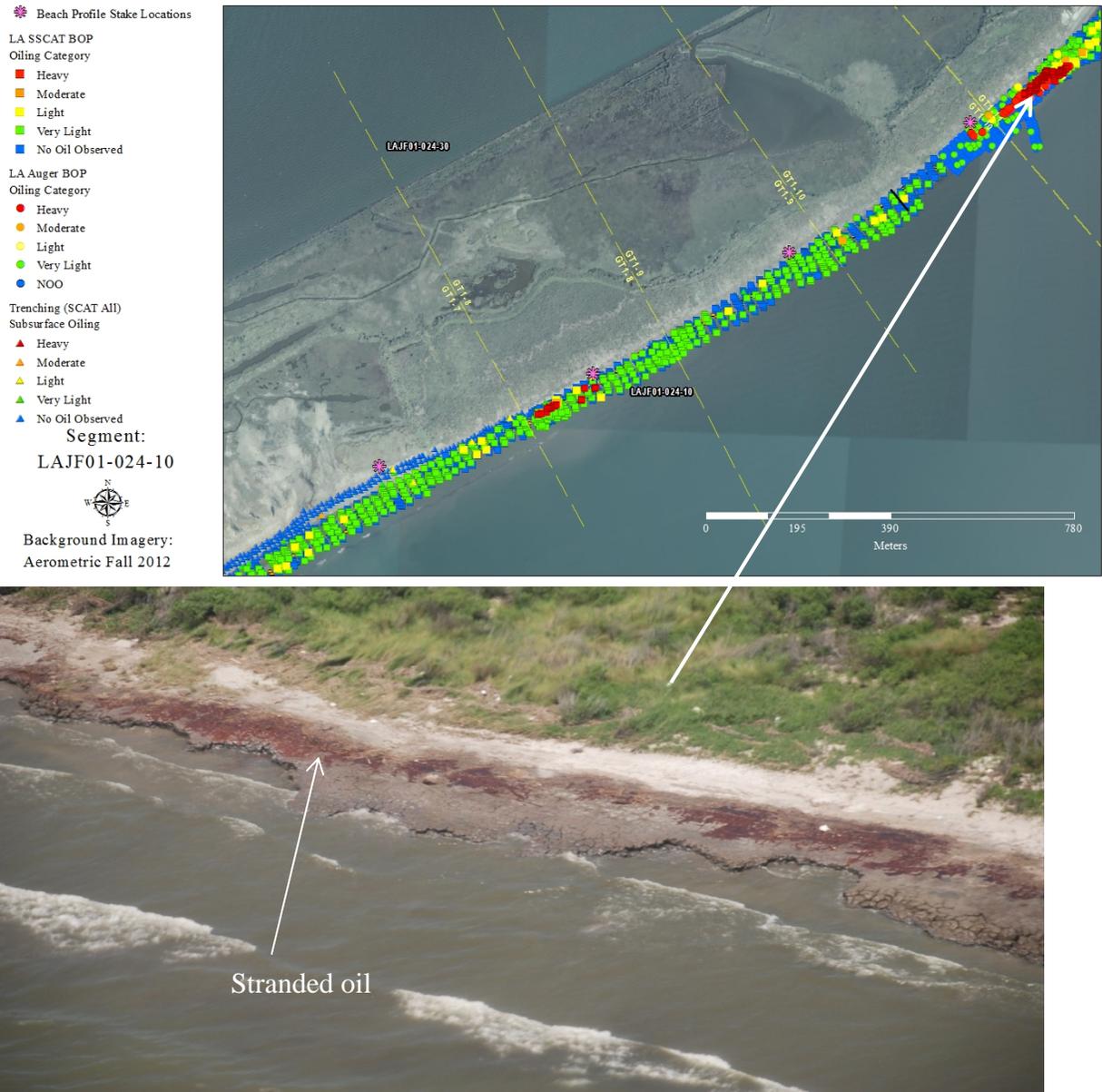


Figure 3.13 Subsurface investigations were conducted along the entire length of Segment LAJF-01-024-10. Locations of stranded weathered oil subsequently buried and removed as part of the BOP were associated with clay platforms (photo taken 5/23/2010).

Segments Evaluated in Lafourche Parish

OSAT-3 evaluated 60 of 162 shoreline segments in Lafourche Parish (Figure 3.14). Note that seven segments with Lafourche SCAT codes (LALF) are located in Terrebonne Parrish. Of the segments reviewed, 47 had heavy and/or moderate oiling reported and 4 had no observable oil during any SCAT survey. The NOO segments and those with less than heavy / moderate oiling evaluated by SCAT were in marshes/mangroves in close proximity to segments with heavy

oiling. There were portions of two segments referred to the BOP for further investigation (Table 3.2) and buried material was found and removed in one of these segments (Figure 3.15).

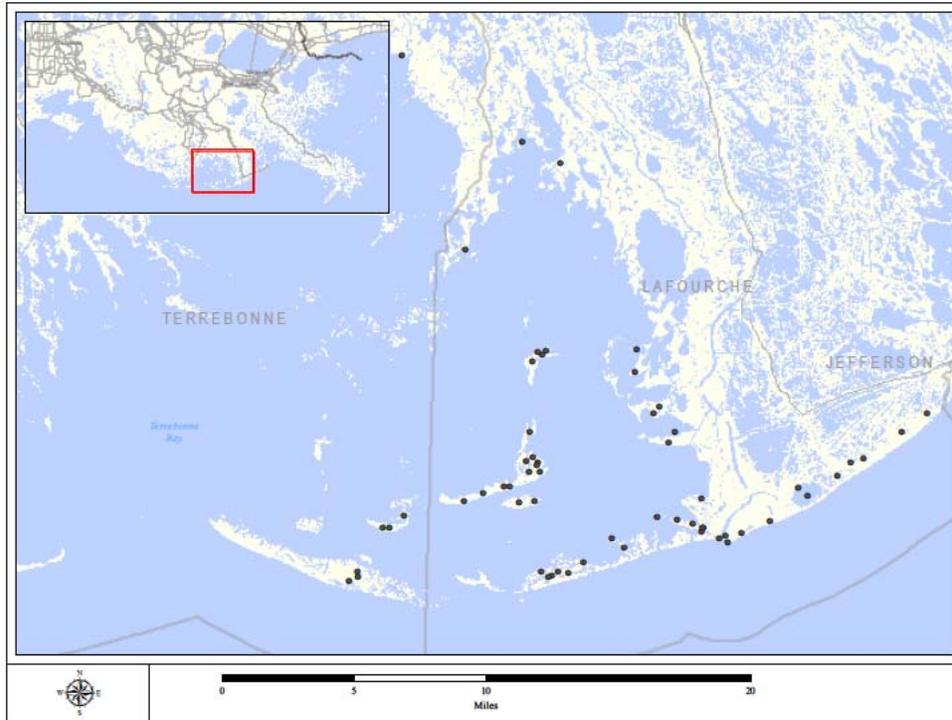


Figure 3.14 Segments in Lafourche Parish evaluated by OSAT-3.



Figure 3.15 Subsurface investigations were conducted in Segments LALF01-031-20 and LALF01-036-20. The area of high-density sampling locations was evaluated during the BOP. Evaluation of aerial imagery and beach profile data showed the remaining areas eroded after the period of initial oiling.

In addition to locations referred to the BOP for further investigation, the areas in front of the breach closures were known areas of concern for buried oil. Figure 3.16 shows a time series of aerial imagery for two breach closures along segment LAJF02—13-10. These “passes” were blocked by sand bags and sheet pilings to prevent floating oil from entering the extensive marsh areas on the back side of the island. Once blocked, the area in front of the breaches quickly filled with sand, burying oil at the same time. Erosion associated with Tropical Storm Karen (October 3-6, 2013) exposed an area of buried oil mat in an area previous augured and excavated. The breach areas had oil buried deeper relative to local mean sea level (LMSL) than any other area in the AOR and proved to be a challenge for Operations. A thorough assessment of the imagery and LiDAR data provided a “target” depth of deposition. During additional investigation of the breach areas in October – December 2013 (Appendix D), depth of excavation relative to LMSL was measured by to ensure removal efforts extended below the “basement” level of deposition. Analysis of samples of weathered oil deposits collected (N=7) in December 2013 from the excavator bucket during removal in front of Breach 1-Fourchon Beach found the percent oil by weight ranged from 1.3 to 13. Six composite samples of the waste stream found the percent oil by weight ranged between 0.1 and 2 percent (Appendix D). Analysis of patterns of re-oiling based on weights of material collected must include an evaluation of the potential for variation in the content of weathered oil and by-products.

Closer examination of the imagery sequence in Figure 3.16 highlights another important point related to the interaction between coastal processes, oiling history, and MC252 spill response actions. The section of beach between the two breaches received similar oiling as the breaches, but removal of stranded oil was more effective on the beach compared to the surf zone in front of the breaches. In addition, this area did not accrete during the time of initial oiling, thus it is unlikely that extensive deposits of buried oil formed in this beach area. This highlights that oil was not buried across all sandy beach areas.



Figure 3.16 Aerial images for breach closures along Segment LAJF02—13-10

Panel a) is an aerial image collected 6/13/2010, Panel b) is from the Spring 2011 NRDA survey, and Panel c) is Fall 2012 NRDA survey. The location of the breaches is designated on each panel ("x") and the position of the "x" is unchanging in the panels. Note that both breaches had completely filled in by Spring 2012, burying substantial amounts of oil. The area within the former breaches did not erode to baseline levels after Hurricane Isaac in 2012.

Segments Evaluated in Terrebonne Parish

OSAT-3 evaluated 65 of 198 shoreline segments in Terrebonne Parish (Figure 3.17). Fifty-five segments had heavy and/or moderate oiling reported and 7 had no observable oil during any SCAT survey (Table 3.1). The NOO segments and those with less than heavy / moderate evaluated were located in marshes/mangroves in close proximity to segments with heavy oiling. Portions of four segments were identified along segment LATB004-008-10 and 008-20 (Figure 3.18) and were investigated by the BOP (Table 3.2). Note the intensity of sampling associated with the BOP. Approximately 5 pounds of material was removed from one segment on the tip of the spit.

Along segment LATB004-008-20, recurring oiling behind rip-rap structures has been noted in several SCAT surveys (Figure 3.18). Areas with structures that interrupt longshore flow are depositional areas, increasing the occurrence of SRBs.

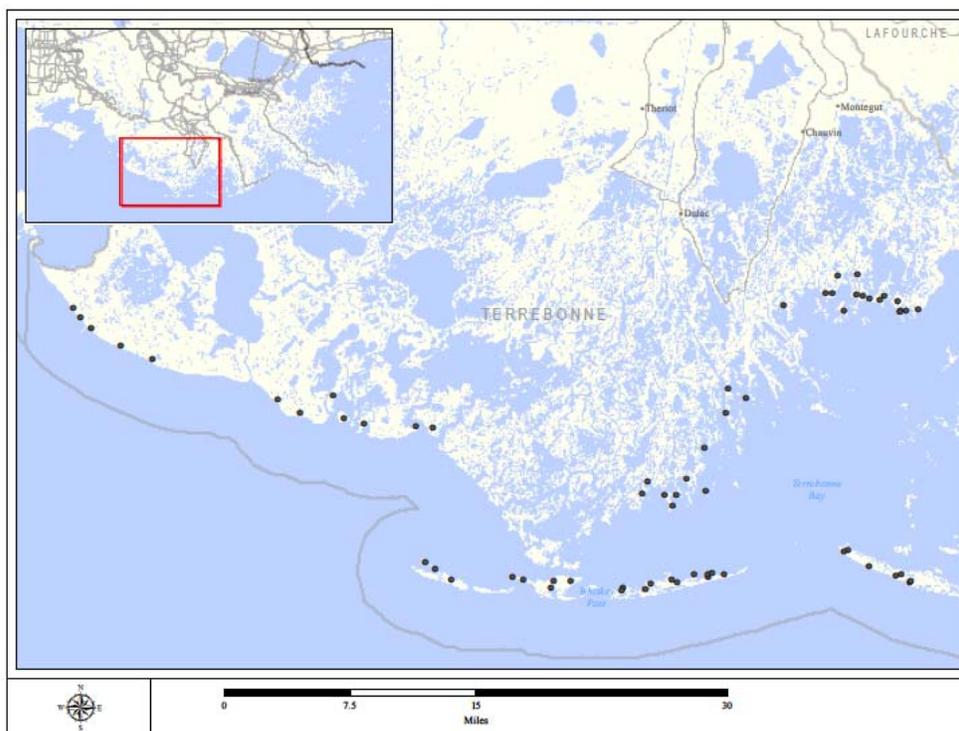


Figure 3.17 Segments in Terrebonne Parish evaluated by OSAT-3.



Figure 3.18 Subsurface investigations were conducted in Segments LATB04-010-10 and LATB04-010-20. The area of high-density sampling locations was evaluated during the BOP. Evaluation of aerial imagery and beach profile data showed the remaining areas eroded after the period of initial oiling. Panel a) shows remnant oil trapped by marsh vegetation shortly after initial oiling (photo taken 9/4/2010). This area eroded after the period of initial oiling, but before the initiation of the BOP, and was, therefore, not detected during the subsurface investigations.

Overall, OSAT-3 evaluated the sources and mechanism for recurring oiling along 438 segments in six Parishes in this AOR. Every area identified during the OSAT-3 team reviews with high potential to contain buried oil (no evidence of erosion) was investigated. In addition to the BOP activities, the OSAT-3 science team, SCAT, and Operations conducted a thorough evaluation of data density across the entire AOR. Areas with “gaps” in coverage of subsurface assessments were identified by OSAT-3 and the SOSCs. These areas were subsequently investigated, and no recoverable buried oil was located. Altogether, buried oil deposits were located and removed from 5 of the areas investigated (Appendix D).

As a result of MC252 spill response efforts, natural degradation processes, and OSAT-3/BOP activities, the potential for extensive (larger than sampling grid) unknown buried oil deposits to remain across the AOR is low. Extensive surveys (SCAT, Snorkel SCAT, and Operations) during the MC252 spill response provide evidence that diffuse deposits are widespread across the Gulf-facing beach segments evaluated and shoreline re-oiling is due to the uncovering and/or cross-shore transport of this small diffuse material. Because this material is less mobile than the surrounding sand, it is likely to become buried and exposed under normal sand transport processes, thereby lengthening the time it may take to move onshore. Longshore transport and deposition of remnant sand/oil deposits will occur in areas near tidal inlets particularly along active recurved spits.

Based on SCAT assessments, the location of remaining marsh areas with remnant oil is well documented. Except for marshes adjacent to tidal inlets, re-oiling in marshes is due to the exposure (local erosion) and vertical migration (root channels and animal burrows) of material deposited on the marsh surface during initial oiling. SRBs may be deposited in marshes adjacent to tidal inlets from up-gradient sources transported by longshore currents.

3.3 OSAT-3 Key Findings

The results of the OSAT-3 activities provide a better understanding of sources and mechanisms of recurring oiling in the AOR, hydrodynamic models to identify areas more prone to deposition, locations where buried oil may persist and a fully integrated GIS system to facilitate visualization and evaluation of multiple data sources for decision-making purposes. In addition to individual segments assessments and data utilized, a summary of the key findings based on

OSAT-3 team reviews with technical experts and the state and local response and natural resource representatives are presented, as follows:

Many but not all beaches were in a highly erosional state (lower elevation) when weathered oil was coming ashore during 2010. As a result, much of the initial oil was buried in the intertidal and subtidal zone as the beaches accreted over the following months. The formation of buried deposits on and nearshore was widespread but there were areas that appear to lack the the combination of factors to form extensive buried and/or submerged sand/oil mixtures.

“Heavy” oiling as defined during SCAT surveys covers a wide range of oiling conditions and does not always equate to the presence of buried oil deposits or extensive penetration into marsh sediments. SCAT assessments are designed to provide a simple, comprehensive, systematic and standardized approach to shoreline oiling conditions in order to recommend cleanup methods and endpoints. OSAT-3 review teams utilized SCAT survey data as part of an integrated assessment of the likelihood and potential for SOMs to be contributing to segment re-oiling. The integration of georeferenced aerial images, photographs, boom location, hydrodynamic model output, field notes, and data (Operations and SCAT) collected during the response into a temporal and spatial referenced GIS system was a key component in the assessment of formation and persistence of SOMs.

Sand-oil mixtures formed at the time of initial oiling (primary) are being reworked by coastal processes to form more diffuse deposits (secondary). Extensive SCAT surveys provide evidence that diffuse deposits are widespread across the segments evaluated by OSAT-3 in this AOR. Understanding the influence of remobilization and transport of material across the AOR is fundamental to determining sources and mechanisms of re-oiling.

Observations of shoreline re-oiling (patterns in size, shape, and amounts) must be evaluated within the context of oiling processes during the time oil was coming ashore, response activities (nearshore booming, removal operations), and shoreline erosion/accretion post-oiling. Similarities and differences in shoreline re-oiling patterns across the range of shoreline types provided valuable information on the sources and mechanisms for re-oiling. However, *examination of patterns in re-oiling alone was not sufficient to meet all OSAT-3 objectives* because a number of factors not related to sources of residual oil can influence collections and

therefore obscure short-term (weekly/monthly) patterns that may be associated with source and transport mechanisms. Factors that can influence daily collections and observations include: composition of material, tide level, time since last survey, debris on beach, and avoidance of areas due to environmental and/or cultural resource issues.

Re-oiling patterns and dominant mechanisms vary across shoreline segment types and can vary within a segment depending on conditions. Re-oiling mechanisms are determined by a combination of interrelated factors associated with formation, source, mobilization, transport, and deposition. Factors that influence re-oiling include: degree of and nature of initial oiling (i.e. volume, patchiness, frequency, and degree of weathering), shoreline morphology/wave energy during the period of initial oiling, erosion/deposition patterns since post-oiling, the success of response activities to remove oil, and wave-energy/current patterns during mobilization/transport.

For the segments that were investigated, four major types of re-oiling mechanisms have been observed across the AOR: (1) cross-shore transport/uncovering of diffuse material referred to as surface residual balls (SRBs) or patties (depending on size) in the intertidal and nearshore subtidal zones (most prevalent mechanism for re-oiling); (2) cross-shore transport of material broken off of submerged oil mats (SOMs) in the intertidal zone in close proximity to the stranding (limited extent); (3) longshore transport and deposition of SRBs from diffuse sources occurring predominantly during storm events (limited extent); and (4) simple uncovering of material of all sizes (buried since initial oiling and/or residual oil from cleanup operations) across tidal zones (common, but not prevalent mechanism for re-oiling).

Since initial oiling, most shoreline and nearshore areas have undergone enough erosion (vertically and laterally) to result in breakup and/or redistribution of the initial sand/oil deposits (other than those actively removed). Although the shoreline and nearshore areas have undergone normal erosion/deposition cycles, there are isolated and identifiable areas where SOMs / buried oil may remain.

All evidence supports the premise that SOMs formed landward of the first sand bar. Analysis of tide and wave patterns during shoreline oiling coupled with observed associations between documented SOM locations and nearshore morphology (inside the first sand bar) support the

formation of SOMs by stranding of oil on receding tides and/or by mixing with sand in the zone of active wave-breaking (not shoaling). Based on wave-energy dissipation and suspended sediment calculations focused on the time period of initial stranding of weathered oil, the energy dissipated outside of the zone of active wave breaking is below the levels necessary to thoroughly mix sand and floating oil. Although sand is very likely in suspension, analysis using hydrodynamic models shows that concentrations of sand reaching the surface are below levels observed in SOMs and levels likely required to decrease buoyancy enough to sink weathered oil. It is not likely that enough sand reaches the surface of the water column to mix with oil except in the zone of active wave breaking/run-up (where sand and floating oil mix). Differences in locations and characteristics of SOMs across the AOR are related to oiling history, wave energy, tidal range, morphology inside the first bar, and boom deployment.

SOMs in protected areas and near inlets are often associated with anchored boom, marsh vegetation or peat platforms. Anchored or stranded booms adjacent to shallow areas held floating oil in place, which enhanced oil mixing or infiltrating sand. Vegetation and peat platforms intermixed with sand also enhanced mixing with weathered oil.

The occurrence of large (greater than 5 centimeters in diameter) and angular (lack of smoothing due to transport along the seafloor) SRBs and patties may be diagnostic of SOMs in the vicinity. While SOMs are a source of re-oiling, interpretation of the presence of SOMs based on field observations must consider the possibility that the material washing up onshore at any particular time may not be a by-product of remaining SOMs being broken up by wave action. Large SRBs and patties are less likely to move than smaller SRBs; therefore it is possible that transport processes will segregate sizes. For instance, deposits of large SRBs and patties may be created and subsequently buried or uncovered by the movement of local sediment.

Increases in material collections/observations of small SRBs (less than 5 centimeters in diameter) along a segment are not a definitive diagnostic for potential concentrated sources such as SOMs. Conversely, extended periods of low recoveries may not be indicative of lack of SOMs as concentrated deposits do not breakup/transport and contribute to the re-oiling if covered by sand. Low recoveries of material could be due to reworking of diffuse deposits or SOMs may be a source of material. If covered by sand, concentrated deposits of buried oil are

not reworked and transported onshore as they are shielded from wave action and currents. Under conditions where native sediment is mobilized, buried SOMs can become partially/fully exposed, break apart, and contribute to re-oiling.

The process of burial/uncovering/cross-shore transport of diffuse sources of smaller SRBs (less than 2.5 centimeters in diameter) is responsible for most of the recurring oiling observed in this AOR. Since SRBs are less mobile compared to sand, they are likely to become buried and uncovered under normal sand transport processes, thereby lengthening the time SRBs may take to move onshore. Based on extensive onshore augering and trenching data, and snorkel SCAT assessments in the intertidal zone, smaller diffuse deposits (SRBs less than 2.5 centimeters) are much more common and widespread than concentrated sources, such as SOMs. Along Gulf-facing segments, re-oiling is associated with SRBs found in the intertidal zone. The complexity of re-oiling (source, burial, uncovering, and transport of SRBs) is explained in the predicted variation in the timing and spatial extent of SRB and sediment mobility.

Differences in initial oiling (less oil and more patchy distribution) and lower wave energy along the protected areas (those areas that are not exposed to wave action from the Gulf of Mexico, such as marshes and the back side of barrier islands) compared to Gulf-facing beaches results in sediment/oil mixtures with different characteristics in these environments. SCAT teams frequently documented “patty”-sized (less than 1.0 meters diameter) and SRB deposits along protected segments and they are often described as “gooey” or “less weathered” compared to deposits on Gulf-facing beaches. These characteristics are consistent with the lower wave energy environment where patches of floating oil mixed with just enough native sediment to sink or stranded on receding tides and persisted (less exposure/breakup/reburial).

Aside from storm conditions and near tidal inlets, SRBs from one source location may not be redistributed to distant down-current locations. Based on results from hydrodynamic models, SRBs greater than 2.5 centimeters in diameter along Gulf-facing beaches are not, under the most commonly observed low-energy wave conditions, likely to move very far along the shoreline. Longshore current velocities estimated from hydrodynamic models are below the critical level required to move SRBs. Conditions for longshore movement of SRBs along sheltered segments (marshes, protected beaches, and the back side of barrier islands) are much less common

compared to the Gulf-facing beaches. During infrequent high-energy events (e.g., winter storms and Hurricane Isaac), energy is sufficient to move a greater range of SRB sizes and potentially expose and break apart patties and SOMs.

When SRBs do move alongshore, output from hydrodynamic models indicate that there are regions that are more conducive to accumulation than others. Deposition of SRBs (and sand) is governed by convergences in longshore currents (e.g. flow reversals), in areas of spatially decelerating longshore currents, and in areas where the shear stress forcing drops below critical thresholds to initiate/maintain SRB movement. Segments in these depositional areas are expected to have chronic re-oiling of smaller SRBs. Areas with structures that interrupt longshore flow (i.e. jetties, groins, culverts, and piers) are also depositional areas.

Areas adjacent to inlets are active transport/deposition zones. Flow and SRB mobility patterns around inlets indicate patterns in hydrodynamic forcing that influence redistribution of both SRBs as well as the transport of surface oil that mixed with suspended sediment to form oil mats in the first place.

Nearshore areas where conditions at the time of initial oiling (beach morphology, wave climate, and oiling pattern) may have been conducive to the formation of SOMs and have not since displayed evidence of erosion were identified and provided to the Buried Oil Project (BOP) for potential field evaluation. This approach was considered the most inclusive and conservative (i.e., this approach likely overestimated the formation and persistence of SOMs) because it is unlikely that SOMs formed in all of the areas identified as having similar characteristics to documented deposits and it is further likely that erosion occurred between aerial image collections used in the analysis.

Not all buried oil has been removed from this AOR, due to a combination of ecological, operational and safety considerations. The decision on whether or not this oil is amenable to removal actions lies with the FOSC. Most of the re-oiling in this AOR is from diffuse secondary sources (not SOMs) and that pattern is likely to continue. Future re-oiling of some segments in the AOR may occur, but the frequency and intensity of re-oiling will dissipate over time due to natural processes. Conditions needed to remobilize buried oil and the location of these re-oiling occurrences are generally predictable. Of the segments

evaluated in this AOR, the patterns observed are predominantly indicative of diffuse sources being reworked by coastal processes. Using the knowledge generated during this program on areas with the highest potential for remaining buried oil deposits combined with an understanding of the mechanisms of transport and deposition of SRBs through hydrodynamic modeling will allow better understanding and predictability of locations for future re-oiling.

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5.0 List of Acronyms

AOR – Area of Responsibility

BOP – Buried Oil Project

DEM – Digital Elevation Model

ERMA – Environmental Response Management Application

FOSC – Federal On-scene Coordinator

GCIMT – Gulf Coast Incident Management Team

GIS – Geographic Information System

LiDAR – Light Detection and Ranging

LWI – Land-Water Interface

LMSL – Local Mean Sea Level

MC252 Spill – Deepwater Horizon MC252 Spill of National Significance

NAIP – National Agricultural Imagery Program

NAVD – North American Vertical Datum

NGS – NOAA National Geodetic Survey

NRDA – Natural Resource Damage Assessment

NOAA – National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

OSAT-3 – Third Operational Science Advisory Team

RADC – Removal Action Deemed Complete

SCAT – Shoreline Cleanup Assessment Technique

SCCP – *Deepwater Horizon Shoreline Clean-up Completion Plan (2011)*

SOMs – Submerged Oil Mats

SOSC – State On-Scene Coordinator

SRBs – Surface Residual Balls

6.0 Appendices

Appendix A: OSAT-3 Charter and Membership

Appendix B: Snorkel SCAT Methodologies and Standard Operating Procedures

Appendix C: Use of Beach Profile Data for Interpreting Beach Morphological Changes and for Planning Purposes

Appendix D: Buried Oil Report Louisiana Area of Response February 2014

Appendix E: Application of Hydrodynamic and Sediment Transport Models for Cleanup Efforts Related to the Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill Along the Coast of Mississippi and Louisiana

Appendix F: Application of Hydrodynamic Models in Support of the Buried Oil Project

Appendix G: Aerial Image Acquisition and Processing

Appendix H: Summary of Oiling Condition by Segment Based on Operations and SCAT Surveys and OSAT-3 Re-Oiling Sources/Mechanisms Designation

Appendix I: Material Segregation Project Grand Isle, Louisiana, August 2013