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Florida scientist tracking oil spill with state-of-the-art forecast model

Dave Heller ■ 6 days ago

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TALLAHASSEE, Florida - The [Deepwater Horizon](#) oil spill poses no imminent threat to Florida, according to a renowned scientist who tracks the wind and ocean currents with an elaborate forecast model.

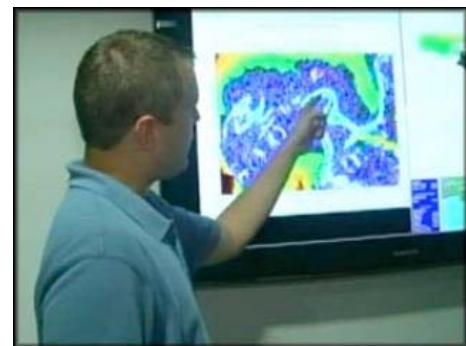
Florida State scientist Steve Morey helped build one of the best forecast models for the Gulf of Mexico. It's used by the U.S. Navy.

Photo Gallery: Oil spill in Gulf of Mexico

The model takes data from buoys in the Gulf, satellite images and wind measurements, crunches the numbers, and churns out a 7-day forecast for water currents.

"We can get a better representation of where the oil is going to go in the future than just by using the ocean surface currents alone or the wind alone," said Morey of the [Center for Ocean-Atmospheric Prediction Studies](#).

Morey says Florida has been lucky so far because the winds have generally been out of the southeast, directing the oil spill toward the northwest and away from the [Loop Current](#).



Steve Morey tracks the Gulf oil spill with an elaborate forecast model.

OIL SPILL GROWS IN GULF

He predicts the oil will float around the Mississippi and Louisiana coastal areas over the next few days.

But Morey says that could change next week.

"As the winds shift around, possibly next week a little bit, some of the oil could migrate out to where it could interact with the eddies and potentially this could cause it to reach the Loop Current, but we're not certain about that yet."

If oil gets swept into the Loop Current, that could push the slick towards the Florida Keys and up the Atlantic Coast.

But there is another sign in the current that could help Florida. It appears to be shedding its northern bulge and if that happens, then there would be a larger buffer between the toxic oil and the all-important Loop Current.

BP estimates the Deepwater Horizon accident has been spewing more than 200,000 gallons of oil a day since April 20th, which would translate to more than 5 million gallons so far.

One study has found that natural seepage in the Gulf of Mexico produces between four million and 20 million gallons of oil a year.

Dave Heller, 10 Connects

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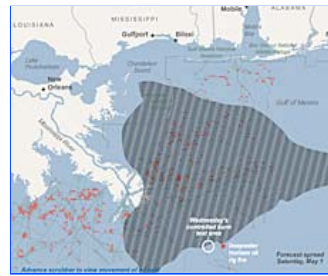
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