



# Florida scientist says evidence indicates BP oil spill impacting Gulf marine life

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Tallahassee, Florida - On the second anniversary of the BP oil spill, a Florida scientist who is studying the Gulf of Mexico says his research indicates marine animals are still being affected by oil contamination.

Florida State Professor of Oceanography Jeff Chanton is using radiocarbon dating to get a better understanding of what happened to the 4.9 million barrels of oil that poured into the Gulf.

overall. Pensacola Bay has had some oil contamination but appears to be faring fine, while Apalachicola Bay remains pristine.

But Chanton says his radiocarbon tracing techniques offer evidence that petrocarbon chemicals are affecting marine life.

"We are definitely finding fossil petroleum or petrocarbon in the food web. But the acute effects are probably more important like, for example, there's a lot of fish that are having sores and so you can see this on living fish and that's just by microtoxins that are affecting the fish that way."

Pinpointing the cause of sick marine life can be a complicated issue because the Gulf has natural oil seeps, as well as other contamination from ships and contaminants from the Mississippi River.

But Chanton says all signs point to the BP spill.

"That oil spill is really a smoking gun, I

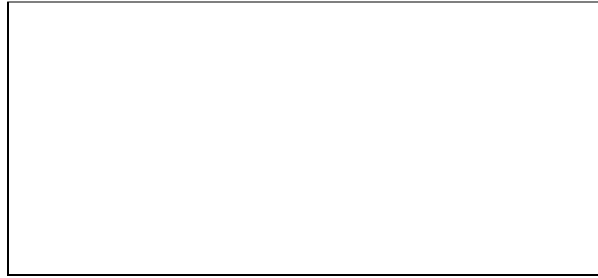
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His research team has investigated different bays all along the Gulf Coast and found the most serious contamination near Louisiana.

He says Florida bays look pretty good





think, and so certainly there is chronic oil addition to the Gulf on a regular basis and part of that is natural but that natural component is only like five percent roughly of that whole BP oil spill."

Chanton says the most serious impacts are near Louisiana, including Barataria Bay and Terrebonne Bay. He says Pensacola Bay looks pretty good and Apalachicola Bay is pristine.

Florida has been leading a campaign to convince people that Florida Gulf seafood is safe to eat.

Agriculture Commissioner Adam Putnam says the state Department of Agriculture's food safety laboratory is aggressively testing Gulf seafood for any contamination. Since August, 2010, Florida has tested more than 1,100 samples of seafood.

Putnam says the findings for each one have been well below the FDA's level of concern.

Meanwhile, Florida is getting ready to move ahead with its first two restoration projects resulting from the disaster.

Florida is receiving \$100 million from BP to help restore damage from the oil spill. It's part of a \$1 billion settlement with BP last year for Gulf restoration.

Mimi Drew is representing Florida on the multistate Deepwater Horizon Resource Damage Assessment Council. She says the cash from BP allows the projects to start now. Otherwise they could have been delayed for many years.

"The Exxon Valdez restoration is still going on. So we felt with the number of trustees that were affected, the amount of oil that was spilled into the Gulf, the fact that many, many people were affected, it was important to get early restoration **funding**."

Some parts of Florida's far western coast are still seeing occasional tar balls wash up, but Drew says they don't pose a health or environmental concern.

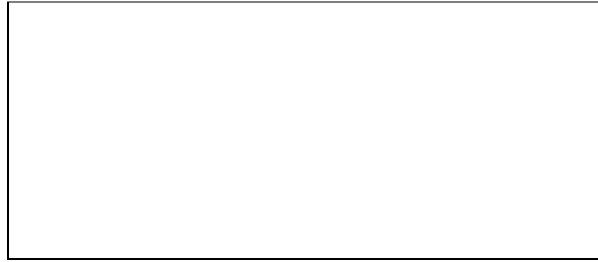
"It's coming in weathered form in the far western part of the beaches but it's not a health concern and it's not really an environmental concern at this point because it's oil that has become hard. We do have a response effort under way if someone does see something that's unexpected or has a concern, they can call

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The first project will restore a damaged dune on Pensacola Beach. The other will repair boat ramps and construct new ones across Escambia County in an effort to attract people back to the beach.





#DEP and we have people ready and prepared to go out with the Coast Guard to address whatever people see. But at this point things are pretty much under control in Florida."

Drew says BP workers are still being dispatched to clean up tar balls. Then they're sent to a Coast Guard lab, which can determine whether they came from BP's Macondo well.

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