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For Immediate Release

Surfrider Foundation Releases Findings Of Gulf Oil Disaster Study

Results Show Continued High Toxin Concentrations In Tar Product Found On Florida, Alabama, and Mississippi Beaches

Pensacola, FL (April 16, 2012) – As we near the two-year anniversary of the tragic Deepwater Horizon Disaster in the Gulf of Mexico, the Surfrider Foundation is releasing preliminary findings from the “State of the Beach” oil trend study. Below is a summary of the report’s top findings:

1. The data collected confirms that Corexit dispersant mixed with crude oil creates a discernible fluorescent signature when illuminated by 370nm wavelength (UV) light.
2. The use of Corexit as a dispersant has inhibited the microbial degradation of hydrocarbons in the crude oil and has allowed Polycyclic Aromatic Hydrocarbons (PAH) concentration levels to consistently exhibit high toxicity levels in excess of the carcinogenic exposure level specified by NIH and OSHA.
3. Of the 32 sampling sites, mainly in Florida and Alabama, 26 had PAH concentration levels exceeding the established carcinogenic exposure limits. In only three locations, samples were found to be free of PAH contamination.
4. Seventy-one samples were collected. Twenty-three were tested for oil range organics and 16 exceeded the target clean up levels specified by the EPA. Of the 48 samples submitted for PAH tests, 90% of the samples had contamination levels in excess of the carcinogenic exposure limit.
5. Tar product remaining in the coastal zone contains PAH levels likely to be toxic (levels > 80mg/kg). Wet skin dermal contact and absorption of tar product was documented. This unknown risk for human health and safety should be further studied.
6. Carcinogenic PAH compounds from the toxic tar product that concentrates in surface layers from natural beach processes was found to be leaching into the lower layers of beach sediment. One researcher’s published scientific results concluded this could lead to the contamination of local groundwater sources.

The Emerald Coast Chapter began the oil disaster “State of the Beach” monitoring program in June 2010 in an effort to help beach goers who suffered from burning eyes,

respiratory problems and other conditions since the spill. Existing government testing results do not provide sufficient information for the public to truly determine if Gulf beaches are “clean” enough for safe recreational use. The Chapter’s independent testing provides a valuable source of information.

The program uses newly developed UV light equipment to detect the tar product and reveal where it is buried in many beach areas and also where it still remains on the surface in the shoreline plunge step area. The tar product samples are then analyzed using GCMS testing methods to determine which toxins may be present and at what concentrations. By returning to locations several times over the past year and analyzing samples, we have been able to determine that the PAH concentrations in most locations are not degrading as hoped for and expected.

The “State of the Beach” oil trend study was conducted by the Surfrider Foundation Emerald Coast Chapter and University of South Florida coastal geologist Rip Kirby. The study was primarily funded by the Surfrider Foundation, grants from Patagonia, O’Neill, and the Norcross Foundation and by personal donations.

To request the complete study, please contact Alexis Henry, Surfrider Foundation, ahenry@surfrider.org or 949.732.6413.

To download a variety of videos and photos, please visit the following websites:

- Photos: <http://www.surfrider.org/emeraldcoast>
- Videos: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=feOn-0uikKo>

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[About Surfrider Foundation](#)

The Surfrider Foundation is a non-profit grassroots organization dedicated to the protection and enjoyment of our world’s oceans, waves and beaches through a powerful activist network. Founded in 1984 by a handful of visionary surfers in Malibu, California, the Surfrider Foundation now maintains over 250,000 supporters, activists and members worldwide. For more information on the Surfrider Foundation, visit www.surfrider.org.