BP's Gulf of Mexico Oil Spill at the Oil Drum Overview

Posted by Gail the Actuary on May 18, 2010 - 10:25am
Topic: Miscellaneous
Tags: blowout, bp, deepwater horizon, gulf of mexico, oil spill, peak oil [list all tags]

Trying to follow a complex ongoing story like the **oil spill** on a blog like The Oil Drum is difficult, so I thought I would put together some pointers and useful links, especially for new readers. In this, I include

- Drumbeat
- Oil Drum articles closely related to the Oil Spill
- Oil Drum background articles, helpful to newcomers

Note: Comments turned off for this thread--please put them on other threads.

Drumbeat

The place most readers start is Drumbeat. Leanan puts up a list of news articles in every day. Many will be relevant to the oil spill and responses to it. The comments below Drumbeat will also include many useful discussions and links. For most people, starting with today's Drumbeat is useful.

If you want to look at prior Drumbeat dates, an easy way to find them is to look through the Archives. If you are particularly interested in comments by a particularly knowledgeable commenter JOHN DOE, you can click on that person's name, and be led to a page that has as one of its choices "Comments by JOHN DOE", and from there can see further comments by the same person.

Oil Drum Posts Closely Related to the Oil Spill

We have run a number of posts that are related to the Oil Spill. These, listed from the most recent to the oldest, are as follows:

19. The Gulf oil spill, recovery, and cleanup - Monday's Press Conference - Heading Out (Dave Summers) - May 18

Update based on information from Monday's news conference. Reports in the press regarding "oil plumes" seem to be overstate what is known--these may not even contain oil. More discussion of riser insertion tube and BP's likely next steps.

18. Tapping into the Riser in the BP Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill - Heading Out (Dave Summers) - May 17

Update on the effort to tap into the riser.

17. Threading the needle at the Deepwater Horizon BP oil spill site - Heading Out (Dave Summers) - May 16

Updates on the pipe insertion approach and on underwater dispersants.

16. Pipe Insertion into the Riser of the Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill - Heading Out (Dave Summers) - May 15

Discussion of pipe insertion methodology.

15. Is 70,000 barrels a day a possibility for the oil spill? by Gail the Actuary (Gail Tverberg) - May 13, moved to May 14

Discussion related to an NPR report that oil spill may be 70,000 barrels a day, based on two independent engineering analyses.

14. Congressional Testimony and the Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill - Heading Out (Dave Summers) - May 13

Dave Summers provides excerpts and links to some key testimony to date.

13. Crystals and the Gulf of Mexico Blowout by Heading Out (Dave Summers) - May 12

A recently retired college professor gives some background relating to the crystals that formed that prevented the use of the first "dome", and talks about the second smaller "top-hat" dome which will be tried next.

12. Oil Spill Hearings Begin - 'Nitrogen Cement' and 'Failure to Place Cement Plug' Testimony Likely - Gail the Actuary (Gail Tverberg) - May 11

Excerpts from news stories regarding Nitrogen Cement and Failure to Place Cement Plug stories, plus discussion of these an other issues, especially relating to multiple hearings beginning May 11.

11. API Teleconference on Oil Spill plus some More Recent News Items Teleconference summary by Heading Out (Dave Summers); recent news items by Gail the Actuary (Gail Tverberg) - May 10

Summary of American Petroleum Institute teleconference on May 6, with link to transcript. Also includes a few recent news items.

10. Oil Spill--New Thread--May 9 Gail the Actuary (Gail Tverberg) - May 9

Brief news items followed by reader comments. (More news in Drumbeat also.)

9. BP Attempt to Cover Oil Spill "Didn't Work" - Open Thread Posted by Nate Hagens - Started May 8, moved to May 9

Comments by readers relating to the problem encountered when the "dome" was placed over the leaks. Essentially, at the cold temperatures found at 5,000 feet under the sea surface, methane hydrate crystals formed and clogged up the dome.

8. Oil Spill Insights from a Retired Manager of an Offshore Underwater Service Company by Oil

Drum reader shelburn - May 8

A retired manager of an offshore underwater service company comments on such topics as how the leak could gradually grow over time, how storms affect the dispersal of oil, and how the dome can be expected to work. Mention is also made of some of the politics of the situation.

7. Heading Out's Oil Spill Update, Including Oil Spill Discussion - May 7 by Heading Out (Dave Summers) - May 7

Provides some illustrations and technical explanation regarding the apparent nature of the leak and its causes, and what is being done to remedy the situation.

6. Oil Spill Discussion - May 6 by Gail the Actuary (Gail Tverberg) - May 6

Updates from BP, NOAA, and MMS, to serve as a lead in to group discussion.

5. Comments on Some Recent Oil Spill News Items, Including the Dome by Heading Out (Dave Summers) - May 4

Brief summary of a few news items of interest, including a picture and diagram of the dome (or "cap") from Superior Energy.

4. Progress on the Gulf oil leak and comments on cementing and well completion by Heading Out (Dave Summers) - May 3

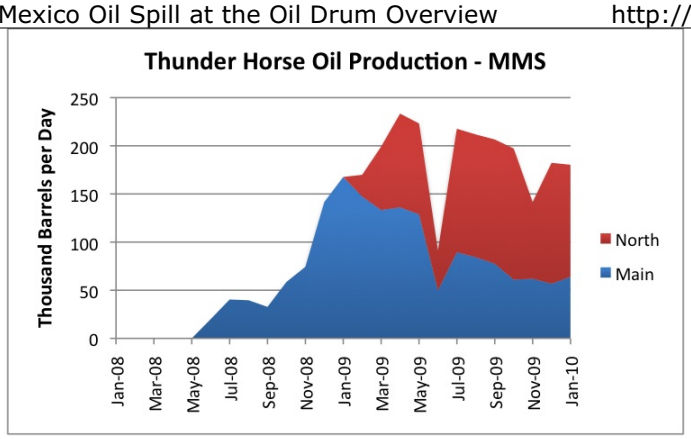
Background technical information on cementing pipes and well completion, plus discussion of how these seem to be an issue in the Deepwater Horizon blowout.

3. Tech Talk: Revisiting Oil Well Pressures and Blowout Preventers after BP's Gulf of Mexico Oil Spill by Heading Out (Dave Summers) - May 2

Post by a recently retired university professor, describing some of the "ins" and "outs" of oil well pressure and blowout preventers. In the second half of the post, Heading Out talks about how this relates to some recent questions that have been raised with respect to how the current blowout took place, and what can be done to stop the leaking.

2. BP's Thunder Horse to Under-Perform in the Wake of the Deepwater Horizon Blowout? -Guest post by Seismobob (Glenn Morton) - April 30

One question of interest is, "If we do all this deepwater drilling, is it really possible to get a reasonable quantity of oil out?" Hopefully, we will be able to run a number of posts trying to examine this question. The April 30 post was the first such post. Based on the analysis Seismobob did, it appears that at least in this example, production is not going nearly as well as planned--suggesting that deepwater oil reserves may be overstated, and costs of production may be much higher than oil companies have planned on.



1. The Gulf of Mexico Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill: Some Background and What It Means by Gail the Actuary (Gail Tverberg) - April 28 Excerpt:

> It seems to me that the great depth and attendant pressures, and the learning curve that goes working within these new parameters, probably contributed to the initial leak, and is contributing to the difficulties that are now occurring in stopping the leak.
>
> This particular well was not an important one--one source said it had economic importance only because of its proximity to a platform which was already in the area. The issues are more the possible environmental damage and the political fallout that could come from the accident. Unfortunately, most of the "easy oil" is gone. The oil that remains all has some challenges--but the fact of the matter is that the world economy cannot run without oil. So there are no easy answers.

Oil Drum General Background for New Readers

Most of our transportation fleet runs on oil products (gasoline or diesel). In addition, many of our roads are paved with asphalt, which is an oil product. Oil is essential for our current food supply system, since farm equipment uses diesel to operate, transportation of food (and refrigeration during transport) requires oil products, and oil is used in irrigation, fertilizer production and transport, and in the manufacture of insecticides and herbicides.

If there are oil shortages, it will affect the economy--either through recession or high prices--but not necessarily both simultaneously--so the impact may look like an *oil demand* problem, as much as an *oil supply* problem. Even if we were able to put up an infinite number of wind turbines or nuclear plants tomorrow, these would not really substitute for oil, so would not solve our oil-related problems, although wind, nuclear, and other energy approaches might have benefits of other types.

Because of this oil problem, we are facing a serious predicament, with no obvious solution. On The Oil Drum, we discuss our predicament; analyze possible mitigating actions; and look at what the future may hold, based on insights from history and from various sciences.

For those just getting started, here are a few articles that may be of interest:

The Oil Supply (or Oil Demand) Problem

There is Plenty of Oil, but . . .

Our Energy Supply, Some Basics

World Oil Production Forecast - Update November 2009

Financial Problems which are likely to be Connected to Oil Supply Issues

Delusions of Finance: Where We May be Headed

Tipping Point Paper

Peak Oil and the Financial Crisis

Insights on Where We May be Headed

The Failure of Networked Systems

Dennis Meadows - Economics and Limits to Growth: What's Sustainable?

The dark side of coal - some historical insights on energy and the economy

Technical posts related to oil supply

See Tech talks by Heading Out (Dave Summers)

Other posts

We have posts on many other topics, including biofuel, wind, nuclear, solar PV, electricity, and many other subjects. Google search can provide help in finding posts.

We also have posts related to the general subject of sustainability. Many of these are in our Campfire section. We also have many posts on related to Net Energy and Energy Return on Energy Invested. These are generally found in the Net Energy section.

Comments have been turned off for this post. If you have questions, please respond on anther thread, or send an e-mail to GailTverberg at comcast dot net.