



Feature Release

From the U.S. Coast Guard Acquisition Directorate

U.S. Coast Guard Acquisition Directorate People, Expertise & Assets Lend Support to BP Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill Response

By Linda M. Johnson

WASHINGTON (July 12, 2010) — The U.S. Coast Guard Acquisition Directorate's Research, Development, Test and Evaluation (RDT&E) Program and its Research and Development Center (RDC) have been supporting the BP Deepwater Horizon oil spill response and cleanup, providing onsite guidance on the usage and effectiveness of oil spill cleanup technologies as well as serving as part of the review team screening and evaluating technology ideas.

"The complex oil spill resulting from the tragic explosion and sinking of Deepwater Horizon demands a 'whole of government' response," Rear Adm. Ronald J. Rábago, Assistant Commandant for Acquisition, told the U.S. Senate Committee on Small Business and Entrepreneurship at a June 17 hearing. "This oil spill is the largest environmental disaster in our history, and we need good ideas from all sources to fight the battle."

The Oil Pollution Act of 1990 gives the Coast Guard broad authorities for oil spill prevention and response on U.S. navigable waters. These responsibilities include conducting oil spill research, which is funded in part from the act's Oil Spill Liability Trust Fund.

The RDC has a subject matter expert onsite who is reporting to the Incident Commander for Surface Response and providing guidance on in situ burns, dispersants and sorbent boom use.



U.S. Coast Guard Buoy Tender Axe crewmembers and civilians set boom June 16 along the northeast shoreline of Raccoon Island, approximately 20 miles south of Cocodrie, La. Raccoon Island is a protected bird breeding sanctuary with a variety of breeds. The Axe is a 75-foot construction buoy tender homeported in Morgan City, La. U.S. Coast Guard photo by Petty Officer 3rd Class Kelly Parker

Lt. Cmdr. Octavia Ashburn, planning section leader for the RDC Deepwater Horizon response effort, said the RDC has had "a constant presence in the Deepwater Horizon response effort. Since the beginning of the oil spill, we've had a subject matter expert in oil spill response stationed at the Incident Command Post in Houma, La. That person has been consulting with BP on some of the ideas that they have from the very start."

The RDT&E Program's Fire and Safety Test Detachment (FSTD) in Mobile, Ala., is coordinating logistical support for volunteers in the area.

"The FSTD in Mobile has been swamped by people asking how they can help and has been coordinating with the Unified Incident Commander," said Capt. Matthew Sisson, commanding officer of the RDC. "When it came to deploying boom at Fort Morgan and using the FSTD's heavy

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U.S. Coast Guard Seagoing Buoy Tender Aspen, homeported in San Francisco, recovers fast sweep boom June 28 after oil skimming operations in the Gulf of Mexico less than one mile from the shoreline. The Aspen is one of several Coast Guard vessels skimming oil in the Gulf of Mexico as part of the ongoing effort to combat the Deepwater Horizon oil spill. U.S. Coast Guard photo by Ensign Shea Winterberger

equipment as well as their landing craft and small boats, they're in the thick of the battle down there."

The RDC is also participating in the Flow Rate Technical Group (FRTG), an interagency team of scientists assembled by the National Incident Commander, former Adm. Thad Allen, to provide the latest scientifically validated information about the characteristics, flow rate and size of the oil spill.

"We wanted to use our scientific know-how to help with the issue of determining the flow rate from the broken wellhead," Sisson explained. "After the formation of the FRTG by Admiral Allen, we began immediately to get the best minds in the business on this issue. We reached out, before the FRTG was even formed, to Woods Hole Oceanographic Institute and

we hired Dr. Richard Camilli within 24 hours."

The RDC called Camilli, an associate scientist in the Department of Applied Ocean Physics and Engineering at the Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution, as he was on the way to the airport to go to Australia after seeing him on television testifying before Congress.

"We contacted him assuming that someone else had been in contact with him but no one had," Sisson noted. "So we said, 'will you work for us?' He said yes, and so he took a crew of four down to Louisiana with his testing gear, which consisted of a sonar and a doppler, which is a way of measuring the flow that doesn't rely on the video feed."

In addition, several newly acquired Coast Guard assets have been assisting with the oil spill response and recovery. The multi-mission HC-144A Ocean Sentry aircraft from Coast Guard Aviation Training Center in Mobile, Ala., has been

providing on-scene oil spill information for government personnel, media and others; transporting oil-impacted wildlife; and locating surface vessels using its extensive sensor package.

The Coast Guard's Nationwide Automatic Identification System is also providing near-real time information about the location of surface vessels equipped with the Automatic Identification System.

IATAP Created & BAA Released

In May, Allen informed the RDC of the formation of the Interagency Alternative Technology Assessment Program (IATAP) and asked the RDC to coordinate the IATAP workgroup, which includes experts from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Fish and Wildlife Service, Maritime Administration, former Minerals Management Service, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, the Department of Agriculture and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.



The crew of U.S. Coast Guard Cutter Stringray, an 87-foot Coastal Patrol Boat homeported in Mobile, Ala., works with a Vessel of Opportunity off the coast of Gulf Shores, Ala., June 13 to spot oil and review booming operations as part of the Deepwater Horizon oil spill response effort. The Vessels of Opportunity program offers local boat operators an opportunity to assist with oil spill response activities. U.S. Coast Guard photo by Petty Officer First Class Rachel Polish

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Working under the IATAP umbrella, the RDC developed a Broad Agency Announcement (BAA), "which is a contractual means of getting a broad array of ideas presented to the government," Sisson explained. "Unlike contract actions that we typically execute through acquisition, which are extremely detailed,

technologies; alternative oil spill response technologies; and oil spill damage assessment and restoration.

BAA white paper submissions are being screened based upon overall scientific and technical merit, feasibility and deployability. All submissions receive

"The three criteria that we've required are that it has to be feasible, it has to be effective and it has to be deployable," Sisson noted. "Our goal is to acknowledge it, receipt it, assess it and respond."

A situation unit with watchstanders was set up at the RDC in New London, Conn., to be "courteous and polite to everyone. The thing that we insist on is that everyone's idea is acknowledged, everyone's idea is followed up on and the final disposition of their ideas will become known to the people who submit them," Sisson said.

The RDC and its interagency partners have been reviewing the submissions and have already sent some submissions to the Federal On-Scene Coordinator



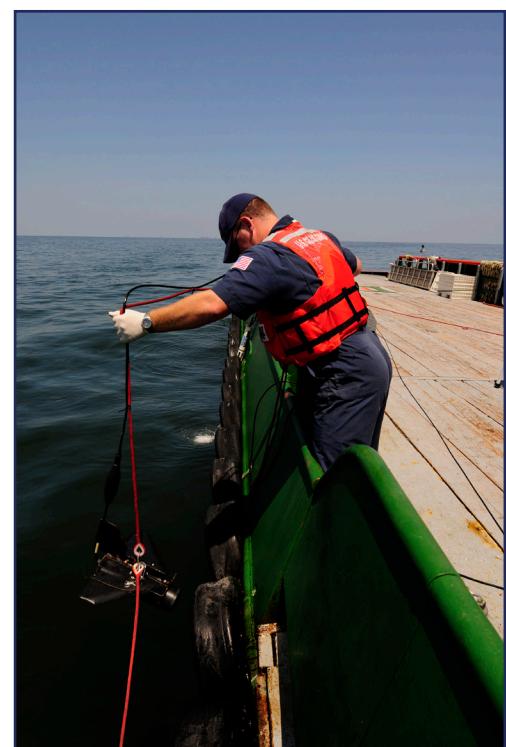
The U.S. Coast Guard's Lt. Bryan Brownlee (left) and Petty Officer 2nd Class Luke Pinneo (right) transport one of six rehabilitated birds that were released May 30 at the Egmont Key National Wildlife Refuge near St. Petersburg, Fla. Four brown pelicans, one laughing gull and one northern gannet were flown to Florida aboard an HC-144A Ocean Sentry aircraft after being cleaned at Fort Jackson, La. U.S. Coast Guard photo by Petty Officer 3rd Class Nick Ameen

this is very general. It allows anyone and everyone to submit a three-page white paper on five different areas, from the beginning of this crisis to the very end."

The BAA, released June 4 at www.fbo.gov, calls for vendor-proposed technology ideas in the form of a white paper and includes step-by-step submittal instructions. The BAA covers five distinct problem areas: oil sensing improvements to response and detection; oil wellhead control and submerged oil response; traditional oil spill response

an immediate response acknowledging receipt and a tracking number.

The RDC performs the initial triage that results in one of three determinations: the submission shows potential immediate benefit and exceptional promise; it merits further investigation or evaluation by the appropriate interagency partner to determine its viability; or it is not applicable to this particular cleanup. Submitters are notified once the initial screening is complete and informed of the decision.



U.S. Coast Guard Petty Officer 2nd Class Dave Martin, a specialist in hazardous material and oil spill response, lowers a fluorometer into the Gulf of Mexico May 27. The device collects water samples and field data, which help environmental scientists determine the effectiveness of dispersants used to break down oil. U.S. Coast Guard photo by Petty Officer 2nd Class Luke Pinneo

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(FOSC), Rear Admiral James Watson, at the Unified Area Command (UAC) in Robert, La. The FOSC makes the final determination for use. More than 300 submissions were received in the first week after the BAA was published and more than 3,400 submissions have been received to date, from which the Coast Guard has selected more than 70 ideas for either immediate consideration or further evaluation. The Coast Guard is also reviewing the more than 600 ideas it received prior to the stand-up of the BAA process.

Accessing Ideas Submitted to BP

The Coast Guard was recently given access by BP to their huge database of more than 100,000 comments and ideas. Previously, the Coast Guard's subject matter experts were able to review and assess only what BP had given them.

"We decided to go out in a clear, transparent manner and take this on," Sisson explained. "Addressing one of the main complaints that we heard and one of the reasons we're doing this effort is that many people using the BP technology input system didn't get a reply. So we want to make sure that the government conducts a transparent, fair evaluation based only upon the merits of their white paper. There are no special fast lanes, there are just ideas and regardless of who puts them in, they're all reviewed equally."

The BAA allows the federal government to move forward with implementing and testing solutions and be reimbursed by BP. "One of the beauties of the BAA is that we've already directed an easy way for any federal agency to use our contract to bring something online and that would be paid for through the UAC to BP or the responsible party," Sisson said. "Right now we're not concerned about the source of the funds, just the idea of moving forward and having a contractual means of executing the work."

"We understand the importance of doing this properly. Every second everybody watches the wellhead on TV, their sense of angst grows about how helpless they feel," Sisson noted. "We need to empower people and make sure they're listening as we're going to use their brainpower to solve our problems." ■



The crew of U.S. Coast Guard Seagoing Buoy Tender Juniper use the on-board fire hose from the buoy deck June 13 to direct surface oil collected into the Shipboard Oil-Recovery System pump. Crewmembers of the 225-foot Juniper, homeported in Newport, R.I., are conducting oil-skimming operations off the Alabama and Florida coasts in addition to the crews of Juniper-class seagoing buoy tenders Oak, Cypress and Elm. U.S. Coast Guard photo by Petty Officer 3rd Class Colin White