

Scientists to see if oil spill hurt deep sea life

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This Sept. 2010 photo provided by Discover Team 2010 shows deep sea corals on the bottom of the northern Gulf of Mexico, not far from where BP's underwater oil well blew out on April 20. Scientists are studying whether the crude damaged the corals or will lead to long-term impacts. (AP Photo/Discover Team 2010)

(AP) -- A team of scientists are leaving on a research cruise to see if the BP oil spill hurt deep-sea coral and organisms that live around natural oil and gas seeps in the Gulf of Mexico.

It's counterintuitive, but scientists say an oil spill could hurt organisms such as tube worms and [mussels](#) that eat oil, gas and [hydrogen sulfide](#) gushing from natural oil and gas seeps. That's because these organisms can die if oil settles on them from above.

The biologists and geoscientists aboard the Gyre research vessel will tow

a cage with a high-resolution digital still camera and take photographs of the depths. The vessel is expected to leave Friday from Texas.

The study is being led by geophysicist Bill Shedd of the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management.

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