

California oil spill cleanup costs reaches \$62 million (Update)

June 10 2015, by Alicia Chang



Shoreline Cleanup Assessment Technique team members evaluate oil coverage as workers clean up areas affected by an oil spill at Refugio State Beach, north of Goleta, Calif., Wednesday, June 10, 2015. The cost of cleaning up the oil spill that fouled beaches last month on the California coast has reached \$69 million so far, an official of the pipeline company said Wednesday. (AP Photo/Damian Dovarganes)

The cost of cleaning up the oil spill that fouled beaches last month on the California coast has reached \$62 million so far, the pipeline company said Wednesday.

Costs are running at \$3 million a day, and there is no timetable for when the cleanup will be complete, Plains All American Pipeline's on-scene coordinator, Patrick Hodgins, told The Associated Press.

The company is responsible for footing the bill after a pipeline break near Santa Barbara forced the closure of two state beaches and prompted a fishing ban in the area.

Hodgins said the pipeline operator is not focused on the money.

"The responsibility here is to get it cleaned up as quickly as possible," he said.

About 76 percent of 97 miles of coastline—mostly sandy beaches—have been cleared of oil. Crews are using putty knives and other tools to scrape oil off rocks and cobble beaches—a labor-intensive process that's dictated by tidal conditions.

"The beaches are fairly clean," said Coast Guard Capt. Jennifer Williams, one of two federal response coordinators. "We're making progress on the shoreline cleanup."

The May 19 spill occurred after an onshore pipeline operated by Texas-based Plains All American ruptured, leaking up to 101,000 gallons of crude.

About 21,000 gallons entered a storm drain and washed out to the Pacific Ocean off Santa Barbara County.

Wildlife experts have recovered 161 dead birds and 87 dead marine mammals, mostly sea lions. Another 106 animals were found coated in oil and are undergoing rehabilitation.



Crews wear protective gear as they use oil absorbent materials to cleanup areas affected by an oil spill at Refugio State Beach, north of Goleta, Calif., on Wednesday, June 10, 2015. The May 19 spill occurred after an onshore pipeline operated by Texas-based Plains All American ruptured. (AP Photo/Damian Dovarganes)

The toll of the spill is a sliver of the 1969 oil platform blowout off Santa Barbara County that blackened miles of coastline and killed thousands of shorebirds and other wildlife.

At the height of the cleanup, there were almost 1,200 people involved. Eighteen boats skimmed oil from the water while a pair of helicopters and a fixed-wing aircraft buzzed overhead. Crews have not used the aircraft for several days and the number of skimmers has been reduced to three.

Plains revised the total cleanup cost after initially pegging it at \$69 million. Company spokeswoman Meredith Matthews said daily costs are expected to decrease as work progresses.



A hand crew member scraps oil residues from a small rock from areas affected by an oil spill at Refugio State Beach, north of Goleta, Calif., on Wednesday, June 10, 2015. The May 19 spill occurred after an onshore pipeline operated by Texas-based Plains All American ruptured. (AP Photo/Damian Dovarganes)

The cause of last month's break has not been determined, but documents released by federal regulators after the spill said testing conducted in early May found extensive external corrosion along some sections of the pipeline.

Hodgins declined to comment on the investigation by the federal Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration.

As cleanup continued, the California Coastal Commission said at its monthly meeting Wednesday that it notified the company that it has opened its own investigation.



A worker cleans a small for oil contamination one rock at a time in areas affected by an oil spill at Refugio State Beach, north of Goleta, Calif., Wednesday, June 10, 2015. The cost of cleaning up the oil spill that fouled beaches last month on the California coast has reached \$69 million so far, an

official of the pipeline company said Wednesday. (AP Photo/Damian Dovarganes)



Shoreline Cleanup Assessment Technique team members evaluate oil coverage, far left, as workers clean up areas affected by an oil spill at Refugio State Beach, north of Goleta, Calif., Wednesday, June 10, 2015. The cost of cleaning up the oil spill that fouled beaches last month on the California coast has reached \$69 million so far, an official of the pipeline company said Wednesday. (AP Photo/Damian Dovarganes)



Shoreline Cleanup Assessment Technique team members evaluate oil coverage as workers clean up areas affected by an oil spill at Refugio State Beach, north of Goleta, Calif., on Wednesday, June 10, 2015. The cost of cleaning up the oil spill that fouled beaches last month on the California coast has reached \$69 million so far, an official of the pipeline company said Wednesday. (AP Photo/Damian Dovarganes)



A worker checks for oil contamination in areas affected by an oil spill at Refugio State Beach, north of Goleta, Calif., Wednesday, June 10, 2015. The cost of cleaning up the oil spill that fouled beaches last month on the California coast has reached over \$60 million so far, an official of the pipeline company said Wednesday. (AP Photo/Damian Dovarganes)



Shoreline Cleanup Assessment Technique team members, left, evaluate oil coverage as a hand crew worker scraps areas affected by an oil spill at Refugio State Beach, north of Goleta, Calif., on Wednesday, June 10, 2015. The May 19 spill occurred after an onshore pipeline operated by Texas-based Plains All American ruptured. (AP Photo/Damian Dovarganes)



Hand crews take a lunch break after scrapping oil residues from areas affected by an oil spill at Refugio State Beach, north of Goleta, Calif., on Wednesday, June 10, 2015. The May 19 spill occurred after an onshore pipeline operated by Texas-based Plains All American ruptured. (AP Photo/Damian Dovarganes)



Tom Dunkelman, Federal On-Scene Coordinator for U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, left, and Plains All American Pipeline's on-scene coordinator, Patrick Hodgins, right, comment on the beach areas affected by an oil spill during an interview at Refugio State Beach, north of Goleta, Calif., Wednesday, June 10, 2015. The May 19 spill occurred after an onshore pipeline operated by Texas-based Plains All American ruptured. (AP Photo/Damian Dovarganes)

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