

Authorities identify source of oil sheen off Huntington Beach

November 22 2021, by Matthew Ormseth



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A day after an oil sheen was spotted off Huntington Beach, authorities believed they had identified and contained the source: a leak from the damaged area of a pipeline that ruptured in October, spilling an

estimated 25,000 gallons of oil into the Pacific.

About 9:30 a.m. Saturday, divers hired by a unified command established in response to the Oct. 2 spill were preparing to do a routine inspection of the damaged [pipeline](#) when they spotted the oil sheen on the water, said Eric Laughlin, a spokesman for the California Department of Fish and Wildlife.

The sheen covered an area of roughly 30 feet by 70 feet. Underwater, the divers noticed small oil droplets near the damaged section of the pipeline, which since the spill has been wrapped in a material called Syntho-Glass, Laughlin said. The divers removed the wrap and replaced it with a new one, he said Sunday.

The pipeline has been shut down and no oil has flowed through it since the Oct. 2 spill, Laughlin said. The oil spotted underwater Saturday was "likely residual," he said.

It appears the new wrap has prevented any additional leaks, Laughlin said. U.S. Coast Guard and Fish and Wildlife officials flew over the site in a helicopter just before sundown Saturday and again Sunday morning and did not see any sheen on the water, leading them to believe the sheen dissipated on its own, Laughlin said. Divers haven't noted any additional oil droplets underwater, he added.

Fish and Wildlife officials have not received any reports of wildlife being affected by the sheen, Laughlin said. The agency and others that make up the unified command—the U.S. Coast Guard; Amplify Energy, the company that operated the pipeline; and representatives of various local governments—plan to keep monitoring the area for any new oil sightings.

"The response has never stopped since Oct. 2," Laughlin said.

Petty Officer Hunter Schnabel, a spokesman for the U.S. Coast Guard, said only that the Coast Guard was investigating reports of an oil sheen off Huntington Beach.

Orange County Supervisor Katrina Foley said Saturday that repeated issues with oil seepage in the waters off Huntington Beach were damaging the city's reputation as a tourism destination.

"We just can't keep having these [types] of incidents or scares off our coastline," Foley said, calling for an end to off-shore drilling.

Federal authorities investigating the Oct. 2 spill are pursuing the theory that a [cargo ship](#) may have dragged an anchor across the pipeline, eventually causing it to rupture. Last week, Coast Guard officers boarded a ship in Long Beach and designated its owners "parties of interest" in its investigation into the spill. Braden Rostad, the Coast Guard's chief of investigations for Los Angeles and Long Beach, said the container vessel, the Beijing, was involved in an anchor-dragging incident in January.

The Beijing is the second ship to have come under scrutiny by authorities investigating the oil spill. Authorities previously said another cargo vessel, the MSC Danit, was involved in an anchor-dragging incident that may have damaged the pipeline, which ran from an oil platform to the Port of Long Beach.

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Citation: Authorities identify source of oil sheen off Huntington Beach (2021, November 22) retrieved 5 May 2024 from

<https://phys.org/news/2021-11-authorities-source-oil-sheen-huntington.html>

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