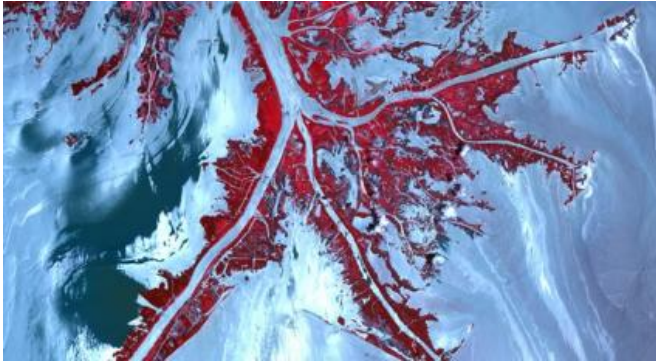


NASA Satellite Spots Oil at Mississippi Delta Mouth

27 May 2010



The relative brightness of the oil from place to place is not necessarily an indication of the amount of oil present. Any oil located near the precise spot where the sun's reflection would appear, if the surface of the Gulf were perfectly smooth and calm, is going to look very bright in these images. The cause of the dark patch of water in the upper left quadrant of the image is unknown. It may indicate the use of chemical dispersants, skimmers or booms, or it may be the result of natural differences in turbidity, salinity or [organic matter](#) in the [coastal waters](#).

Oil from the Deepwater Horizon spill laps around the mouth of the Mississippi River delta in this May 24, 2010, image from the Advanced Spaceborne Thermal Emission and Reflection Radiometer (ASTER) instrument on NASA's Terra spacecraft. The oil appears silver, while vegetation is red. Image credit: Jesse Allen/NASA/GSFC/METI/ERSDAC/JAROS, and U.S./Japan ASTER Science Team

Provided by JPL/NASA

(PhysOrg.com) -- On May 24, 2010, the Advanced Spaceborne Thermal Emission and Reflection Radiometer (ASTER) instrument on NASA's Terra spacecraft captured this false-color, high-resolution view of the very tip of the Mississippi River delta.

Ribbons and patches of oil that have leaked from the Deepwater Horizon well offshore appear silver against the light blue color of the adjacent water. Vegetation is red.

In the sunglint region of a satellite image--where the mirror-like reflection of the sun gets blurred into a wide, bright strip--any differences in the texture of the water surface are enhanced. Oil smoothes the water, making it a better "mirror." Oil-covered waters are very bright in this image, but, depending on the viewing conditions (time of day, satellite viewing angle, slick location), oil-covered water may look darker rather than brighter.

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