

Oil Spill Response

Thursday, May 20, 2010

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

Big Cypress National Preserve
33100 Tamiami Trail East
Ochopee, FL 34141



On April 20, 2010, the Deepwater Horizon oil rig exploded in the Gulf of Mexico. Since then, the well has spilled large amounts of oil off the Louisiana, Mississippi, and Alabama coastline. Currently, BP has reported limited success in containing the ruptured well, which continues to release oil threatening several park units in the northwestern Gulf of Mexico. Recent imagery and models suggest surface oil may have also entered, or is poised to enter, a southeasterly flow of water called the loop current. The path of this loop current could bring oil to five additional National Park Service units located in south Florida, including Big Cypress National Preserve.

Current Status

Two National Park Service incident management teams continue to coordinate the oil spill response in the Gulf. Many other park service employees across the country are supporting the response with technical information and assistance. Human safety and resource protection are the focus of the National Park Service in the eight parks—from Louisiana to Florida—that may be affected by the oil spill.

This week National Park Service personnel will begin conducting a baseline condition assessment of natural and cultural resources in Big Cypress National Preserve. These assessments will be used to document the pre-spill condition of coastal areas in the park.

What's at Risk?



Though the coastline of Big Cypress National Preserve is small in size, it contains important resources of natural and recreational value. The mangrove-lined waters of the Turner River are a favorite haunt of canoeists, kayakers, and anglers in search of the numerous species of flora and fauna that dwell there. The arrival of oil to these coastal areas threatens these important park resources.

What Are We Doing?

The park is working in concert with the unified response effort. Based upon results from the baseline condition assessments, the National Park Service will help guide the potential implementation of any necessary mitigation efforts. Should remediation be necessary, the National Park Service will direct the cleanup efforts of BP and their contractors for the protection of the resources in our care.

Park Status

The park remains open and all park activities continue as scheduled. For more information on park response efforts, contact the public information office at (305) 224-4125 or email: SouthFloridaNPS@gmail.com

How You Can Help

Fortunately, south Florida national parks have thus far been spared. However, volunteers are currently involved in the larger response effort. For more information on volunteering, please call the Deepwater Horizon Response Volunteer Request Line at (866) 448-5816