

Scientists Confirm that Dispersants Are Increasing Contamination in the Gulf

By [Washington's Blog](#)

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Region: [USA](#)

Theme: [Environment](#)

I have repeatedly documented the detrimental impacts of dispersants on humans, wildlife and seafood safety. See [this](#), [this](#), [this](#), [this](#), [this](#), [this](#) and [this](#).

As I [noted](#) in September, scientists from Oregon State University found elevated levels of polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs) in the Gulf, and blamed dispersants.

Now, the website of the prestigious Journal Nature is also [reporting](#) on the increase of PAH contamination due to the use of dispersants in the Gulf:

Peter Hodson, an aquatic toxicologist from Queen's University in Kingston, Ontario, presented his case on 9 November at a meeting of the Society of Environmental Toxicology and Chemistry in Portland, Oregon...

The problem, explains Hodson, is that the **dispersed cloud of microscopic oil droplets allows the PAHs to contaminate a volume of water 100-1,000 times greater** than if the oil were confined to a floating surface slick. This hugely increases the exposure of wildlife to the dispersed oil. ...

Worse, the toxic constituents of oil hang around longer than other components, another speaker told the meeting. "This idea that there's an oil biodegradation rate doesn't hold," says Ronald Atlas, a microbiologist at the University of Louisville, Kentucky, who has studied the aftermath of the 1989 Exxon Valdez spill in Alaska. Alkanes, the simple hydrocarbons that comprise the bulk of oil, are degraded more readily than the PAHs, he points out.

As the Press Register [notes](#):

"These chemicals, these are PAHs that are carcinogenic. ... These items are not in any way appropriate for anyone to eat," said Ed Cake, an environmental consultant from Ocean Springs. "There's no low-dose level that's acceptable to eat."...

[William Sawyer], the [veteran] Florida toxicologist, said the government tests do not look for total petroleum hydrocarbons in the seafood. He said his tests of Gulf shrimp have shown unsafe levels of the compounds, which can cause liver or kidney damage in a matter of weeks.

And see this:

Raw Story [reports](#):

Dr. William Sawyer... said... “We found not only petroleum in the digestive tracts [of shrimp], but **also in the edible portions of fish.**”

“We’ve collected shrimp, oysters and finned fish on their way to marketplace — **we tested a good number of seafood samples and in 100 percent we found petroleum.**”

The FDA says up to 100-PPM of oil and dispersant residue is safe to consume in finned fish, and 500-PPM is allowed for shellfish.

Dr. Sawyer, who has long been a vocal critic of these rules, called the government’s tests “**little more than a farce.**”

Maine Public Radio [points out](#):

“We’re more concerned about the dispersant and the dispersant mixed with oil—the dispersed oil, if you will—than we are about the crude oil itself.”

Tests conducted in recent months by [University of Southern Maine Center for Toxicology and Environmental Health director John] Wise’s lab, using human cell lines, show that dispersants cause cell death and DNA damage, which has been linked to cancer and reproductive problems.

WFTV Orlando [reports](#):

Brand new laboratory test results just in Monday morning are showing troubling problems with gulf seafood... the results are raising a lot of red flags.

WFTV put gulf shrimp to the test by ordering raw shrimp over the Internet and shipping it to a private lab. ...

Scientists found elevated levels of Anthracene, a toxic hydrocarbon and a by-product of petroleum. The Anthracene levels were double what the FDA finds to be acceptable.

The scientist who tested the shrimp said she would not eat it based on the results...

I’ve also [previously reported](#) that dispersants were used long after BP and the government said they had stopped using them in July. Now, Cherri Foytlin and Denise Rednour [claim](#) to have pictures of 176 empty containers of ‘discontinued’ COREXIT 9527A found... With a ship date of August 10th. And the president of a county seafood workers’ association [claims](#) that dispersant is still being applied.

In related news:

- Louisiana allegedly has [more oiled shoreline now than in July](#)
- A Gulf resident’s November blood test shows ethylbenzene levels [higher than cleanup workers tested in August](#)
- An NSF-funded workgroup [notes](#): “Storms are likely to resurrect the oil that is currently hidden from sight” — “Much oil persists” nearshore

- A Florida State University professor [says](#) the oil is still there: “most of that Deepwater Horizon oil — as much as 70 percent to 79 percent of it —sank to the ocean floor, where it remains, sucking up oxygen and inhibiting life.
- A University of Florida scientist [says](#) “clear evidence that much of the oil is still below the surface in subsurface plumes”
- At an international conference of experts, [almost no one had great confidence in the safety of Gulf seafood](#)
- Alabama shrimpers [find](#) catch “coated in oil” at area open for fishing — Boat to be decontaminated

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