



US Coast Guard Tests Favor BioSonics DT-X for Submerged Oil Detection

The *Deepwater Horizon* Gulf of Mexico oil spill crisis has generated a sudden and urgent need for effective methods for locating and recovering submerged oil. In anticipation of such an event, the U.S. Coast Guard Research and Development Center recently spearheaded a multi-year project to develop a complete approach for dealing with detection, assessment, and recovery of spills of submerged oils. In 2009 testing was conducted to evaluate various technologies, including BioSonics scientific echosounders, for locating heavy oil sitting on the sea floor. Evaluations were conducted at the MMS National Oil Spill Response Test Facility, (also known as [OHMSETT](#)) in Leonardo, NJ. These tests demonstrated that BioSonics DT-X echosounders are effective at locating submerged oil and concluded that:

“These (narrower beam sonars) should provide better resolution and should be able to calculate general thickness, which could provide some information about the amount of oil.”

“...the narrow area covered could be advantageous for guiding recovery efforts”

The detailed test results have been published in a report now [available here](#).

Slide show of testing procedure at OHMSETT [available here](#)

As documented, BioSonics scientific echosounder systems provide for detection of submerged oil masses in the nearshore. Detection of suspended oil may also be possible using techniques similar to those used for detection of fish schools. By locating the edges and determining the oil mass thickness in the water column, a calculation of the cross-section area of the mass could be made, allowing estimation of the volume. Software currently used for assessment of fish schools could provide the ability to perform these calculations with some expert participation.

Our hope is to reach individuals with access to BioSonics echosounder systems who are currently involved in the spill assessment effort to alert them to the potential application of these sonar systems for oil detection. We encourage you to forward this information to colleagues who may be interested and to [contact us](#) for more information.

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