

Report of Field Activities

DATE: June 4, 5, and 11, 2015

TO: RANCHO PALOS VERDES

FROM: John L. Hunter and Associates. Inc,

PREPARED BY: Michelle Staffield
Hugo Garcia

SUBJECT: Oil globule sighting investigation: Abalone Cove, Sacred Cove

Overview:

Tar ball sightings have been observed on Ventura, Los Angeles, and Orange County beaches in the wake of the May 19, Plains All American oil spill in Santa Barbara County. South Bay cities have received numerous eyewitness observations of “tar balls” or “oil globs” on beaches since the Santa Barbara incident. The oil spill released as much as 101,000 gallons of crude, and an estimated 21,000 gallons of oil spewed into the Pacific Ocean, according to the LA TIMES. Laboratory testing is ongoing to determine whether the tar traveled from Santa Barbara County. According to LA Times, scientists from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) are trying to determine if, given existing weather patterns, it is possible for oil to travel from Santa Barbara to the South Bay.

On 6/4/15, the John L. Hunter & Associates was requested by the City of Rancho Palos Verdes to make an investigation of Abalone and Sacred Coves, as there were reports oil glob sightings in the area. John L. Hunter & Associates deployed staff, Michelle Staffield (Environmental Engineer) and Hugo Garcia (Field Inspector) to perform a water quality report.

Method:

Staff surveyed Abalone Cove (AC) and Sacred Cove (SC) on Thursday, 6/4/15, Friday 6/5/15, and Thursday, 6/11/15 between 2 pm – 5 pm during low tide. Staff performed exhaustive surveys along the mean low-tide line. Staff evaluated sightings of oil globs and classified specimens by location, characteristic (wet/dry), and size. Several photos were collected, and overall conditions were observed.

The following provides explanation of how each condition was defined:

Survey:

AC: Abalone Cove’s survey was performed from the “AC” lifeguard tower south to Portuguese Bend Point.

SC: Sacred Cove’s survey was performed from the trailhead at Smuggler’s Cove Trail north to the Sacred Cave.

Distance/Frequency:

Staff walked along the rocky intertidal and sandy beach, along the mean low-tide line and counted paces until they observed an oil glob. A pace is equal to one natural step, about 30 inches long. When observed, staff took note of quantity, characteristic, substrate adhesion, size, and photographs (for several specimen). Staff would start counting paces again between each oil glob sighting.

Quantity:

Staff counted the number of oil globs within an approximate 12-inch diameter of each oil glob sighting.

Characteristic:

Oil globs were characterized as either “Dry” or “Wet” based on observed plasticity. “Dry” globs had a slight odor, and appeared to be adhered to their respective substrate. “Wet” globs were more viscous than “Dry” globs, malleable, and had a strong odor.

Substrate:

Oil globs were observed either on rocky tidal boulders or sandy beach.

Size:

Oil globs were classified as either “Small”, “Medium”, or “Large” based on their diameter and length. If either the diameter or length was observed in the next size class, the larger class was identified. See the table below:

	Small	Medium	Large
Diameter	< 1 inch	1-3 inch	> 3 inches
Length	< 2 inches	2-4 inches	> 4 inches

Several anecdotal accounts were collected from Los Angeles County Fire Department, Ocean Lifeguards, who are stationed at Abalone Cove.

Observations & Data:

Staff scanned Abalone Cove and Sacred Cove for evidence of oil sheen in the water and outfall pipes for evidence of illicit discharge. Staff did not observe evidence of oil globs or sheen in either location.

Location: Abalone Cove

Survey: "AC" lifeguard tower south to Portuguese Bend Point

Date: 6/4/15, 3:15 pm – 4:00 pm

Tide (NOAA): 3.84 ft high-tide, 11:59 am; 2.11 ft low-tide, 4:39 pm

Distance/Frequency	Quantity	Characteristic	Substrate	Size
10 paces	3	Dry	Rocks	Small
14 paces	1	Wet	Rock	Med
3 paces	1	Dry	Rock	Small
5 paces	4	Dry	Rocks	Small
12 paces	1	Dry	Rock	Small
495 paces	0	--	--	--
TOTAL Observations:	10			

Location: Abalone Cove

Survey: AC Lifeguard station south to Portuguese Bend Point

Date: 6/5/15, 1:30 pm – 2:15 pm

Tide (NOAA): 3.8 high-tide, 12:49 pm; 2.3 feet low-tide, 5:28 pm

Distance/Frequency	Quantity	Characteristic	Substrate	Size
19 paces	1	Wet	Rock	Small
15 paces	2	Wet	Rocks	Small
48 paces	3	Wet	Rocks	Small
77 paces	1	Wet	Rock	Small
20 paces	1	Dry	Rock	Small
365 paces	2	Wet	Sand	1-Small, 1 Medium
TOTAL Observations:	10			

Location: Abalone Cove

Survey: "AC" lifeguard tower south to Portuguese Bend Point

Date: 6/11/15, 3:00 pm – 4:00 pm

Tide (NOAA): 0.90 ft low-tide, 11:38 am; 5.7 ft high-tide, 6:18 pm

Distance/Frequency	Quantity	Characteristic	Substrate	Size
6 paces	3	Dry	Rocks	Small
3 paces	3	Dry	Rocks	Small
3 paces	3	Dry	Rocks	Small
6 paces	2	Dry	Rocks	Small, Med
9 paces	1	Dry	Rock	Med
17 paces	2	Dry	Rocks	Small
4 paces	1	Dry	Rock	Small
23 paces	2	Dry	Rocks	Small, Med
11 paces	2	Dry	Rocks	Small
116 paces	1	Wet	Rock	Small
42 paces	1	Wet	Rock	Small
73 paces	1	Wet	Rock	Small
19 paces	1	Wet	Rock	Small
201 paces	0	--	--	--
TOTAL Observations:	23			

Location: Sacred Cove

Survey: Smuggler's Cove trailhead north to Sacred Cave

Date: 6/4/15, 4:00 pm – 4:30 pm

Tide (NOAA): 3.84 ft high tide, 11:59 am; 2.11 ft low-tide, 4:39 pm

Distance/Frequency	Quantity	Characteristic	Substrate	Size
3 paces	1	Wet	Sand	Small
3 paces	1	Dry	Rock	Small
7 paces	2	Dry	Rocks	Small
16 paces	1	Wet	Rock	Small
3 paces	1	Wet	Rock	Small
2 paces	2	Wet	Rocks	Medium
1 pace	1	Dry	Rock	Small
2 paces	1	Dry	Rock	Small
127 paces	0	--	--	--
TOTAL Observations:	12			

Location: Sacred Cove

Survey: Smuggler's Cove trailhead north to Sacred Cave

Date: 6/5/15, 2:45 pm – 3:15 pm

Tide (NOAA): 3.85 high tide, 12:49 pm; 2.27 feet low tide, 5:28 pm

Distance/Frequency	Quantity	Characteristic	Substrate	Size
14 paces	1	Wet	Sand	Small
11 paces	3	Dry	Rock	Small
1 pace	1	Dry	Rock	Small
14 paces	1	Dry	Rock	Medium
11 paces	1	Dry	Rock	Small
1 pace	1	Dry	Rock	Small
1 pace	2	Wet	Rocks	1 small, 1 medium
1 pace	2	Dry	Rocks	Small
1 pace	1	Dry	Rock	Medium
110 paces	1	Dry	Rock	Medium
TOTAL Observations:	14			

Location: Sacred Cove

Survey: Smuggler's Cove trailhead north to Sacred Cave

Date: 6/11/15, 4:15 pm – 5:00 pm

Tide (NOAA): 0.90 ft low-tide, 11:38 am; 5.7 ft high-tide, 6:18 pm

Distance/Frequency	Quantity	Characteristic	Substrate	Size
55 paces	1	Dry	Rock	Small
83 paces	1	Dry	Rock	Small
21 paces	2	Wet	Rocks	Med, Lrg
10 paces	1	Dry	Rock	Small
TOTAL Observations:	4			

Anecdotal Evidence:

Bennett Moxon

Los Angeles County Ocean Lifeguard, AC lifeguard tower

6/4/16, 3:05 pm

Staff introduced themselves and asked if any other agency, such as the Coast Guard or Fish & Wildlife, had been present that day. He informed us that he hadn't seen anyone else except for the usual visitors. Bennett did mention that after patrolling the beach during his shift, he did not notice any significant globs of oil, and what sightings were present dwarfed in comparison to what was seen at Hermosa Beach (where he was stationed the day before).

Kevin Maxwell

Los Angeles County Ocean Lifeguard, AC lifeguard tower

6/5/15, 1:30 pm

Kevin began his shift at 1:30 pm and took a paddleboard out to patrol Abalone Cove by sea. He reported to Michelle Staffield at 5:15 pm that there were no observable globs of oil for oil sheen floating anywhere in Abalone Cove.

Ed Butts

Los Angeles County Ocean Lifeguard, AC lifeguard tower

6/11/15, 3:00 pm

Ed is a seasoned employee of the LA County Fire Department, Lifeguard Division, with over 30 years experience as an ocean lifeguard. He stated that he typically is stationed at Abalone Cove and while working at Abalone Cove on 6/11/15 he did not notice any sighting of oil globs or oil slick in the water.

Summary:

Most of what was observed on the beach and rocks were small-scattered blobs of oil no bigger than 1-1.5 inch in diameter, dry, and semi-hard. Some black pebbles were mistaken as oil along the way but they showed no signs of having a strong oil smell or sticky nature.

The outfall pipe was running and appeared to be clean water at Abalone Cove that runs directly into the sandy beach, about mid-way at the Cove. There were no signs of any type of discharge, especially one involving an oil spill.

The outfall pipe was dry at Sacred Cove that runs along the side of the cliff and trail at Sacred Cove. There were no signs of any type of discharge, especially one involving an oil spill.

Recommendation:

The City should continue to report all occurrences of oil sightings to the federal and state offices. The City should continue to monitor and evaluate the oil impacts as reports of sightings are observed.

National Response Center: 800-424-8802

CA Dept. Fish & Game, Office of Spill Prevention and Response: 800-OILS911

Third party claims number: 1-866-753-3619

Third party claims process: <https://nrm.dfg.ca.gov/FileHandler.ashx?DocumentID=100486>

Cal Spill Watch: Follow Cal Spill Watch for more updates at: <https://calspillwatch.dfg.ca.gov/Spill-Archive/Santa-Barbara-County-Spill>