

Gulf Oil Observers (GOO) FACT SHEET

In April 2010, an explosion on the Deepwater Horizon drilling rig released an estimated 4.9 million barrels of crude oil into the Gulf of Mexico from a damaged (Macondo) well about 40 miles southeast of the Louisiana coast. As the Deepwater Horizon accident was unfolding, Deep-C Consortium scientists were among those who worked feverishly to determine how much oil was being discharged into the environment and where it was going. In the immediate aftermath of the blowout, experts worked to collect urgently needed samples and data. This data would assist investigators, other scientists, and engineers in their oil spill response efforts. Today, the process of gathering and analyzing information about the fate of the Deepwater Horizon oil carries on. Deep-C researchers continue to work in the areas affected by the spill studying the long-term fate and effects of petroleum hydrocarbons in the Gulf.



WHAT IS GULF OIL OBSERVERS?

Gulf Oil Observers (GOO) is a citizen scientist initiative involving high school students, teachers and other volunteers in the collection of oil samples and other data along the shores of the Gulf of Mexico. Participants are provided with training in ocean science concepts and oil collection methods so they can actively assist in the ongoing study of the 2010 Deepwater Horizon oil spill.



TRAINING & PREPARATION:

In advance of any field activity, GOO volunteers attend a series of classroom or online lessons where they learn citizen scientist skills such as use of the scientific method, proper techniques for collecting data and recording observation protocols. They are also trained on oil collection sampling and observation techniques by experts from the Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution (WHOI) and Florida State University (FSU). These "citizen scientists" are instructed on how to properly document, photograph and record observations in the field.

TRACKING RESULTS:

Samples collected in the field by GOO volunteers will be sent to WHOI, where they will be analyzed to determine whether or not they contain oil from the Deepwater Horizon oil spill. GOO volunteers will be able to track the result of their findings (via an online database) and scientists will be able to use the data resulting from these citizen scientist expeditions to further their research efforts.



FIELD STUDIES:

The first official GOO team was comprised of students from the West Florida High School of Advanced Technology (WFHSAT) in Pensacola, FL who successfully completed a field study in February 2014. They collected more than 70 oil patty samples, many of which turned out to be from the Deepwater Horizon oil spill and provided invaluable data for Deep-C researchers. During the 2014-2015 school year, students from Booker T. Washington High School (Pensacola, FL) and Saraland High School (Mobile, AL) will be joining WFHSAT as official *Gulf Oil Observers*.

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FOR MORE INFORMATION:

<http://deep-c.org/education-and-outreach/for-educators/gulf-oil-observers-aka-project-goo>

www.deep-c.org

Deep-C is a long-term, interdisciplinary study of deep sea to coast connectivity in the northeastern Gulf of Mexico

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