

By John Collins Rudolph; NY Times; November 5. 2010

The article details on the examination of a seafloor near BP's blown-out well near Gulf of Mexico. Scientists had noticed and commented that dying coral reefs were most likely damaged by the oil-spill. Location of the coral site is seven miles southwest of the well, at a depth of 4,500 feet. Last spring, weeks after the oil spill, this area was noticed to contain large cloud of dispersed oil, drifting through the deep ocean.

Scientists aboard the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) research vessel had used a submersible robot equipped with camera and sampling tools to discover the state of these corals. Charles Fisher, a marine biologist from Pennsylvania State University had deduced that a combination of oil plumes in the area, proximity to BP's oil well, and recent nature of the die-off meant that spill was fatal to the reef.

Post BP-oil spill, many scientists raised concerns regarding the potential harm that could be caused to the marine life, and this recent incident had provided a strong evidence for this. The spill was recorded to be the largest off-shore spill in US's history, recorded at 5 million barrels. Reefs were found to be covered with a brownish substance, which Dr. Fisher suggested was dead tissue and sediments. In Dr. Fisher's opinion, this was the most severe case of coral reef pollution that he had come across.

However, scientists could still not conclusively link the spill to the coral-die off; and further information on presence of hydrocarbons and dispersants was necessary. NOAA had found the results significant, claiming that monitoring and evaluation of impact of spill in the gulf was essential. Scientists are also planning to carry out a deep-water expedition in the same area in December to carry out further testing. This testing would allow them to look for any acute or long-term damages.

Scientists are of the opinion that this requires further exploration and testing.

Critique

The author has balanced the article well. Since this was primarily a factual and not opinion based article, there was little room for personal opinions or one-sidedness in this article. Even though this article is not biased, it does lack opinions of the BP management, and no scientists refuting the findings have been suggested. However, since the scientists have claimed that further expedition and testing on the coral reef is required, this article has been well balanced without much room for prejudice or bias.

Once again, due to the nature of the article, not much research would have been required. However, the author could, and should have included examples of such spills or effect of spills on coral reefs from the past. There have been incidents where coral reefs have been damaged due to man-made disasters, and some account of these would have made the article more significant and interesting read. For a layman, this article does not offer any information on the starting dates of the spill, or an explanation of what coral reefs are; details which are essential for this kind of news article.

The author has not offered a solution to the concerned environment issue; however in this case, he is not required to. Since this is a factual article, the findings of scientists are truer than opinions of an

author. It is difficult to discern author's worldwide view from this article; however, it can be deduced to be rather perspective based. Lack of enough background information in this article would signify that the author might have dedicated short amount of time to this article, preferring to collate information from finite sources.

In my opinion, considering that this is a factual article, it deserves a 'B'. There is a definite scope for improvement, especially in detailing background information on Coral reefs and other incidents of spills. Otherwise, the author has covered the article in an unbiased manner, even if only a few sources seem to have been referred to.