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# Gulf Coast Ports Surrounding the *Deepwater Horizon* Oil Spill

By Matthew Chambers

This fact sheet provides a snapshot of two major seaports (New Orleans, LA, and Mobile, AL) and summary tables of other Gulf coast seaports close to the *Deepwater Horizon* mobile offshore drilling unit (MODU) explosion and oil spill. New Orleans is approximately 132 miles from the site, and Mobile is approximately 136 miles from the site.

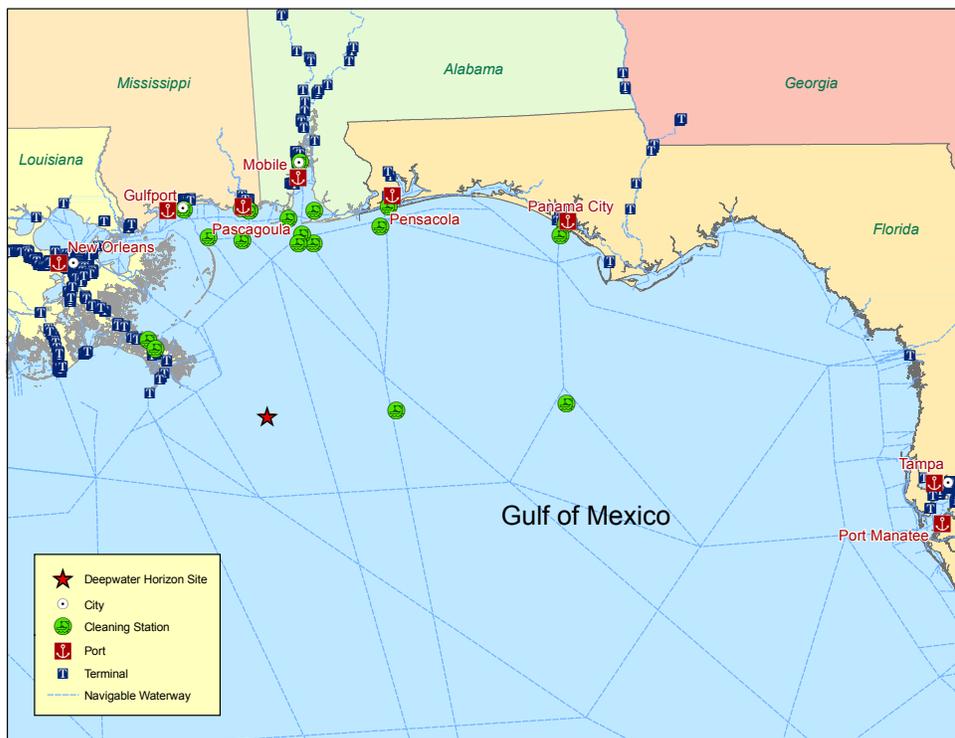
Mexico.<sup>1</sup> In addition to the environmental impact, close attention is now being paid to the region's MTS due to the spill's potential effect on ports and terminals and dry-bulk vessel, containership, tanker, and cruise line operations. Figure 1 shows the MTS surrounding the *Deepwater Horizon* MODU site.

## Background

The oil spill resulting from the April 20, 2010, explosion aboard the *Deepwater Horizon* MODU may affect the operation of the marine transportation system (MTS) in the Gulf of

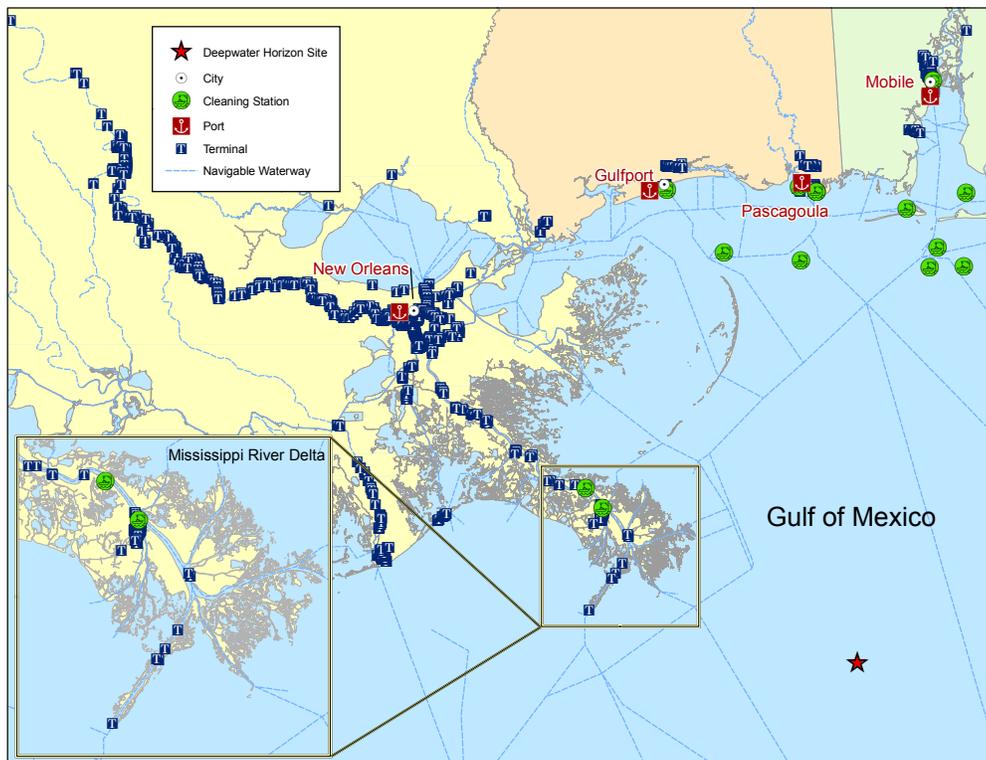
<sup>1</sup> U.S. Coast Guard and Minerals Management Service. *Marine Board of Investigation for the Deepwater Horizon MODU Explosion*. Available at <http://www.deepwaterinvestigation.com/> as of May 2010.

**Figure 1: Gulf Coast Ports and Channels**



**SOURCES: Channels:** U.S. Department of Transportation, Research and Innovative Technology Administration, Bureau of Transportation Statistics; *National Transportation Atlas Databases (NTAD) 2009 DVD*, available at <http://www.bts.gov/> as of May 2010. **Cleaning stations:** North Protection and Indemnity (P&I) Insurance Association. *Deepwater Horizon Incident – Briefing Notes* (May 21, 2010). Available at <http://www.nepia.com/> as of May 2010. **Ports:** U.S. Department of Transportation, Maritime Administration, *U.S. Port Calls by Vessel Type*, available at <http://www.marad.dot.gov/> as of May 2010. **Terminals:** U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Navigation Data Center, *Ports and Waterways Facilities*, available at <http://www.ndc.iwr.usace.army.mil/data/datapwd.htm> as of May 2010.

Figure 2: Lower Mississippi Ports and Channels



**SOURCES: Channels:** U.S. Department of Transportation, Research and Innovative Technology Administration, Bureau of Transportation Statistics; *National Transportation Atlas Databases (NTAD) 2009 DVD*, available at <http://www.bts.gov/> as of May 2010. **Cleaning Stations:** North Protection and Indemnity (P&I) Insurance Association. *Deepwater Horizon Incident – Briefing Notes* (May 21, 2010). Available at <http://www.nepia.com/> as of May 2010. **Ports:** U.S. Department of Transportation, Maritime Administration, *U.S. Port Calls by Vessel Type*, available at <http://www.marad.dot.gov/> as of May 2010. **Terminals:** U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Navigation Data Center, *Ports and Waterways Facilities*, available at <http://www.ndc.iwr.usace.army.mil/data/datapwd.htm> as of May 2010.

Efforts are underway to protect the interconnecting ports and channels, inland waterways, locks and canals, and marine terminals (e.g., the Louisiana Offshore Oil Port, a.k.a. LOOP) that comprise the MTS, which supports domestic freight and passenger transportation as well as international freight. The MTS is essential for the movement of tank barges and tankers to and from the Gulf Coast refineries, which represent about half of total U.S. refining capacity.<sup>2</sup> Furthermore, the Transportation sector consumes over two-thirds of the U.S. annual demand for refined petroleum products.<sup>3</sup>

The approach channels leading to several Gulf seaports (i.e., Biloxi, Gulfport, Mobile, and Pascagoula) are close to the

potential path of the oil spill.<sup>4</sup> Figure 2 shows the spill site is close to the approaches for the Southwest Passage to the lower Mississippi River. These waterways serve the Port of South Louisiana<sup>5</sup> that was the largest U.S. seaport in terms of tonnage in 2008,<sup>6</sup> as well as the Port of New Orleans and surrounding ports.

The oil spill has the potential to contaminate vessels, which may delay cargo handling and slow vessel traffic. The Gulf Coast ports have continued operations as of May 26, 2010.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>2</sup> U.S. Department of Energy, Energy Information Administration, *This Week in Petroleum* (May 19, 2010), available at <http://www.eia.doe.gov/> as of May 2010.

<sup>3</sup> U.S. Department of Energy, Energy Information Administration, *Annual Energy Review*, tables 5.13a - 5.13d, available at <http://www.eia.doe.gov/> as of July 2008 as reported in U.S. Department of Transportation, Research and Innovative Technology Administration, Bureau of Transportation Statistics, *National Transportation Statistics*, table 4-3, available at [http://www.bts.gov/publications/national\\_transportation\\_statistics/](http://www.bts.gov/publications/national_transportation_statistics/) as of July 2008.

<sup>4</sup> Unified Command's Joint Information Center, *Transcript from press briefing on ongoing response to oil spill*, available at <http://www.deepwaterhorizonresponse.com/> as of May 2010.

<sup>5</sup> According to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineer's *U.S. Waterway System — Transportation Facts*, these include ports and terminals in St. Charles, St. John the Baptist, and St. James Parishes.

<sup>6</sup> U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Waterborne Commerce Statistics, *Tonnage for Selected U.S. Ports in 2008*, available at <http://www.ndc.iwr.usace.army.mil/> as of May 2010.

<sup>7</sup> Port of New Orleans. *Oil Update No.9*, available at <http://www.portno.com/> as of May 2010. U.S. Coast Guard. *Sector New Orleans: Port Status Information*. Available at <http://homeport.uscg.mil/> as of June 2010.

For risk mitigation, authorities have undertaken many precautions to protect the environment and sustain maritime commerce. Figure 2 shows the vessel-cleaning stations<sup>8</sup> that authorities have established throughout the Gulf Coast region (e.g., Boothville, LA, and Venice, LA).<sup>9</sup> In addition, the authorities have established mobile and offshore vessel-cleaning stations at anchorages (e.g., near Mobile, AL).<sup>10</sup>

## Port of New Orleans

The Port of New Orleans, LA, was the sixth largest port in the United States in terms of tonnage handled in 2008.<sup>11</sup> Tankers carrying mostly petrochemicals account for about 40 percent of the vessel calls. Dry-bulk vessels carrying coal, coke, grain, etc. account for another 40 percent of vessel calls (table 1).

New Orleans is a popular port for cruises. The Port of New Orleans operates the Julia Street and Erato Street cruise terminals.<sup>12</sup> These terminals support year-round operations.

**Table 1: New Orleans, LA**

Measure	Value
Vessel Calls (all types), 2008	4,328
Tanker	1,545
Container	297
Dry Bulk	2,060
Other (e.g., Combination, Ro-Ro)	426
Cruise Departures, 2009	101
Cruise Passengers (in thousands), 2009	243
Vessel (all types) Value (in billions), 2009	\$32.89
Total Cargo Tonnage (millions of metric tons)	72.62
Containerized Cargo Value (in billions), 2009	\$7.08
Containerized Cargo Tonnage (millions of metric tons)	4.14

**NOTES:** For an explanation of Ship Types, please refer to the Maritime Administration's *Glossary of Shipping Terms*, which is available at [http://www.marad.dot.gov/documents/Glossary\\_final.pdf](http://www.marad.dot.gov/documents/Glossary_final.pdf).

**SOURCES: Vessel Calls:** U.S. Department of Transportation, Maritime Administration, *U.S. Port Calls by Vessel Type*, available at <http://www.marad.dot.gov/> as of May 2010. **Cruise:** U.S. Department of Transportation, Maritime Administration, *North America Cruise Summary Data*, available at <http://www.marad.dot.gov/> as of May 2010. **Value and Tonnage:** USA Trade Online, *Annual Port-level Exports and Imports*, available at <http://www.usatradeonline.gov/> as of May 2010.

<sup>8</sup> North Protection and Indemnity (P&I) Insurance Association; *Deepwater Horizon Incident – Briefing Notes*, available at <http://www.nepia.com/> as of May 2010.

<sup>9</sup> Port of New Orleans. *Oil Update No. 4*, available at <http://www.portno.com/> as of May 2010.

<sup>10</sup> Alabama State Port Authority. *Port of Mobile Remains Open*, available at <http://www.asdd.com/> as of May 2010.

<sup>11</sup> U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Waterborne Commerce Statistics, *Tonnage for Selected U.S. Ports in 2008*, available at <http://www.ndc.iwr.usace.army.mil/> as of May 2010.

<sup>12</sup> Port of New Orleans. *Cruises*, available at <http://www.portno.com/> as of May 2010.

## Port of Mobile

The Port of Mobile, AL, was the ninth largest port in the United States in terms of shipping weight in 2008.<sup>13</sup> Dry bulk vessels, carrying mostly bituminous coal and coke, account for nearly half of the vessel calls (table 2).

Alabama State Port Authority operates the Mobile Alabama Cruise Terminal,<sup>14</sup> which recently commenced year-round operations.

**Table 2: Mobile, AL**

Measure	Value
Vessel Calls (all types), 2008	963
Tanker	180
Container	57
Dry Bulk	465
Other (e.g., Combination, Ro-Ro)	261
Cruise Departures, 2009	76
Cruise Passengers (in thousands), 2009	135
Vessel (all types) Value (in billions), 2009	\$7.88
Total Cargo Tonnage (millions of metric tons)	24.54
Containerized Cargo Value (in billions), 2009	\$2.12
Containerized Cargo Tonnage (millions of metric tons)	1.73

**NOTES:** For an explanation of Ship Types, please refer to the Maritime Administration's *Glossary of Shipping Terms*, which is available at [http://www.marad.dot.gov/documents/Glossary\\_final.pdf](http://www.marad.dot.gov/documents/Glossary_final.pdf).

**SOURCES: Vessel Calls:** U.S. Department of Transportation, Maritime Administration, *U.S. Port Calls by Vessel Type*, available at <http://www.marad.dot.gov/> as of May 2010. **Cruise:** U.S. Department of Transportation, Maritime Administration, *North America Cruise Summary Data*, available at <http://www.marad.dot.gov/> as of May 2010. **Value and Tonnage:** USA Trade Online, *Annual Port-level Exports and Imports*, available at <http://www.usatradeonline.gov/> as of May 2010.

## Other Gulf Coast Ports

**Table 3: Select Gulf Coast Ports' Vessel Calls, 2008**

Port	All Types		Dry Bulk		Other (e.g., Ro-Ro)
	Types	Tanker	Container	Bulk	
Mobile, AL	963	180	57	465	261
Panama City, FL	4	0	0	4	0
Pensacola, FL	5	0	0	4	1
Port Manatee, FL	113	20	1	26	66
Tampa, FL	710	321	39	227	123
Lake Charles, LA	705	492	2	140	71
New Orleans, LA	4,328	1,545	297	2,060	426
Gulfport, MS	16	0	9	5	2
Pascagoula, MS	245	187	0	35	23

**SOURCE:** U.S. Department of Transportation, Maritime Administration, *U.S. Port Calls by Vessel Type*, available at <http://www.marad.dot.gov/> as of May 2010

<sup>13</sup> U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Waterborne Commerce Statistics, *Tonnage for Selected U.S. Ports in 2008*, available at <http://www.ndc.iwr.usace.army.mil/> as of May 2010.

<sup>14</sup> Alabama State Port Authority. *About*, available at <http://www.asdd.com/> as of May 2010.

**Table 4: Select Gulf Coast Ports' Total and Containerized Cargo Value and Tonnage, 2009**

Customs Port	Vessel Merchandise Value (in U.S. Dollars)	Total Cargo Tonnage (in Metric Tons)	Containerized Cargo Value (in U.S. Dollars)	Containerized Cargo Tonnage (in Metric Tons)
Mobile, AL	\$7,883,237,370	24,538,511	\$2,121,635,931	1,733,305
Boca Grande, FL	\$133,196	24	\$12,021	5
Panama City, FL	\$2,001,808,128	1,116,739	\$817,983,965	228,439
Pensacola, FL	\$102,224,749	119,160	\$1,250,000	6
Port Manatee, FL	\$492,570,421	1,267,320	\$133,805,294	295,476
St. Petersburg, FL	\$203,179	72	\$203,179	72
Tampa, FL	\$3,441,048,276	11,278,160	\$440,917,759	383,340
Avondale, LA	\$9,059,511	13,758	\$8,531	10
Baton Rouge, LA	\$7,362,889,261	18,617,597	\$125,235,861	162,600
Destrehan, LA	\$566,731	188	\$550,047	187
Good Hope, LA	\$20,773,519	39,925	\$121,279	164
Gramercy, LA	\$16,062,071,806	53,771,758	\$254,078,736	570,085
Lake Charles, LA	\$10,235,421,584	28,931,401	\$146,381,502	289,790
Morgan City, LA	\$17,071,149,579	42,147,216	\$10,633,351	2,151
New Orleans, LA	\$32,894,532,850	72,616,599	\$7,084,778,095	4,139,422
Port Sulphur, LA	\$87,317,580	194,158	\$4,501,751	419
St. Rose, LA	\$774,251,615	1,903,121	\$27,523	20
Greenville, MS	\$210,243	180	\$184,426	178
Gulfport, MS	\$2,169,244,672	1,657,282	\$1,727,190,100	1,108,126
Pascagoula, MS	\$9,388,263,873	25,089,420	\$49,296,196	96,574
Vicksburg, MS	\$787,204	60	\$787,204	59,500

**NOTES:** See the Maritime Administration's *Glossary of Shipping Terms*, which is available at [http://www.marad.dot.gov/documents/Glossary\\_final.pdf](http://www.marad.dot.gov/documents/Glossary_final.pdf) for an explanation of Container. See the U.S. Census Bureau's *Guide to Foreign Trade Statistics*, which is available at <http://www.census.gov/foreign-trade/guide/> for a description of the Foreign Trade Statistical data program.

**SOURCE:** USA Trade Online, *Annual Port-level Exports and Imports*, available at <http://www.usatradeonline.gov/> as of May 2010.

### About This Fact Sheet

Matthew Chambers, a Senior Transportation Specialist, in the Bureau of Transportation Statistics (BTS) prepared this fact sheet. Dominic Menegus, a Geographic Information Systems (GIS) Analyst, provided special assistance creating the maps. BTS is a component of the U.S. Department of Transportation's Research and Innovative Technology Administration (RITA).

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### Recommended BTS Publications For Further Reading—

- U.S. Department of Transportation, Research and Innovative Technology Administration, Bureau of Transportation Statistics, *America's Freight Transportation Gateways* (November 2009)
  - The report has a chapter highlighting the international trade at the seaport of New Orleans. In addition, the Appendix contains merchandise trade data by value for the Top 125 ports of entry, which includes Baton Rouge, LA; Gulf Port, MS; and Mobile, AL.
- U.S. Department of Transportation, Research and Innovative Technology Administration, Bureau of Transportation Statistics, *America's Container Ports: Freight Hubs That Connect Our Nation to Global Markets* (June 2009)
  - The report focuses on the container ports coast-to-coast, which include those along the Gulf Coast.