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Sarasota County beaches are safe, clean and oil-free

Sarasota County has been diligent in its efforts to monitor for any impacts from the Deepwater Horizon oil spill. The BP oil well has been capped for several months now; however, calls from citizens concerned about the safety of our beaches continue.

Sarasota County beaches are safe, clean and oil-free. Sarasota County remains proactive by local testing of water, sediment and shellfish, specifically looking for measurements of petroleum-related products. These efforts are ongoing and results will be reported when the testing has been completed.

Sarasota County government works closely with many partners to ensure the health and safety of our coastal beaches. Specific procedures are in place for citizens to report any potential oil products on our beaches or near shore waters. These procedures will not only help to verify the presence or absence of oil; if oil is found, they will assist with determining if the source is related to the BP oil spill. The county continues to encourage everyone to report potential oil product sightings on Sarasota County beaches so that these incidents can be carefully investigated.

According to Laird Wreford, coastal resources manager for Sarasota County, there have been numerous sampling events undertaken locally by the state of Florida, Mote Marine Laboratory and the county itself. This sampling has included both water and sediment, as well as wildlife tissue sampling (bay and offshore fish, oysters and other shellfish).

To date, none of the samples has resulted in any indications of impacts from the recent Gulf oil spill. However, the county will continue to undertake routine monthly water quality sampling, and will elevate its efforts and sampling coverage at the first sign of any problems or abnormalities. If any suspected material is seen in the coastal area, residents or visitors are asked to call the State Watch Office at 1-800-320-0519. This call will initiate an investigative response by the proper authorities. When reporting, residents or visitors are asked to provide the what, when and where particulars of the sighting.