

Thursday, July 12, 1990

# Microbes gobble oil successfully; environment remains unharmed

HOUSTON (AP) — Oil-eating microbes dumped on a slick from a leaking tanker apparently did their job: gobbling up oil without hurting the environment, state officials said.

State Land Commissioner Garry Mauro and Texas Water Commission Chairman B.J. "Buck" Wynne said Thursday that while more testing is needed, there's enough evidence for them to push for expanded use of the process, called bioremediation.

"Our results aren't definitive, so some of you may accuse me of throwing caution to the waves," Mauro said at a news conference. "I disagree. We have strong evidence that bioremediation works. The results show that we are close to having a tool that actually cleans up oil spills."

"The results are very encouraging," Wynne added.

The microbes were tested after the Norwegian tanker Mega Borg exploded and burned 57 miles off Texas' shore in the Gulf of Mexico on June 8. An estimated 3.9 million gallons of light crude leaked into the Gulf.

Much of the oil burned, but some of it created a slick that appeared to be headed towards the Texas coast.

Skimmers and booms were deployed to clean up some of the oil, but Mauro and Wynne pushed to test the microbes. The test, first done on about 40 acres of the spill and again on a smaller patch, was not a major part of the cleanup.

Mauro and Wynne said Thursday there is no evidence that the microbes caused any environmental damage. Both said the microbes should be used again on the next significant oil spill, and should be tested on smaller spills near the Texas coast.

The test on the Mega Borg spill marked the first time the microbes were used in open waters. Bioremediation had been used before that to clean up hazardous waste sites, extract oil from tight geologic formations, and clean some rocks on shore after the Exxon Valdez spill in Alaska last year.

The naturally occurring bacteria reduce the oil to an emulsion of fatty acids. This emulsion sinks and is eaten by fish. When the oil is gone, the microbes die.

In the first test, researchers could see that the microbes reacted with the oil on the open sea as they did in the laboratory, Mauro said.

Next, microbes were poured over a smaller, isolated slick and samples were taken every two hours for 12 hours. Those results were compared with a nearby slick that wasn't treated.

"We found surface oil was reduced after the application, and we found no similar reduction in the control slick," Mauro said. The surface oil in some samples was "reduced to 30 percent of the original volume," he said.

Wynne and Mauro conceded that weather and currents may have had some effect on dispersing the oil, but they were confident the microbes had done their duty in eating some of the goo. Mauro said bioremediation could be the premier tool in cleaning up spills.

"The best that anything else in our oil spill response arsenal can do is mitigate disaster," he said.

The next step, he said, involves persuading companies to include bioremediation in their oil spill contingency plans. "I'm not saying our results are definitive, that they prove bioremediation is the solution for oil spills," Mauro said, but "we have enough evidence to make a public policy decision."

## In Advance

### Youth present free talent show in Rudder

Teenagers from the Youth Opportunity Unlimited program will present a talent show at 8 p.m. Saturday in Rudder Auditorium. Entertainment will include dances, skits, singing and rap music. Admission is free. For more information, call the YOU office at 845-0037.

## Salutes

### Faculty/Staff

- Dr. John Sweeten, an extension agricultural engineer and a professor of agricultural engineering, has been elected as a fellow of the American Society of Agricultural Engineers.
- Dr. George Carter, distinguished professor emeritus of geography, has received the first gold medal award from the Institute for the Study of American Cultures for his decades of work on the origins of American Indians.
- Dr. Max Summers, a professor of entomology, has been named president-elect to the American Society for Virology.
- Edward Hiler, deputy chancellor for academic program planning and research, was elected to the presidency of the American Society of Agricultural Engineers.

## Officials set water rations for counties

SAN ANTONIO (AP) — Water rationing begins immediately in Bexar, Comal and Hays counties, where officials are worried about the level of the Edwards Aquifer.

"We will enforce the plan in the counties," said Russell Masters, general manager of the Edwards Underground Water District, which adopted the rules Wednesday.

The measures restrict lawn watering and car washing to designated days and prohibit filling hot tubs and swimming pools. Watering of golf courses is prohibited except once every five days on tees and greens.

The plan also bans washing sidewalks, driveways and other impervious surfaces and prohibits inside and outside fountains unless they reuse water.

Each city within the three-county water district has the power to set fines. San Antonio has fines up to \$200, for instance. The water district can bring civil lawsuits against violators in unincorporated areas; the district can also sue cities for non-compliance.

The emergency plan expires Dec. 31. It was drawn up by the Texas Water Commission under Commissioner John Birdwell's direction.

Birdwell has been mediating disputes over water in the Edwards Aquifer, an underground reservoir that is the sole water source for more than 1.3 million people, most of whom live in Bexar County.

## Clements predicts Williams as victor in gubernatorial race

*Opinion polls, undecided voters aid decision*

AUSTIN (AP) — Gov. Bill Clements, Texas' only Republican governor this century, on Thursday predicted that Clayton Williams would be his successor.

Clements said Williams' early lead over Democrat Ann Richards in opinion polls, combined with a relatively small number of undecided voters, would help the Republican candidate win November's election.

"The people of Texas, in a historic sense, seem to have consolidated their views and made their mind up. There's only about a 10 or 11 percentage point undecided vote out there. I can't even remember where this has been the situation before," Clements said.

"I think Clayton Williams is just doing great," he said. "I'm going to help him every way I can. He has maintained his poll lead over a long period of time and it's rock solid."

Elected in 1978 and 1986, Clements is the only Republican to hold the governor's office since Reconstruction. He said he based his prediction on several opinion polls, along with a preview he received of Williams' campaign strategy.

Clements discounted Richards' criticism of Williams' most recent controversial remark, which came in defense of his earlier admission that he was "serviced" by prostitutes as a young man.

In a profile published in U.S. News & World Report, Williams said, "In the world I live in of bulls and cattlemen, you talk about the bull servicing the cow. I was trying to find a nice, polite term for (vulgarity for sexual intercourse)."

Williams admitted last April that he paid for sex a number of times in Texas and Mexico as a young man and used the term "serviced."

"Some of Mr. Williams' language is salty at times," said press secretary Gordon Hensley. "But the voters

appear to appreciate his candor, and that doesn't appear to hurt him in the polls."

Richards issued a statement saying Williams' comments "do not reflect the image that we need when Texas businesses are trying to compete in the world marketplace. It is also hard to understand why he continues to insult women and family values."

Clements was asked whether Williams suffers from "foot-in-mouth" disease. "I don't think there's any problem whatsoever," the governor said. "He's a great candidate."

Clements said it was too early to say whether a Williams victory would help other Republicans capture offices this fall. If Williams wins big, however, Clements said that would be good news for other GOP candidates.

"If it's a very narrow race, and I'm talking about a 51 percent (majority) race, I don't think he will have coattails," he said. "If the win is in the magnitude of the 55, 56 (percent) range, there will be coattails," Clements said.

The governor also said he was glad Vice President Dan Quayle is coming to Texas next week to campaign for two other GOP hopefuls: agriculture commissioner candidate Rick Perry and attorney general nominee J.E. "Buster" Brown.

"I think Dan Quayle is an asset to President Bush and he will be an asset to any of the candidates in Texas with whom he campaigns ... He's welcome any time," Clements said.

Clements said he hoped Richards would ask the 1988 Democratic presidential candidate, Massachusetts Gov. Michael Dukakis, to campaign for her.

## What's Up

### Friday

- ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS:** will have a general discussion at noon. Call the C.D.P.E. at 845-0280 for more information.
- CATHOLIC STUDENTS ASSOCIATION:** will have Aggie Awakening #28. Call 846-5717 for more information.
- STUDENTS OVER TRADITIONAL AGE:** will have a supper club with movies to follow at 6 p.m. at Sonny's Barbeque in Hearne. Call 845-1741 for more information.
- AGENT ORANGE AND THE DEFOLIANTS:** will be at Kay's Cabaret at 9 p.m.

### Saturday

- NARCOTICS ANONYMOUS:** will have a general discussion at 8:30 p.m. Call the C.D.P.E. at 845-0280 for more information.
- ADULT CHILDREN OF ALCOHOLICS:** will have a general discussion at 6 p.m. Call the C.D.P.E. at 845-0280 for more information.

### Monday

- ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS:** will have a general discussion at noon. Call the C.D.P.E. at 845-0280 for more information.

### Tuesday

- NARCOTICS ANONYMOUS:** will have a general discussion at 8:30 p.m. Call the C.D.P.E. at 845-0280 for more information.
- ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS:** will have a general discussion at noon. Call the C.D.P.E. at 845-0280 for more information.

Items for What's Up should be submitted to The Battalion, 216 Reed McDonald, no later than three business days before the desired run date. We only publish the name and phone number of the contact if you ask us to do so. What's Up is a Battalion service that lists non-profit events and activities. Submissions are run on a first-come, first-served basis. There is no guarantee an entry will run. If you have questions, call the newsroom at 845-3315.

## Dead turtle discovered on shore

### Official apologizes for mismanagement

GALVESTON (AP) — Another dead sea turtle washed up on shore Thursday, bringing to 12 the number of turtles found dead since shrimping season opened Sunday.

The turtle found Thursday was a Kemp's Ridley turtle, an endangered species, said Neal Baxter, acting director of the Galveston National Marine Fisheries Service laboratory in Galveston. It was the fifth Kemp's Ridley found dead, Baxter said. The others were loggerheads.

"It just washed in with the tide," he said.

Environmentalists accuse shrimpers for the deaths, alleging the shrimpers are not obeying new laws requiring them to put devices on their nets that would let turtles escape. Baxter says it's too soon to draw any conclusions, but testing will begin next week to determine the cause of death.

The turtles have been stored in freezers.

The Coast Guard has ticketed at least nine vessels since Sunday for allegedly violating turtle protection laws off the Texas coast. Officials said some shrimpers had purposely disabled their turtle excluder devices, or TEDS, in their nets.

Federal law requires that all shrimp nets be equipped with the devices, which have built-in escape hatches for the sea turtles.

DALLAS (AP) — A TU Electric official, fired after his allegations of widespread mismanagement were made public, has apologized and will receive more than \$180,000 in benefits, a newspaper reported.

In a severance agreement reached June 7, Jim Taylor, a former district manager for TU Electric in Plano, will receive disability pay and medical benefits totaling more than \$180,000 through 1996, the Dallas Morning News reported Thursday.

The benefits could be reduced if he obtains another job, according to the agreement.

In a letter also dated June 7, Taylor apologized for his earlier allegations and blamed his "irrational action" on "tremendous personal stress."

But he didn't formally withdraw the more than 70 allegations raised in documents that he mailed this spring to state and federal regulators. In his letter of apology, he said much of his information "was based on hearsay and assumptions which were unsubstantiated."

His apology letter and his termination agreement are part of public records filed in the company's pending request for a rate increase with the Public Utilities Commission.

Taylor had alleged that TU Electric officials engaged in "clandestine" lobbying and improper use of the company's political action committee, interfered with the operations of rural electric cooperatives,

and tried to undermine efforts by cities that oppose utility rate increases.

He also accused company officials of using corporate vehicles and company-owned facilities, such as lake houses, for personal benefit.

PUC officials said the regulatory agency is continuing to investigate the accusations.

In a termination agreement signed by E.L. Watson, senior vice president of TU Electric, the company denied any wrongdoing.

When asked about the allegations, Taylor said: "The best thing I can do is stay out of any kind of publicity. As far as I am concerned, this thing is over."

The termination agreement is similar to a proposal Taylor rejected earlier this year before he made his allegations, the newspaper said.

In a sworn deposition given in the pending rate case, Taylor said he considered TU Electric's earlier offer to pay his \$75,000 salary and medical benefits to be "hush money."

"I considered that nothing more than hush money with a little front-end wording on it where they could get me to sign that document and my wife to sign it, which would keep me from ever being able to effectively or even maybe legally bring forth my accusations publicly," Taylor said May 21.

## Restaurant Report

The restaurants listed below were inspected by the Brazos County Health Department between July 2 and July 6. Information is from a food service establishment inspection report.

**SCORED BETWEEN 90 AND 95:**

- Double Dave's Pizza** at 115 N. Main St. **Score — 94.** Points were deducted for inadequate amounts of hand cleanser, presence of animals and unprotected outer openings. It was a regularly scheduled inspection.
- Jack in the Box** at 1504 S. Texas Ave. **Score — 93.** Points were deducted for improper storage of in-use utensils, improper storage of single-service articles, unclean non-food contact surfaces and presence of vermin. It was inspected because of a complaint.
- Beetle's B.B.Q.** at 201 E. William J. Bryan Parkway **Score — 91.** Points were deducted for improper thawing of potentially hazardous food, improper storage of toxic items (major violation) and unclean food-contact surfaces. It was a regularly scheduled inspection.

**SCORED BETWEEN 80 AND 85:**

- A&M Steakhouse** at 108 College Main **Score — 85.** Points were deducted for improper thawing of potentially hazardous food, improper food protection during storage, improper storage of single-service articles, unsatisfactory plumbing maintenance, hand drying device not provided, improper waste receptacles, unprotected outer openings and unclean floors. It was inspected because of a complaint.
- Genare** at 404 E. University Dr. **Score — 85.** Points were deducted for lack of food protection, inadequate maintenance of non-food contact surfaces, unclean non-food contact surfaces, unprotected outer openings, unsatisfactory repair of walls and ceilings, unshielded light fixtures and improper storage of toxic items (major violation). It was inspected because of a complaint.

**SCORED BETWEEN 70 AND 75:**

- Bombay Bicycle Club** at 607 Texas Ave. **Score — 72.** Points were deducted for potentially hazardous temperature of food (major violation), thermometers not provided and conspicuous, improper food protection, improper storage of in-use utensils, improper hygienic practices (major violation), unsatisfactory non-food contact surfaces, inaccurate dishwasher thermometers, unclean food contact surfaces of hand drying device not provided, uncovered garbage receptacles, unclean garbage receptacles, unprotected outer openings and unclean walls and ceilings. It was inspected because of a complaint.

David Jefferson, a registered sanitarian at the department, said restaurants with scores of 95 or above generally have excellent operations and facilities. He said restaurants with scores in the 70s or low 80s usually have serious violations in the health report.

Scores can be misleading, Jefferson said, because restaurants can get the same score by having several minor violations or a few major violations. He said the minor violations can be corrected during the inspection. Point deductions or violations in the report range from one point (minor violations) to five points (major violations).

Jefferson said the department might close a restaurant if the score is below 60, the personnel have infectious diseases, the restaurant lacks adequate refrigeration, there is a sewage backup in the building or the restaurant has a complete lack of sanitation for the food equipment.

The department inspects each restaurant every six months. Jefferson said a follow-up inspection is sometimes required if a restaurant has a four- or five-point violation that cannot be corrected during the inspection, or if there are numerous small violations.

Inspectors at the department are registered sanitarians.

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