

Search SunHerald.com for [ ] SEARCH Web Search powered by YAHOO! SEARCH

OIL SPILL

Tuesday, Jul. 06, 2010

Comments (0)

BARBOURS INSPECT NEW SKIMMER BOAT

By GEOFF PENDER and MICHAEL NEWSOM - Sun Herald

GULFPORT — Gov. Haley Barbour inspected the first of what he said will soon be a fleet of 27 oil-skimmer boats for Mississippi on Tuesday, and the head of BP's oil-disaster response visited the Coast.

Bob Dudley, the new man in charge of BP's oil response, told reporters the company was committed to the long-term restoration of the Gulf and South Mississippi — a place he said he knows well.

Mississippi is spending about \$20 million of the \$50 million BP has given it so far to build and lease skimmers, after discovering weeks ago the BP/Coast Guard oil-disaster command did not have enough skimmers to help states battle oil once it got near shore or barrier islands.



TIM ISBELL/SUN HERALD Gov. Haley Barbour talks with Trinity Offshore President John Dane aboard an oil-skimming boat under construction in Gulfport on Tuesday afternoon.

- LINK: Read more coverage of the Gulf oil spill from the Biloxi Sun Herald
LINK: Upload your oil spill photos here
GALLERY: Reader photos of oil in Mississippi
GALLERY: BARBOURS INSPECT NEW SKIMMER BOAT
STORY: Tuesday highlights
STORY: County subpoenas Waste Management
STORY: Oil seeps into Lake Pontchartrain
STORY: Buffett hopes to boost Gulf spirits with concert
STORY: Oil-spill debris may go to Pearl River County

Mississippi's oil-disaster plan had been to spot oil while it was miles out from the barrier islands and Mississippi Sound, then skim as much as possible before it made landfall.

But what few skimmers the BP/Coast Guard operation had were often allocated to other areas, and oil began washing onto Mississippi beaches.

Barbour, his wife, Marsha Barbour, and several state officials checked out a skimmer boat nearing completion at Trinity Offshore in Gulfport, a company that usually builds yachts. Barbour said Trinity, after hearing the state desperately needed skimmers, offered to help.

The company will build five skimmers, at about \$430,000 each, with the first set to be ready for operation next week and the rest by early August.

Barbour thanked Trinity, which he said has been working around the clock to build the skimmers.

Overing Yacht Designs in Ocean Springs also will build five, Barbour said. The state is leasing other skimmers, including at least eight of French design from AshBritt, a company that held one of the largest cleanup contracts along the Gulf after Hurricane Katrina.

Trinity President John Dane III said his company contacted a Seattle-based firm that owns the patent on the skimmers and worked out a deal. Dane said BP is going to order about 40 more of the boats for use Gulf-wide, and Trinity plans to build six of those.

Barbour said although the various skimmers the state will soon have may not scoop up all the oil that blows in, they should be able to get much of it, and the remainder that lands on beaches can be cleaned up more quickly.

Barbour said there was no bid process for the purchase of the skimmers, but the proposals for building and leasing had to be approved by BP so the company could help "make sure they'll work."

Spill 'personal' to Dudley

Dudley, who grew up in Hattiesburg, was appointed June 23 to oversee BP's response to the spill.

In his youth he spent time on boats around Biloxi and Gulfport, where his family often stayed in the summers.



TIM ISBELL/SUN HERALD Gov. Haley Barbour talks with Trinity Offshore President John Dane aboard an oil-skimming boat under construction in Gulfport on Tuesday afternoon.

- LINK: Read more coverage of the Gulf oil spill from the Biloxi Sun Herald
LINK: Upload your oil spill photos here
GALLERY: Reader photos of oil in Mississippi
GALLERY: BARBOURS INSPECT NEW SKIMMER BOAT
STORY: Tuesday highlights
STORY: County subpoenas Waste Management
STORY: Oil seeps into Lake Pontchartrain
STORY: Buffett hopes to boost Gulf spirits with concert
STORY: Oil-spill debris may go to Pearl River County

He said the disaster was personal to him because the area was in many of his childhood memories.

"I've seen the many changes after different storms," Dudley said. "I've seen the increase in the character of the Gulf Coast here, with the casinos and the revitalization of the Mississippi Coast that has occurred. The beaches were cleaner than when I grew up in the '60s.

"We've got make sure that we get the beaches back to that clean state where they were."

The 54-year-old Dudley has overseen BP's operations in both the Americas and Asia and worked for decades with Amoco, which merged with BP. He answers to BP CEO Tony Hayward.

For now, he said, the company's most important job is to stop the gusher. Company officials have said that could happen in August.

He said he doesn't have a firm time line on how long it will take, but he believes the Coast can recover. He told reporters Tuesday he doesn't want to minimize the effect of the spill, but he is battling claims the Gulf of Mexico "is never going to be the same."

Weather hampers skimming

Dudley also said BP has been working to acquire more skimmers and said Mississippi officials are working on getting their own to help. But he said rough weather and seas, which have hampered skimming for the past few days, may not allow any

BP boats to skim again before Friday.

He also said the probability of the April 20 explosion at the Deepwater Horizon drilling rig that caused the oil spill was "incredibly low."

Dudley, who describes himself as an optimist by nature, said the explosion was a "game-changer" in the oil and gas industry that could result in many new safety laws.

Lessons in disaster

The company may be able to teach the industry many lessons on deep-sea drilling safety through its studies of the explosion and the blowout preventer, Dudley said.

Mississippi officials responding to the gusher have been very supportive and direct in their dealings with the company, Dudley said.

He said he believes Barbour has been very practical in his response.

Mississippi senators and congressmen have also peppered the company with many tough questions, Dudley said.

"They're not easy on us," Dudley said.

SHARE MY YAHOO! E-Mail Print Reprint or license TEXT SIZE: - +

Quick Job Search Enter Keyword(s): Enter a City: Select a State: Select a Category: Search Advanced Job Search Search by Category

powered by careerbuilder.com Top Jobs

MOST POPULAR County considers outlawing drug Man charged in assault at restaurant 1 man stabbed, 1 burned by acid over weekend Three nabbed in home-invasion probe; suspects charged with armed robbery BARBOURS INSPECT NEW SKIMMER BOAT County subpoenas Waste Management Husband way out of line posting sex pics online Miss. officials investigate newborn's death Apple Records Catalogue Remastered and Reissued on CD and Digital Download Gulf awash in 27,000 unmonitored, abandoned wells