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NEWS

Jindal fears spill's impact; river reopens for shipping

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By **MICHELLE MILLHOLLON AND CHRIS GAUTREAU**

Advocate Capitol News Bureau

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The Mississippi River reopened Friday for shipping after being closed two days by a massive oil spill.

Gov. Bobby Jindal on Friday voiced concern about the spill's short-term impact on the region's drinking water and the long-term impact on its economy.

The state is testing the river and providing alternate drinking water to any parish that requests it, Jindal said. The governor said he asked the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency to do additional testing.

The fuel oil spill shutdown a 100-mile stretch of the river from New Orleans to the Gulf of Mexico, stranding vessels carrying everything from oil and coal to grain and manufactured goods.

Jindal said the rest of the world is seeing how critical the river and south Louisiana is to commerce.

Shipping on the Mississippi River resumed in a tightly controlled procession Friday afternoon.



The U.S. Coast Guard established a pecking order based on the economic importance of the ships' cargo. The first ship to head north from the river's mouth, the Overseas New York carrying oil, was cleared to sail to the refinery corridor that lines the river between Baton Rouge and New Orleans.

With more than 200 ships waiting, it was expected to take days to clear the backlog that developed after the tanker Tintomara collided with a barge in the early morning hours Wednesday. About 419,000 gallons of fuel oil spilled from the barge into the Mississippi at New Orleans.

Gary LaGrange, executive director of the Port of New Orleans, said a recent economic impact study conducted by the port showed that such a total shutdown could cost the national economy up to \$275 million per day.

Connie Fabré, executive director of the Greater Baton Rouge Industry Alliance, said Friday that local plants have not been affected so far.

Plants rely on ships for both sending their manufactured products and receiving raw materials for manufacturing, she said.

"Most of them have a couple of days' storage capacity," Fabré said. "But they can't run for a month without having supplies."

Fabré, whose group represents about 50 industrial manufacturers, said she spoke to about half a dozen member facilities, including four large plants, though she declined to specify which ones.

Refineries adjusted to the shutdown.

Officials with Royal Dutch Shell PLC, for example, said its Gulf Coast sites were operating as usual and meeting supply obligations. One refinery was sending some fuel by pipeline that normally would be transported by vessel.

About 2,000 passengers on a cruise ship diverted to Mobile, Ala., were being bused to New Orleans, said its operator, Carnival Corp.

In another e-mail update, Mike Titone of the Mississippi River Maritime Association said the process of decontaminating oil-soaked ships had not started smoothly.

Titone wrote that problems with equipment and the river current forced crews to move the cleanup work from where they had originally set up.

Officials said high-pressure water would be applied to the ships' hulls at the water line to remove oil — a process that would take three to four hours per ship.


The spill was the largest since a tanker ran aground in 2000 about 40 miles south of New Orleans, dumping more than half a million gallons of crude oil on the Mississippi. That spill closed about 26 miles of the river.


Authorities are investigating the cause of the crash, and said there wasn't a properly licensed pilot aboard the tugboat pushing the barge. Officials would say only that their probe is continuing.

Meanwhile, residents filed a suit Friday against the owners and operators of the vessels, alleging that they were exposed to fuel oil fumes.

Mark Ballard of the Capitol news bureau and Alan Sayre of The Associated Press contributed to this report.

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dani

Saturday, Jul 26, 2008
12:39 AM

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Funny how no rumors get started on how this happened. Guess we won't be blaming Bush for this one since Republicans want to drill.

Former Republican

Saturday, Jul 26, 2008
2:57 AM

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Hey, - it's only a half-million gallons of bunker oil. No big deal, right? Dani, the reason this happened is because Louisiana businesses have no regard for the law - an apprentice pilot was about the tug that caused the accident. Few in Louisiana care about following maritime law, apparently, and if you spill a few thousands barrels of bunker oil into the river, it's no big deal.

A Concerned Louisiana Citizen

Saturday, Jul 26, 2008
4:48 AM

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I am concerned about the ecological effects this is going to have. I have spilled oil on the ground before while, and unless I dig it out, it stays there, never going away even after several storm. I have waited almost a year, and still the ground where I spilled the oil was contaminated (I eventually dugged it out). Oil contaminated doesn't appear to go away by itself (my guess is that it is the same way with fuels). I doubt the clean up efforts will be able to remove every bit of this oil (wasn't it fuel?), so the ecological effects may last generations or forever until it is finally removed manually.

Another former Repub

Saturday, Jul 26, 2008
6:56 AM

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I agree. Louisiana does not observe the law or care about the environment. They hand out permits right and left to dig up the marshes for oil/gas and development while asking for billions from Congress to fix their own mess. Give me a break! And BJ's claims that this shows America the commercial value of the river is nonsense. If commerce was really suffering, they would open that river up in a second and not worry about the environmental consequences. BJ's spins are totally transparent.

Cajun Jedi

Saturday, Jul 26, 2008
8:24 AM

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I heard on a Houston radio station that the person responsible for this was an illegal alien. If this is true there needs to be criminal prosecution and he needs to be a permanent citizen of Angola.

Jesus Jefferson

Saturday, Jul 26, 2008
10:12 AM

[Report Violation](#)

The vast majority of ship captains navigating the river are aliens. That's the nature of international shipping. However, the government requires licensed pilots to navigate the Mississippi once the vessel enters the river. The river pilots are extremely profession, over-paid big-time, but professionals all the same. Let's wait until the investigation finds fault before rushing to judgement. The spill cleanup is another issue. Allowing shipping to resume is going to make that much more difficult. As much as I hate that fact, it was probably necessary due to the huge lose of revenues which would have come about if the river were not

reopened. Energy and chemical plants, and also refineries would have to shut down, which is unbelievably expensive. We're talking many millions of dollars, lost profits and maybe even layoffs. Let's hope Bobby concentrates on the cleanup, which is very unlike the past history of Republican administrations. This is how he can prove himself, particularly if he advocates further off-shore drilling.

dani

Saturday, Jul 26, 2008
11:02 AM

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Former Republican, I'm concerned about how the national media will run with this one in order to strengthen the Obama angle. The same way they blamed Bush for everything. Bush ignored the black people when the power to call the National Guard lies with the governor. Bush was pushing for us to be less dependent on foreign oil for the longest time. Are you the only one who doesn't see their love affair with Obama? Are you relying on only one source for all your opinions? They've been pushing the Democrat angle for the longest time. Do you do what the T.V. god tells you? Can you think for yourself? Take a bigger picture. Be informed. Be responsible. T.V. is going down because they are becoming too political. Swing Town? Trying to say Carter years were great. Destroying families? Children with parents fighting forever over the hurt feelings this creates. Don't you remember how much our respect in the world went down then?

SHARON MOUNIER

Saturday, Jul 26, 2008
11:03 AM

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Don't worry about it Governor Jindal because the citizens of Louisiana never matter much to their politicians anyway. At least the citizens of Alaska get oil and gas rebate checks for the drilling that goes on off their coast. Louisianaians get nothing but an eroding coast, substandard levees, a crumbling infrastructure, global warming and oil spills that wreck havoc on our economy our land and our resources. I don't envy the citizens of Alaska who each got 3,500 smackeroos last year in oil and gas rebate checks but I do pity Louisiana because when the last drop of oil is sucked from out of our Outer Continental Shelf, all the oil and gas companies will leave us with is a BIG MESS!!!

dani

Saturday, Jul 26, 2008
11:03 AM

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You weren't even a Republican were you?

dani

Saturday, Jul 26, 2008
11:23 AM

[Report Violation](#)

It's O.K. some people will see what I really said. People always do. Sometimes I'm even right. Not really a Former Republican are you?

Former Republican

Saturday, Jul 26, 2008
12:10 PM

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Ooooh. You got me Dani. After watching the "fiscally responsible" party try to break the back of Clinton's balanced budget act (written and passed by Democrats in 1993) and then watching the dry drunk frat boy we have for a President blow every cent the Chinese would lend to us (in the form of treasury bonds) on a BS war, yeah, I switched parties. The Democrats are pretty spineless at times - especially the entrenched party leadership who have been whipped about the head for years and years by the Republicans and the pundits over their supposed "softness" on terrorism, etc - but you know what? It's the Republicans who are responsible for the useless, baseless war in Iraq. don't give me BS about Al-Quaeda in Iraq or WMDs - AQ is a tiny percentage of a minority sect in that country. We've been fed lies on top of lies on top of lies by the GOP for over a decade. They've had congress since 1994 (until two years ago), the executive branch since 2001, and the Supreme court is stacked with three hard core conservatives versus one liberal and five relative moderates. The country is a complete mess because of the "leadership" of the GOP - the economy is in the tank because they've chosen to further enrich the top 1% with lavish tax breaks, hoping the rich will deign to drop some crumb on us little folks in the middle class. Corporate malfeasance is rampant - looking more and more like 1929 - and currently, the republicans - so-called conservatives - want to give away the beauty of our shores and national parks to the oil companies, as though doubling the amount of oil and gas leases on public land over the past five years wasn't enough. I've had it with these "conservatives" who don't conserve. And that's why I'm a Former Republican. Open your eyes, and you might be too. Otherwise, turn up the Rush Limbaugh and repeat everything he says - that paragon of integrity is a shining example of the hubris that has ruined this country.

Winston

Saturday, Jul 26, 2008
3:18 PM


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