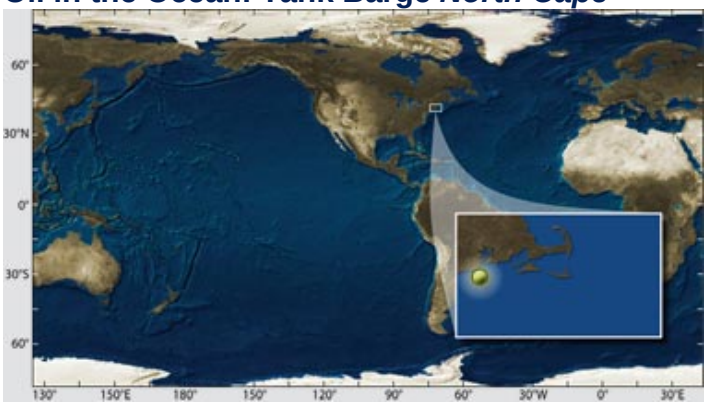
Print

Oil in the Ocean: Tank Barge *North Cape*



Location: Block Island Sound off Moonstone Beach, R.I.
Date: January 19, 1996

Lat./Long.: 41°22'10.43"N, 71°34'22.74"W
Material spilled: No. 2 fuel oil
Amount spilled: approx. 828,000 gallons
Spill extent:

On January 19, 1996, during a severe winter storm, the tugboat *Scandia* caught fire along the southern coast of Rhode Island. The crew abandoned the tug and the barge it was towing, the North Cape. Both vessels ran aground near Moonstone Beach, South Kingstown, R.I., and the barge spilled about 2700 of its 12500 metric ton cargo of No. 2 (diesel) fuel oil.

Of the 14 fuel compartments in the barge, eight breached during the grounding. Because of the high winds (60 mph) and rough seas (16 to 23 feet), the oil was well mixed and dispersed throughout the local area within 24 hours. The spill closed approximately 250 square miles of fishing and shellfishing areas for as long as five months and killed more than 10 million lobsters, approximately 500 birds (including the federally-endangered piping plover), over 40 million surf clams, and many other benthic and pelagic animals, resulting in the most damaging man-made accident in the history of the state of Rhode Island.

Publications

Reddy, C.M. and JG Quinn, " The North Cape oil spill: hydrocarbons in Rhode Island coastal waters and Point Judith pond," *Marine Environmental Research* 52(2001), 445–461.

Reddy, CM and JG Quinn, " GC-MS analysis of total petroleum hydrocarbons and polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons in seawater samples after the North Cape oil spill," *Marine Pollution Bulletin* 38(1999):126-135.

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