



Testimony of
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President's Oil Spill Commission
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Requested Testimony

- Scientific findings in the aftermath of IXTOC-I Oil Well Blowout 1979 .
- Research on other applicable oil releases.
- Direct experience related to and scientific recommendations regarding Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill.

IXTOC I Oilwell Blowout June 3, 1979 to March 23, 1980.

- Petroleos Mexicanos (PEMEX) well, Bay of Campeche, Mexican waters ,Gulf of Mexico.
- 50 meters water depth.
- Explosion, fire, oil release at ocean bottom.
- 475,000 metric tons released.
- Research cruise to site 11-27 September 1979.

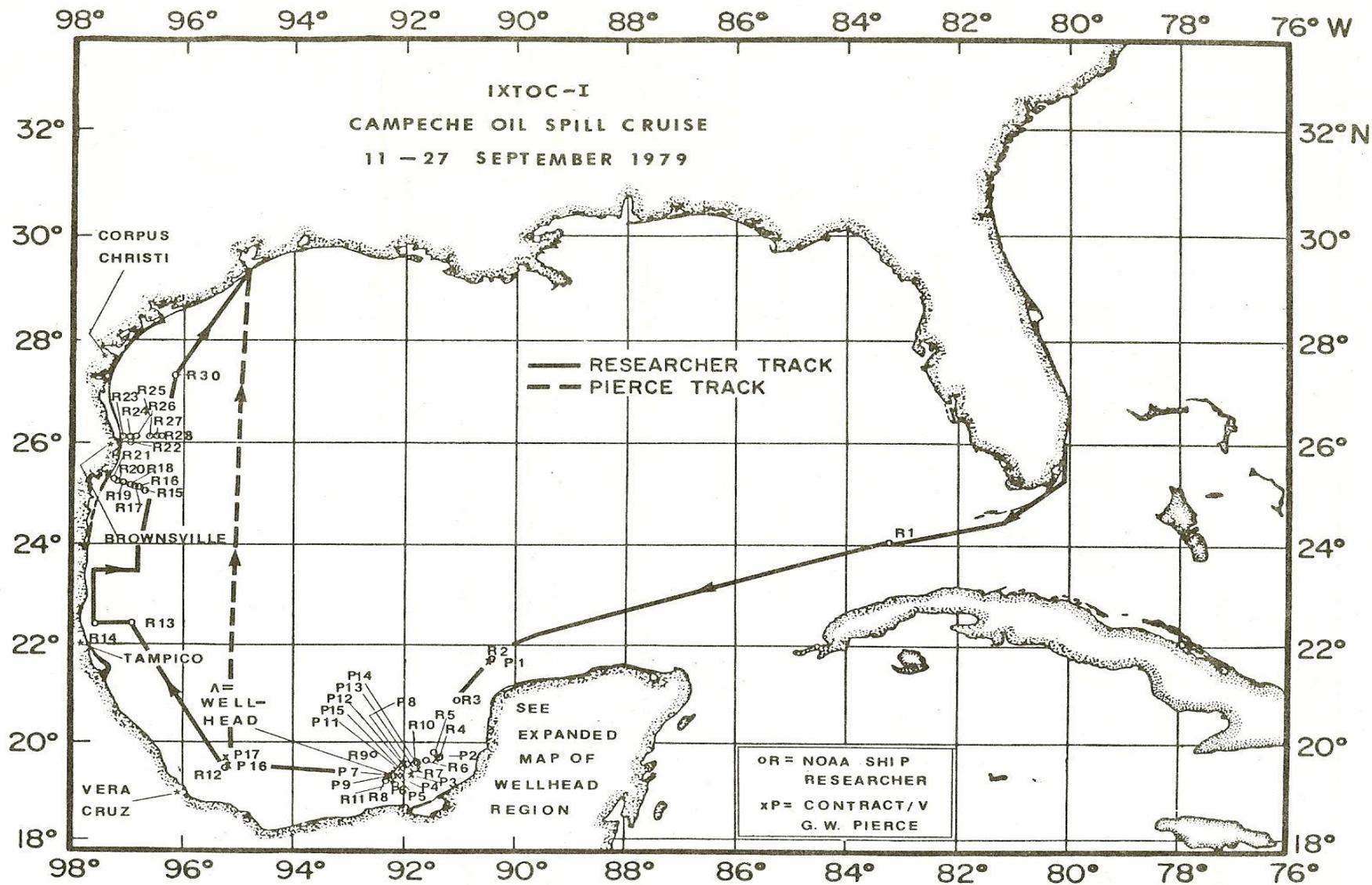


Figure 1. IXTOC-I Campeche oil spill cruise, 11-27 September 1979.

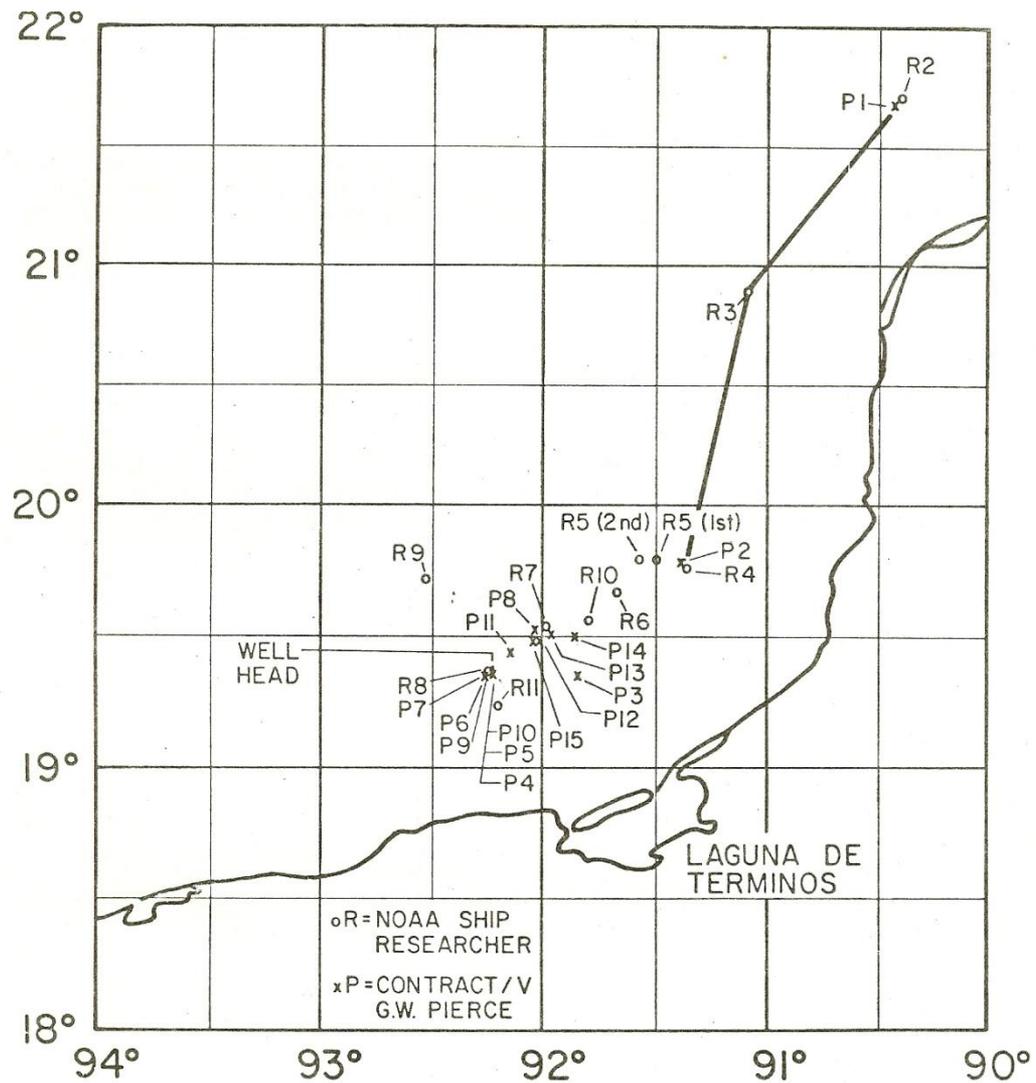


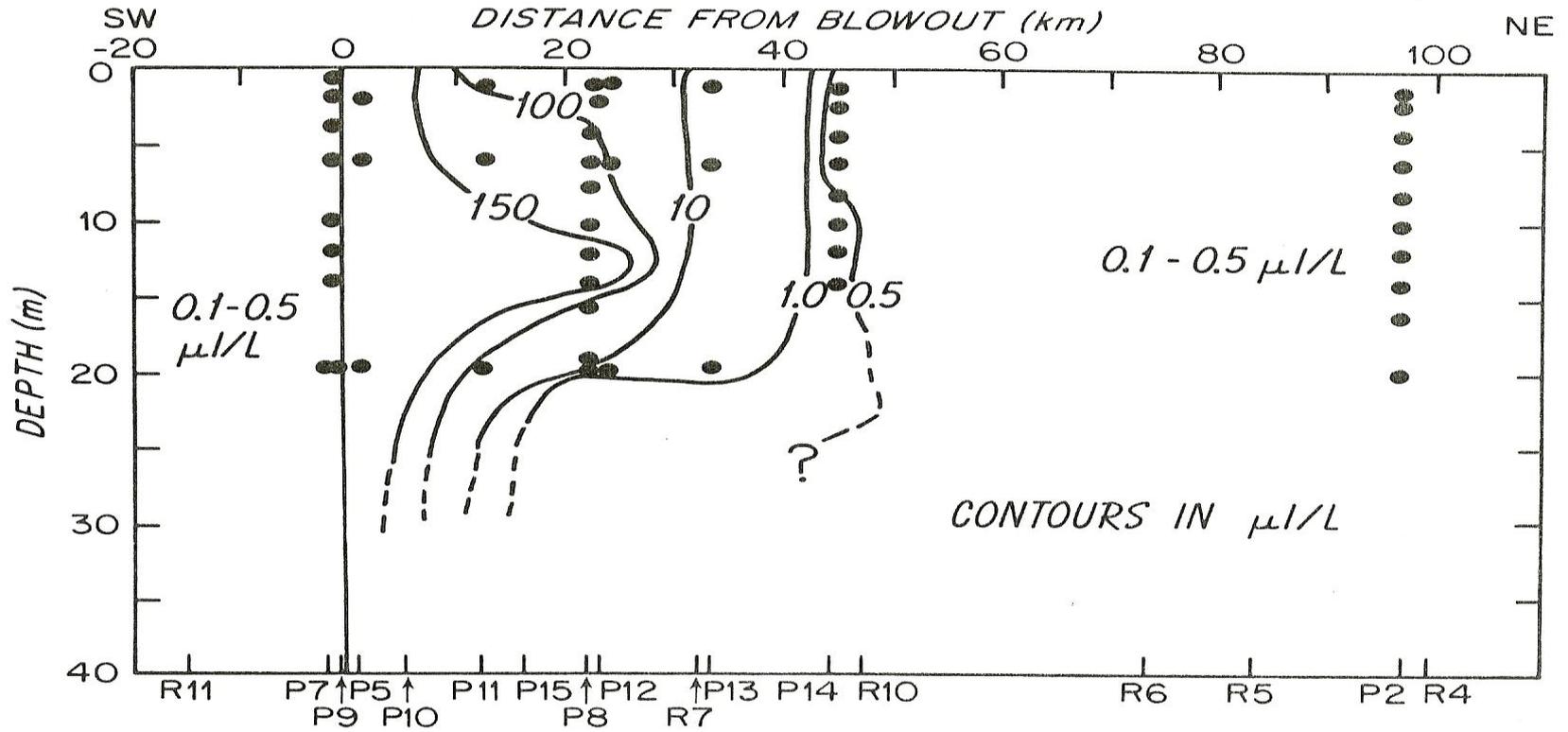
Figure 2. IXTOC-I Campeche oil spill cruise, 11-27 September 1979, expanded wellhead region.





Brooks et al (1980) Texas A & M University

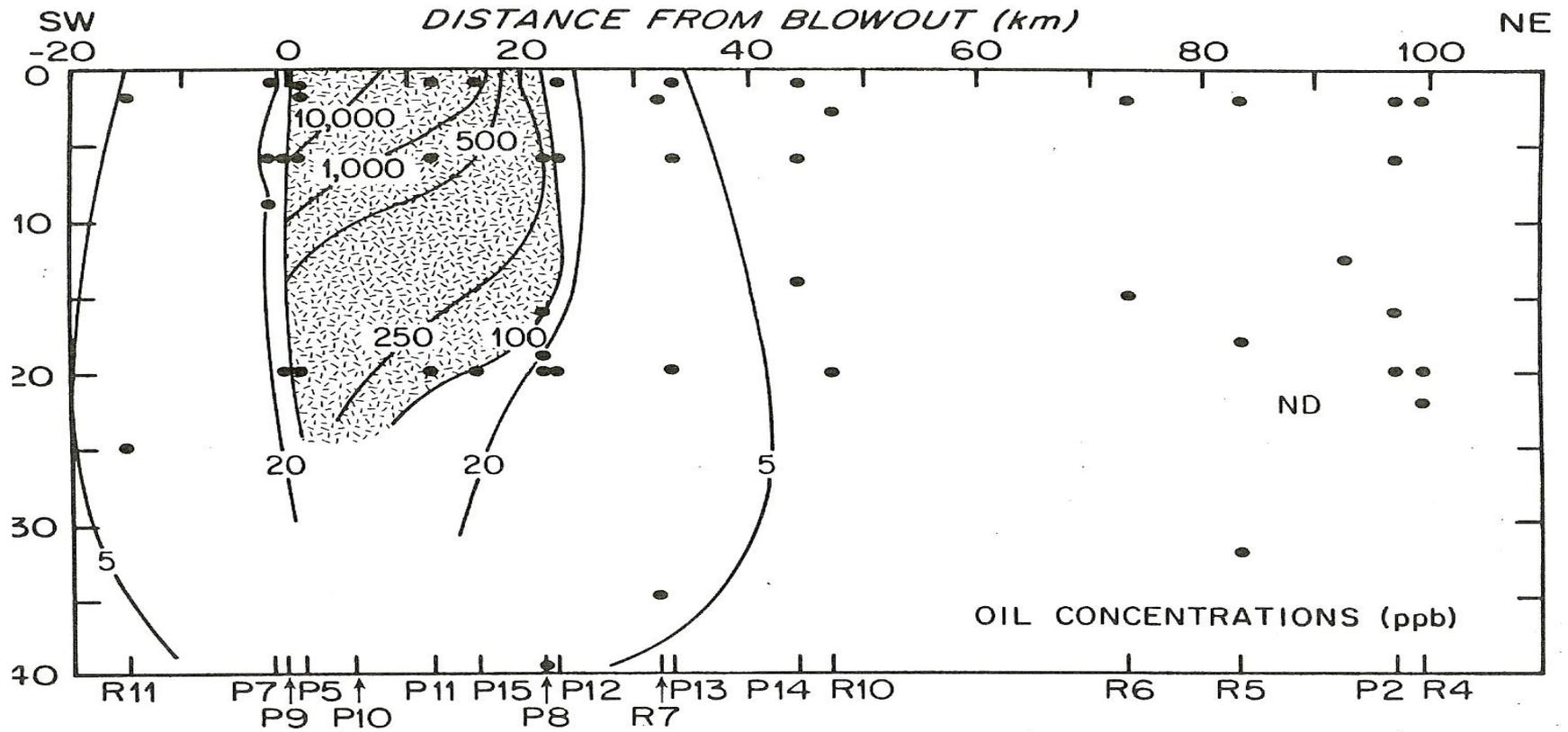
CONCENTRATIONS OF METHANE ALONG A TRANSECT
TO THE NORTHEAST OF THE IXTOC-1 BLOWOUT, SEPTEMBER 1979



Station Designations and Positions on Transect.

Fiest and Boehm (1980) and Boehm and Fiest(1982) Energy Resources Company, Inc.

CONCENTRATIONS OF OIL ALONG A TRANSECT ORIENTED
TO THE NORTHEAST OF THE IXTOC - I BLOWOUT, SEPTEMBER 1979



Station Designations and Positions on Transect.

RESEARCHER/PIERCE IXTOC I CRUISE ONE IMPORTANT CONCLUSION

There was an underwater horizontal “plume” moving with the current away from the vertical plume and under the surface slick.

2. Knowledge of Oil Pollution in the Marine Environment

- The National Academies of Science 2003 report “Oil in the Sea III” is an excellent compilation of knowledge about oil pollution in the marine environment.

2. Knowledge of Oil Pollution in the Marine Environment (Cont).

- Farrington and McDowell (2004) in an article written in *Oceanus* magazine: “*Mixing Oil and Water*”, summarizing the National Academy of Sciences 2003 Report for the layperson wrote:

“We also need to expand research on oil pollution in deep waters. Most concerns and research have traditionally focused on coastal waters. Yet new concerns arise as oil production moves offshore. We can only speculate on the impact of oil exploration and production in deeper waters until we have more detailed knowledge of the biological organisms in these habitats and the biogeochemical processes that govern their lives. “

Conclusions

(Acknowledging that hindsight is often 20/20 or better)

- Scientific research often gets tangled with debates about: “Who is to blame?” Who will get credit for being the lead federal agency? The legal requirements of NRDA.
- Delays and confusion within our government about allocations and release of research funding provided by BP for consortia of academic institutions resulted in missed opportunities to gain vital new knowledge about fates and effects of DWH MC252 Oil Spill

Conclusions

(Acknowledging that hindsight is often 20/20 or better)

- Too little attention had been given to the real potential for a deep water oil well blowout.
- While I recognize that this was an accident, statements that this was an accident of an unexpected nature are not in accord with the fact that the National Academy Sciences report “Oil in the Sea III” discussed a scenario very similar to the DWH MC252 oil spill – a deep water oil well blow out at the bottom of the ocean in 1500 meters water depth. (pages 106-108 of that report).

Overarching Recommendation 1 (Out of sight, Out mind should not prevail when visible oil slicks disappear.)

The nation should not let the lessons from the DWH MC252 fade from memory as has often happened to oil spills in the past.

Eleven people perished.

The economic well being and quality of life for countless other people has been severely disrupted.

There have been adverse impacts on living natural resources.

Forgetting has too often been the reality in the past!

Overarching Recommendation 2. (Relative to BP Funds set aside for research.)

- The funds for research set aside by BP should be released as soon as practicable by the responsible government agencies, if this has not yet happened as of this date. (I understand that the funds may have been released within the past 24 to 72 hours).
- The award of funds should occur by way of an expedited peer review process.
- The move towards “centralized” control of all research on the DWH MC252 oil spill is troubling. This should be rethought. Coordination is fine. However, too often, centralized control has the unwanted effect of stifling creative scientific research. (If this is still happening, the process should be modified.)