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Oil has been pouring into the Gulf of Mexico since April 20 from a blown-out undersea well, the result of an explosion and fire on an oil rig. The spill is located in a relatively stagnant area of the Gulf, and the oil so far has remained relatively confined near the Louisiana and Alabama coastlines, although there have been reports of small amounts in the Loop Current.

The model simulations show that a liquid released in the surface ocean at the spill site is likely to slowly spread as it is mixed by the ocean currents until it is entrained in the Loop Current. At that point, speeds pick up to about 40 miles per day, and when the liquid enters the Atlantic's Gulf Stream it can travel at speeds up to about 100 miles per day, or 3,000 miles per month.

The six model simulations released today all have different Loop Current characteristics, and all provide slightly different scenarios of how the oil might be dispersed. The simulations all bring the oil to south Florida and then up the east Coast. However, the timing of the oil's movement differs significantly depending