

Lake Michigan BP oil spill hits close to home

By Jim Servi

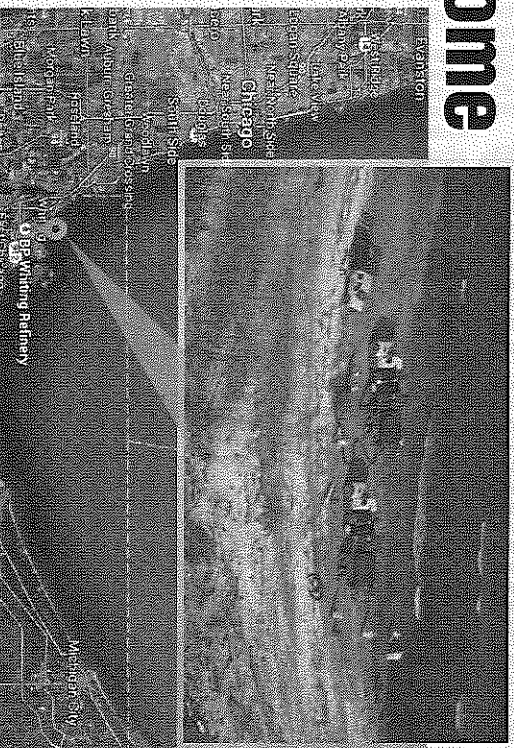
Contributing Writer

Whiting, Ind. — Although it pales in comparison to the 2010 BP oil spill that allowed 210 million gallons to leak into the Gulf Coast, a March 24 BP oil spill hits a little closer to home.

As much as 1,638 gallons of oil leaked into Lake Michigan after a malfunction at the Whiting, Ind., refinery located near the Illinois and Indiana border. That's more than double the original estimate that BP reported. According to federal records, the Whiting refinery already was one of the largest sources of industrial pollution in Lake Michigan before this spill.

The Environmental Protection Agency, Coast Guard and Indiana Department of Environmental Management arrived on the scene within hours of being notified by BP. Mike Beslow, EPA emergency response coordinator, said, "The spill likely poses no long-term risks to Lake Michigan, and there is no known impact to wildlife or human health at this time."

The EPA is conducting an investigation into possible violations of the federal Clean Water Act. Some



A shoreline cleanup team, led by the EPA, with vacuum trucks and more than 2,000 feet of absorbent booms, quickly contained the spill despite heavy winds. The Coast Guard flew over the area and reported no further oil slicks.

Photo by U.S. Coast Guard

politicians, including Illinois senators Mark Kirk and Dick Durbin, are a little more concerned and have requested a meeting with the CEO of BP America, saying that "we plan to hold BP accountable for this spill" and "it is in all of our best interest to ensure that this greater processing capacity will do no harm to Lake Michigan."

BP completed major renovations at a cost of \$4 billion last July in order to process more Canadian

oil. The renovations made it one of the seven largest refineries in the nation. The capacity to refine oil sands nearly doubled, and the site can now produce more than 405,000 barrels per day. One of those modifications was to a new distillation unit that appears to be the site of the leak. Scott Dean, a BP spokesman, says the company "has resumed normal operations," but has released few other statements related to the oil spill.