



URI research vessel Endeavor headed to Gulf of Mexico to aid oil spill relief efforts

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KINGSTON, R.I. – June 4, 2010 – As the effort to fight the oil spill disaster in the Gulf of Mexico continues, the University of Rhode Island research vessel *Endeavor* will depart Tuesday morning, June 8, for the site of what many experts are calling the worst environmental disaster in U.S. history.



According to Sam DeBow, URI's marine superintendent in charge of operations of the Endeavor, the vessel will leave the Narragansett Bay Campus Tuesday morning with a team of scientists from the [Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution](#) (WHOI).

The purpose of the mission – which is being funded by the [National Science Foundation](#) – is to track, characterize and sample subsurface oil in the Gulf.

Researchers will mount a mass spectrometer to the autonomous underwater vehicle *Sentry* to “essentially sniff for oil and then map plumes, not only for discrete sampling, but also to get an understanding of the 3D shape of the plumes,” according to one of the WHOI principal investigators. This will help researchers better understand the subsurface oil behavior and composition in the area.

While no researchers from URI are making the trip, there will be 13 people from the University on board, including 12 crew members and one marine technician, according to DeBow.

Since the April 20 explosion aboard the British Petroleum oil rig Deepwater Horizon, tens of thousands of gallons of oil have been spilling into the waters off the Louisiana coast daily. Estimates of the total oil spilled have ranged from 21 million to 46 million gallons since the explosion, which killed 11 workers.

The Endeavor is scheduled to remain in the Gulf until June 30.