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Scientists tracking Hudson River's spring flow

Posted by the Asbury Park Press on 05/4/06

BY KIRK MOORE
TOMS RIVER BUREAU

The Hudson River's springtime flow -- carrying nutrition for sea life, as well as toxic contaminants that have persisted in river mud since the Industrial Revolution -- is being tracked offshore this week by scientists from Rutgers University and other institutions.

After the ship's propeller had stopped stirring the sea into the color of blood, a probe was lowered over the side and researchers went to work, charting the great ghostly traces of the river off the New Jersey beach.

"We're looking at the dynamics of the plume. Surface water is going to be river water, and the water below is ocean water," explained Jessica Connolly, a graduate student from California Polytechnic State University, as she examined a computer display of the water below the research vessel Oceanus.

The 179-foot ship and the R/V Hatteras, both from Woods Hole Oceanographic Institute in Massachusetts, crisscrossed waters off Long Branch and Asbury Park today after marking the river flow with rhomadine dye.

The nontoxic, fluorescent colorant soon fades from the naked eye, but "the detectors are so sensitive to the dye they can track it for days," said Oscar Schofield, a Rutgers University oceanography professor.

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