

Press Communiqué

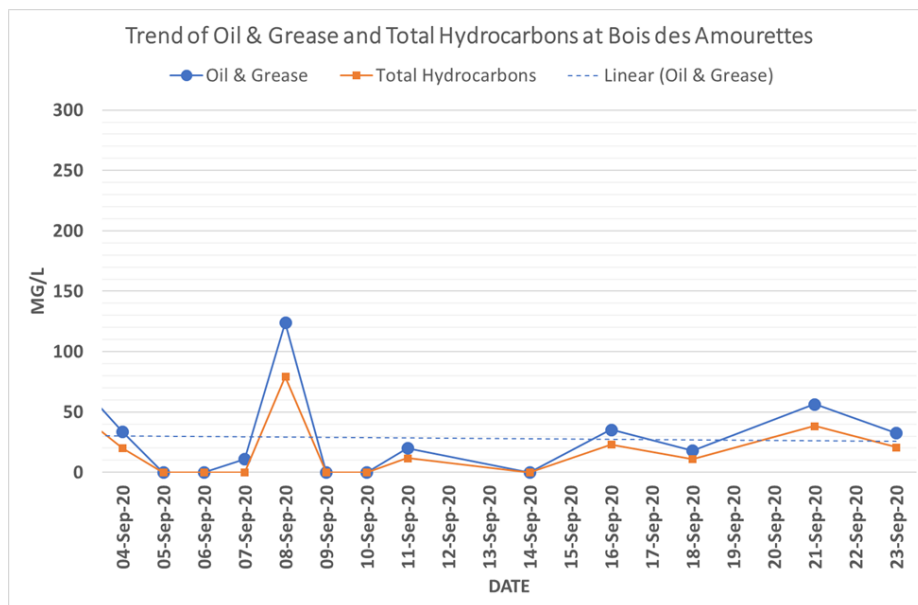
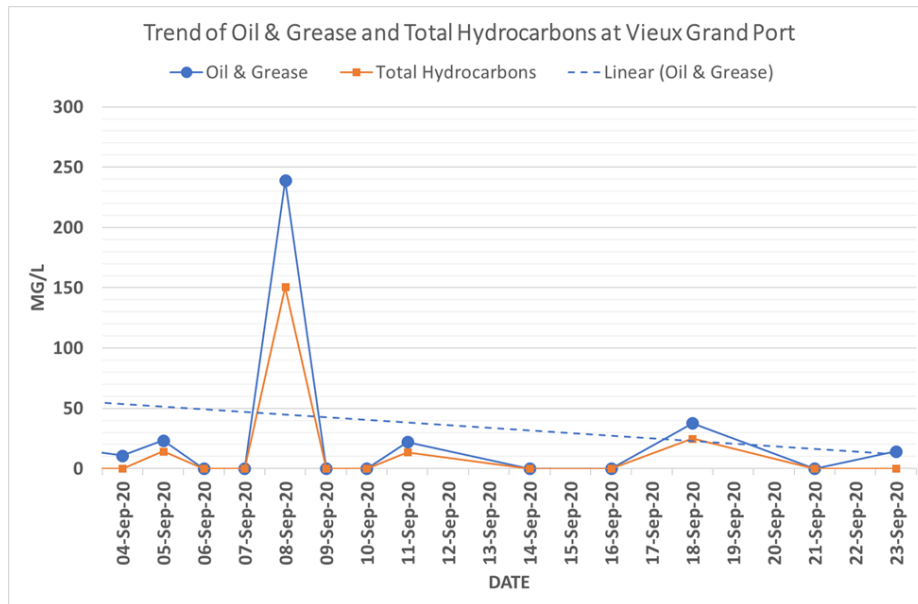
Water and Air Quality Monitoring – Post grounding of the MV Wakashio

The Ministry of Environment, Solid Waste Management and Climate Change wishes to draw the attention of the public that certain international presses have reported that no monitoring is being effected by the authorities, following the grounding of the MV Wakashio and in the aftermath of the oil spill. The Ministry reassures the public that, regular monitoring for water and air quality has been and is still being carried out by this Ministry and other governmental institutions at affected and other sites. Additionally, the oil samples collected from the ship and from the marine environment have been characterised by SGS Mauritius Ltd as well as by the ‘Centre de Documentation, de Recherche et d’Expérimentations sur les Pollutions Accidentelles des Eaux’ (Cedre), France and the Australian Maritime Safety Authority (AMSA), Australia.

The Ministry wishes to highlight the following:

Water Quality Monitoring

- MV Wakashio ran aground on Saturday 25 July 2020. The Ministry of Environment, Solid Waste Management and Climate Change started monitoring 4 sites namely Blue Bay, Pointe D’Esny, Pointe Jerome and Mahebourg Waterfront for various parameters including Oil and Grease and Total Hydrocarbons as from 26 July 2020. The daily seawater quality at the above-mentioned sites till 05 August 2020 was compliant to the *Guidelines for Coastal Water Quality (Class A1 for Conservation) of the Environment Protection Act*.
- The presence of Oil and Grease and Total Hydrocarbons was first detected on 6 August 2020 at Mahebourg and Pointe Jerome, the date on which oil spill from MV Wakashio was reported.
- As from 14 August 2020, a joint monitoring programme was set up among National Environmental Laboratory (NEL), Albion Fisheries Research Centre (AFRC) and Mauritius Oceanography Institute (MOI) for the affected sites and vicinity. The number of coastal sites monitored was increased to 27 sites, namely Trou d’Eau Douce, Grand River South East, Quatre Soeurs, Deux Freres, Petit Sable, Grand Sable, Anse Jonchee, Bamboo Virieux, Pointe du Diable, Pointe aux Feuilles, Pointe d’Esny RAMSAR site, Pointe Canons, Riviere des Creoles (2 sites), Vieux Grand Port (3 sites), Bois des Amourettes (2 sites), La case du Pécheur (Barachois), La Cambuse, Blue Bay (2 sites), Pointe d’Esny, Pointe Jerome, Mahebourg and Falaise Rouge.
- Besides Oil and Grease and Total Hydrocarbons, various parameters were monitored such as Temperature, pH, Dissolved Oxygen, salinity, nitrates and phosphates. No algal proliferation was observed at the affected sites.
- On the 23 September 2020, out of the 27 sites, 7 sites did not comply with the Guidelines for Coastal Water Quality for the parameters Oil and Grease (La Cambuse, Blue Bay, Pointe D’Esny, Pointe Jerome, Mahebourg, Vieux Grand Port and Bois des Amourettes).



- The latest results of water quality monitoring carried out by NEL, MOI and AFRC showed that the levels of Oil and Grease and Total Hydrocarbons at two most impacted sites namely, Vieux Grand Port and Bois des Amourettes have decreased significantly.
- Sampling is being maintained at a frequency of three times per week.
- Public is also informed that the Albion Fisheries Research Centre of the Ministry of Blue Economy, Marine Resources, Fisheries and Shipping has been undertaking a long term monitoring of coastal water quality around the island since 1995, whereby parameters such as Dissolved Oxygen, Chemical Oxygen Demand, Salinity, pH, Temperature, Nitrates and Phosphates are monitored.

Air Quality Monitoring

- Air quality surveillance was carried out daily as from 8 August 2020 at 33 sites including 17 schools, 12 residential areas in the coastal region from Mahebourg to Poste de Flacq and four unaffected sites at Le Bouchon, Le Souffleur, Gris-Gris and Poste La Fayette.
- These sites were assessed for presence of contaminants such as Volatile Organic Compounds (VOCs) and odour nuisance. The level of VOCs was compliant with Lowest-Observed-Adverse-Effect Level (LOAEL) of United States-Environment Protection Act at all sites. Mild petroleum odour was noted at Mahebourg Water Front, Vieux Grand Port and Bois des Amourettes on several occasions. The air quality surveillance is being maintained.

Characterisation of oil collected from MV Wakashio

- Samples of oil were collected from MV Wakashio by its crew in accordance with the MARPOL convention and handed over to the Mauritian authorities prior to the spill. During the oil spill, the National Environmental Laboratory also collected several samples of oil from the impacted sites. Part of the samples were handed over to the SGS Mauritius Ltd, Cedre and AMSA for full characterisation or fingerprinting.
- SGS Mauritius Ltd has carried out a partial characterisation of the sample of collected oil, whereas Cedre has carried out a complete assessment and submitted a full report. Additionally, AMSA has also submitted a preliminary report and the full report is still awaited. The Polycyclic Aromatic Hydrocarbons (PAHs) profiles have been established. As such, long term monitoring of the PAHs is envisaged under the Integrated Environmental Monitoring Programme.

Ministry of Environment, Solid Waste Management and Climate Change
30 September 2020