

## CONTACT PROCEDURE

1. Use the DECISION TREE (overleaf) to identify the type of slick.
2. If you decide that the slick may be from an OIL SPILL, then record the details listed below before contact the authorities listed.

### Your name and contact details

Location of slick  
(latitude & longitude, if possible)

Time and date slick seen

Approximate area covered by slick

Appearance of slick  
(colour, consistency, smell, etc)

Wind speed and direction

Source of slick (if known)

Has a sample been taken ? YES/NO

Identification of any vessels  
in the area

Any other relevant information.

3. Contact one the agencies listed below.  
Relay the information you have collected.

## PHONE

Maritime Rescue Coordination Centre  
(AUSSAR) 1800 641 792 24 hrs

EPA Hotline 1300 130 372

Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority  
(07) 3830 4919 24 hrs

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Cover photograph taken by Len Zell.  
An algal bloom from 1000 feet, half-way between  
the Whitsundays and Hook Reef. August 1979

## IDENTIFYING SLICKS FROM THE AIR



### CORAL SPAWN

- Red/orange colour
- Only occurs from October to December



### ALGAL BLOOM

- Rusty-brown colour
- Green and purple streaks
- All year, but mainly from August to December



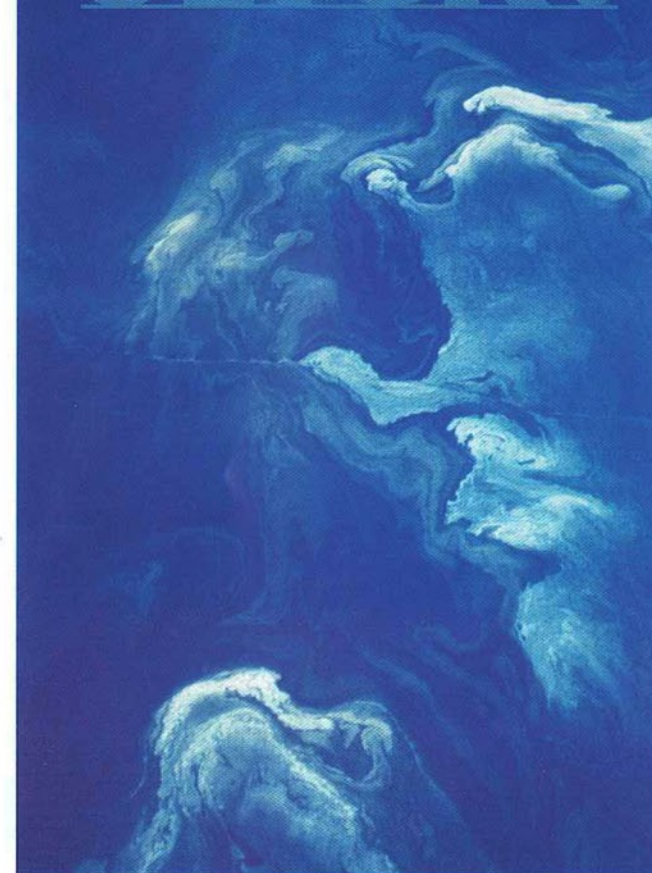
### OIL SPILL

- Silvery sheen
- Rainbow colours
- Dark streaks or patches



Australian Government  
Great Barrier Reef  
Marine Park Authority

# What's that SLICK?



our great barrier reef  
let's keep it great





## WE NEED YOUR HELP !!

Government agencies, including the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority (GBRMPA), respond to many reports of slicks caused by oil spills, coral spawn and algae. **Oil slicks are the only ones that pose a threat to the Reef.** This pamphlet will assist you to identify slicks, and sets out the contact procedure for reporting oil spills to the authorities. **Your help in this task is particularly important, given the value of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park.**

### ALGAL BLOOMS

(sea sawdust, whale sperm, whale food, sea scum)

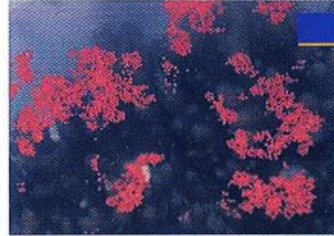
When good growth conditions exist, the alga *Trichodesmium* (also named *Oscillatoria*) multiplies rapidly. This alga consists of little brown bundles of threads. These bundles are just visible to the naked eye, appearing like tiny flecks of sawdust floating on and

near the surface. Algal blooms can occur throughout the year, but are most common between August and December, when they can form very large slicks. Large, old and beached slicks may have a putrid, almost 'fishy' smell. In most cases blooms are harmless, but if they deplete the oxygen content of the water, they can cause death to marine animals.

**To identify algal blooms, look for:**

- bundles of fine threads
- rusty-brown colour, with grey, green or purple streaks
- common August to December, but may occur at other times
- 'fishy' smell
- algae will wash off your hands in water

Algal blooms are a natural event on the Great Barrier Reef. There is no need for you to contact the authorities.



### CORAL SPAWN

On just a few nights each year most of the corals on the Great Barrier Reef reproduce simultaneously. This spectacular event takes place between late October and early December. Shortly after dusk the coral polyps release their egg and sperm bundles, which

float to the surface, often forming large slicks. These slicks appear red or pink, although some streaks can be blue, purple or green. Slicks persist for no more than one or two days, and break down quickly when winds are over 15 knots. Dead or dying eggs appear white and clumped together, forming a thick, dirty, irregular scum.

**To identify coral spawn slicks, look for:**

- pink, orange or red colour
- particles are of a uniform size
- occur between October and December only
- coral spawn will wash off your hands in water

Mass coral spawning is a natural annual event on the Great Barrier Reef. There is no need for you to contact the authorities.



### OIL SPILLS

There are many types of oil carried through the Great Barrier Reef. These include fuels (petrol, diesel, kerosene, bunker oil), heavier lubricants and crude oil. Oil will float and will not mix readily with water. When small amounts are spilled, the water surface takes on a smooth and

silvery sheen, often refracting rainbow-like patterns. Larger spills form thick coatings on the water, and usually appear grey, brown or black in colour. Fresh oil spills can often be recognised by their characteristic 'oily' smell. Aged oil tends to be a 'tarry' consistency and forms irregular clods.

**To identify oil spills, look for:**

- silvery sheen
- rainbow colours
- grey, black or brown streaks and patches, often on the leading edge of slick
- 'oily' smell
- oil will not wash off your hands in water

Please report oil spills to the relevant authorities using the contact procedure overleaf.

## DECISION TREE

Read the information on the previous pages, then identify the type of slick by working through the decision tree shown here:

### START

Collect a small amount of slick and seawater in a glass jar.

Shake gently for a few seconds and allow to stand.

Hold up to the light and examine closely.

Are there many tiny (1 mm) bundles of fine, short threads?

**YES**

ALGAL BLOOM

**NO**

Is it a fine suspension of uniform-sized (0.2 - 0.8mm), round, coloured particles?

**YES**

HEALTHY CORAL SPAWN

**NO**

Are there fine, white, irregular particles in an otherwise discoloured, greasy, thick scum?

**YES**

DEAD/DYING CORAL SPAWN

### CONFIRM

Material floats slowly to the surface in irregular-sized, round droplets. These droplets combine to form an even surface layer. If material is from an old spill, it may have a putrid smell, a 'tarry' look, and may form irregular clods.

**Turn over to the CONTACT PROCEDURE, and report as a POTENTIAL OIL SPILL.**