

NUMERICAL SIMULATION OF OIL SLICKS TRAJECTORIES: A TOOL FOR RISK ASSESMENT IN PIPELINE BREAKDOWN

Emilio Ernesto Paladino

emilio@sinmec.ufsc.br

Clovis Raimundo Maliska

maliska@sinmec.ufsc.br

Computational Fluid Dynamics Laboratory - SINMEC -
Federal University of Santa Catarina
88040-900 – Florianopolis – SC – BRAZIL
Phone: +55 – 48 – 331-9562
FAX: +55 – 48 – 234-1519

ABSTRACT

The aim of this paper is to present a mathematical model and its numerical treatment to forecast oil spills trajectories in the sea. The knowledge of the trajectory followed by an oil slick spilled on the sea is of fundamental importance in the estimation of potential risks for pipeline and tankers route selection, and in combating the pollution using floating barriers, detergents, etc. In order to estimate these slicks trajectories a new model, based on the mass and momentum conservation equations is presented. The model considers the spreading in the regimes when the inertial and viscous forces counterbalance gravity and takes into account the effects of winds and water currents. The mass loss caused by oil evaporation is also considered. The numerical model is developed in generalized coordinates, making the model easily applicable to complex coastal geographies.

NOMENCLATURE

h	Slick Thickness
\mathbf{u}	Oil Velocity Vector
\mathbf{V}	Wind and Currents Velocity Vectors
\tilde{U}, \tilde{V}	Contravariant Components of the velocity
α, β, γ	Contravariant tensor components
Δ	Oil-Water density relation
μ	Oil dynamic Viscosity
ρ	Oil density
τ	Shear at top and bottom of the oil slick
ξ, η	Transformed plane Coordinates
J	Jacobian of the Transformation
g	Gravity Acceleration

INTRODUCTION

The environment is today one of the main preoccupations of potential pollutant industries and government authorities. This is particularly true in the petroleum branch, due to its high environmental risk in cases of large oil spills, which are one of the worst environmental accidents.

These spills are much more damaging when they occur near shorelines because, besides the environmental impacts, the economical damages ranges from fishing to tourism. The recent oil spill in the Guanabara Bay, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, caused by a pipeline rupture is a strong example of this broad impact. The detailed knowledge of the spilled oil position and the area covered by the slick is of fundamental importance to take appropriate actions against pollution, like use of floating barriers, detergents, dispersants, etc. It is also important the estimation of potential risks in selecting pipeline routes, locating shoreline tanks and petrochemical industries. Therefore, a model to forecast the time-space evolution of the oil slick should make part of any environmental program that has the purpose of oil pollution combat.

The first studies attempting to model the movement of oil slicks (Fay (1969,1971), Fanelop and Waldmann (1971), Hout (1972), Buckmaster (1973), etc.) consider the spreading as one-dimensional or axi-symmetric. These models consider the spreading of the oil in calm waters, where a slick, initially circular, will remains circular, just increasing its diameter. Considering the forces that governs the spreading process, Fay (1969), characterized the spreading by dividing it in three phases: Initially, when the thickness of the slick is big and so are the inertial forces, the gravity acts as the active force counterbalanced by inertial forces; this is called the gravity-

inertial spreading regime. When the mean thickness of the slick begins to decrease, and the viscous forces exerted by the water boundary layer will eventually outweigh the inertia as the retarding force, it constitutes the gravity-viscous spreading. In the final instances, the slick will be so thin that the imbalances of surface tensions between air-water, air-oil and water-oil will substitute the gravity as active force, maintaining the tension exerted by the water as retarding force. This last regime is called viscous-surface tension spreading. For big spills ($>10^4$ m³), these regimes last for 1 to 4 hours, four to ten days and several months, respectively.

Further models has tried to simulate more realistically the trajectories by including other process like dispersion caused by winds and water currents, and those process which represents mass exchanges between different environmental compartments (called fate processes) like evaporation, dissolution, emulsification, etc.

Two approaches for computing oil spills trajectories are commonly encountered in the literature; Lagrangian models and Eulerian models. The Lagrangian models (Shen e Yapa (1988)) consist basically in representing the oil slick by an ensemble of a large number of small parcels, which are advected by a velocity, which results from a combination of the action of winds and currents. Then, the slick is divided into pie shaped segments or strips, depending if the form of the slick is nearly circular or elongated. Fay (1969) spreading formulas are then applied to each segment. For the Eulerian approach, two model are usually encountered, those based in the mass and momentum equations applied to the oil slick (Hess and Kerr (1979), Benqué *et. alii.* (1982)), and those based on a convection-diffusion equation (Venkatesh (1988) among others), in which the diffusive part of the equation represents de spreading of oil by itself and the convective terms represents the advection of oil by currents and winds. The model presented in this paper belongs to the second category of Eulerian models and it is based on the integration of mass and momentum equation over the thickness of the oil slick.

MATHEMATICAL MODEL

This model is based on the integration of the mass and momentum equations along the thickness of the slick. Therefore, it takes into account the spreading of oil by itself and the transport caused by winds and water currents. As the surface tension is neglected and, therefore, only the first and second spreading regimes, i.e. gravity-inertial and gravity-viscous spreading are considered, the model is applicable up to about ten days after the spill, depending on its magnitude. The evaporation is considered through a logarithmic decay model presented by Stiver and Mackay (1984).

Following, it will be shown how the mathematical model for the motion of oil is obtained.

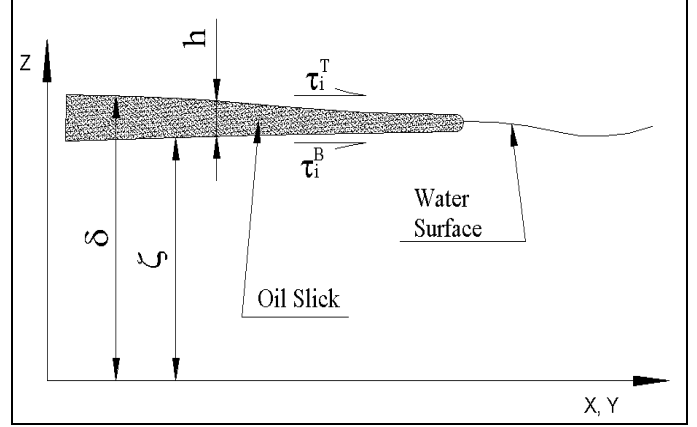


Figure 1. Variables considered in the vertical integration of governing equations.

Figure 1 shows schematically an oil slick being transported by the tensions exerted by water currents and winds. The oil flow is governed by mass and momentum equations for incompressible flows. These equations are:

$$\frac{\partial \mathbf{u}_i}{\partial x_i} = 0 \quad (1)$$

$$\frac{\partial \mathbf{u}_i}{\partial t} + \frac{\partial(\rho \mathbf{u}_i \mathbf{u}_j)}{\partial x_j} = \frac{\partial(\tau_{ij})}{\partial x_j} - \frac{\partial p}{\partial x_i} \quad (2)$$

Following Hoult (1972), we can consider that the oil viscosity is much large than the water viscosity. Thus, the vertical velocity gradients within the oil are much less than these gradients in the water or in the wind. It is, therefore, a good approximation to consider that the flow parameters (velocity and pressure) do not vary across the thickness of the slick. Integrating the governing equations, Eqs. (1) and (2), across the slick thickness as shown in Fig. 1, considering hydrostatic pressure distribution within the oil, we obtain

$$\frac{\partial h}{\partial t} + \frac{\partial(\bar{\mathbf{u}}_i h)}{\partial x_i} = 0 \quad (3)$$

$$\frac{\partial(\rho \bar{\mathbf{u}}_i h)}{\partial t} + \frac{\partial(\rho \bar{\mathbf{u}}_i \bar{\mathbf{u}}_j h)}{\partial x_j} = \frac{\partial}{\partial x_j} \left(h \mu \frac{\partial \bar{\mathbf{u}}_i}{\partial x_j} \right) + \tau_i^T - \tau_i^B - \rho g h \Delta \frac{\partial h}{\partial x_i} \quad (4)$$

where the bar variables represent vertical integral averages, h is the oil slick thickness and Δ is a parameter which relates the oil and water densities $\Delta = (\rho_o - \rho_w) / \rho_w$. The terms τ represent the shear tensions on top and bottom of the slick exerted by winds and water currents, respectively. These tensions were calculated as,

$$\tau_i^T = C_f^{wind} \mathbf{V}_i^{wind} \quad (5)$$

$$\tau_i^B = C_f^{water} (\mathbf{u}_i^{oil} - \mathbf{V}_i^{water}) \quad (6)$$

NUMERICAL SOLUTION

Due the similarity of the governing equations with those used in Shallow Waters Flows, an adaptation of the semi-implicit method presented by Casulli and Cheng (1992) is used here for generalized coordinates, a finite volume procedure and collocated variables. This fact makes the model easily applicable to complex coastal geographies. Transforming Eqs. (3) and (4) to generalized coordinates following the procedure described in details in Maliska (1995), we obtain

$$\frac{\partial}{\partial t} \left(\frac{\rho h}{J} \right) + \frac{\partial(\rho h \tilde{U})}{\partial \xi} + \frac{\partial(\rho h \tilde{V})}{\partial \eta} = 0 \quad (7)$$

$$\begin{aligned} \frac{\partial}{\partial t} \left(\frac{\rho h u}{J} \right) + \frac{\partial(\rho h \tilde{U} u)}{\partial \xi} + \frac{\partial(\rho h \tilde{V} u)}{\partial \eta} = \\ \frac{\partial}{\partial \xi} \left(h \mu \omega \alpha \frac{\partial u}{\partial \xi} - h \mu \omega \beta \frac{\partial u}{\partial \eta} \right) + \frac{\partial}{\partial \eta} \left(h \mu \omega \gamma \frac{\partial u}{\partial \eta} - h \mu \omega \beta \frac{\partial u}{\partial \xi} \right) + \\ + \frac{\tau_x^T}{J} - \frac{\tau_x^B}{J} + \frac{\rho g h \Delta}{J} \left(\frac{\partial h}{\partial \xi} \frac{\partial \xi}{\partial x} + \frac{\partial h}{\partial \eta} \frac{\partial \eta}{\partial x} \right) \end{aligned} \quad (8)$$

$$\begin{aligned} \frac{\partial}{\partial t} \left(\frac{\rho h v}{J} \right) + \frac{\partial(\rho h \tilde{U} v)}{\partial \xi} + \frac{\partial(\rho h \tilde{V} v)}{\partial \eta} = \\ \frac{\partial}{\partial \xi} \left(h \mu \omega \alpha \frac{\partial v}{\partial \xi} - h \mu \omega \beta \frac{\partial v}{\partial \eta} \right) + \frac{\partial}{\partial \eta} \left(h \mu \omega \gamma \frac{\partial v}{\partial \eta} - h \mu \omega \beta \frac{\partial v}{\partial \xi} \right) + \\ + \frac{\tau_y^T}{J} - \frac{\tau_y^B}{J} + \frac{\rho g h \Delta}{J} \left(\frac{\partial h}{\partial \xi} \frac{\partial \xi}{\partial y} + \frac{\partial h}{\partial \eta} \frac{\partial \eta}{\partial y} \right) \end{aligned} \quad (9)$$

The variables ξ and η are the coordinates in the generalized coordinate system, α , β and γ are the components of the covariant metric tensor, J is the Jacobean of the transformation and \tilde{U} and \tilde{V} are the contravariant velocities defined as

$$\begin{aligned} \tilde{U} &= (y_\eta u - x_\eta v) \\ \tilde{V} &= (x_\xi v - y_\xi u) \end{aligned} \quad (10)$$

These equations were discretized using a finite volume approach, the time variation was considered explicitly in momentum equations and implicitly for the mass conservation equation used to calculate the oil thickness distribution. Fig. 2 shows a control volume in the computational domain used for the equations discretization.

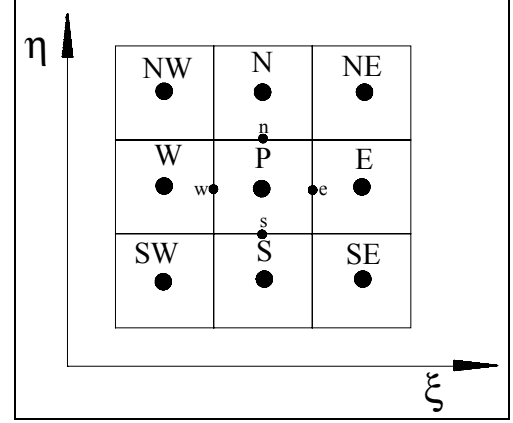


Figure 1: Control Volume on the Computational Domain

Using WUDS (Raithby & Torrance (1979)) as interpolation function and evaluating explicitly the time derivative, we have, taking the east face as example, the velocities at this face are given by

$$\begin{aligned} u_e = F[u]_e^0 - \frac{\rho \Delta t g \Delta h_e}{M_e} \left[\frac{\xi_x}{J} \right]_e \frac{(h_E - h_P)}{\Delta \xi} + \\ + \frac{\eta_y}{J} \left[\frac{(h_{NE} + h_N - h_{SE} - h_S)}{4 \Delta \eta} \right] \end{aligned} \quad (11)$$

$$\begin{aligned} v_e = F[v]_e^0 - \frac{\rho \Delta t g \Delta h_e}{M_e} \left[\frac{\xi_y}{J} \right]_e \frac{(h_E - h_P)}{\Delta \xi} + \\ + \frac{\eta_y}{J} \left[\frac{(h_{NE} + h_N - h_{SE} - h_S)}{4 \Delta \eta} \right] \end{aligned} \quad (12)$$

Where $F[\]$ is an explicit convective-diffusive finite volume operator¹ and represents the explicit convection-diffusion balance of the variable for a control volume. It is expressed for a generic variable ϕ as,

$$F[\phi_P] = \frac{\Delta t}{M_P} \left[\phi_P^0 \left(\frac{M_P^0}{\Delta t} - A_P \right) + \sum A_{nb} \phi_{NB}^0 + \hat{S} \Delta V \right] \quad (13)$$

The mass balance in the volume P which is obtained by the discretization of Eq. (7), is given by,

$$\begin{aligned} h_P = h_P^0 - \rho J_P \frac{\Delta t}{\Delta \xi} \left[\left(h^0 \tilde{U} \right|_e - h^0 \tilde{U} \right|_w \right) + \\ - \frac{\Delta t}{\Delta \eta} \left[\left(h^0 \tilde{V} \right|_n - h^0 \tilde{V} \right|_s \right) \right] \end{aligned} \quad (14)$$

Substituting the Cartesian velocities into the expressions for the contravariant velocities at the east face of the control volume, we have

¹ Further details could be seen in Paladino (2000)

$$\tilde{U}_e = \tilde{U}_e^* - \frac{\rho \Delta t g J \Delta h_e}{M_e} \left[\begin{array}{c} \alpha_e \frac{(h_E - h_P)}{\Delta \xi} + \\ - \beta_e \frac{(h_N + h_{NE} - h_S - h_{SE})}{4 \Delta \eta} \end{array} \right] \quad (15)$$

In the same way, we can obtain the contravariant velocities at the other face of the control volume. Then, substituting these velocities into the mass equation, we obtain an equation for the oil thickness as¹:

$$A_P h_P = A_e h_E + A_w h_W + A_n h_N + A_s h_S + \\ + A_{ne} h_{NE} + A_{se} h_{SE} + A_{nw} h_{NW} + A_{sw} h_{SW} + B \quad (16)$$

This equation is solved using the Gauss-Seidel method. Note that for the momentum equations no linear system of equations has to be solved. The solution procedure for the coupled system is:

- Initialize all variables at $t=0$. The thickness of the oil for the whole domain is initialized with a small value (say 1×10^{-15}) to avoid division by zero. Define the region and the thickness of the initial oil slick, if an instantaneous spill is considered.
- Calculate the coefficient of the momentum equations. Determine the velocity field explicitly, i.e. no linear system has to be solved here.
- With the most recent velocities, calculate the coefficients of the momentum equation. Compute the convective-diffusive operator to enter the evaluation of the source term of the mass equation.
- Calculate the coefficients and source term of the mass equation and solve the oil thickness.
- Recalculate the oil thickness field taking into account the mass transfer processes like evaporation, sinking, etc.
- Advance a time step, update all fields and cycle back to step one.

Two type boundary conditions were used. Where the domain coincides with shorelines no mass flux was prescribed and at the open sea locally parabolic conditions were assumed. This allows the slick to leave the computational domain without affecting the thickness distribution of the slick inside the domain.

MODEL VALIDATING AND RESULTS

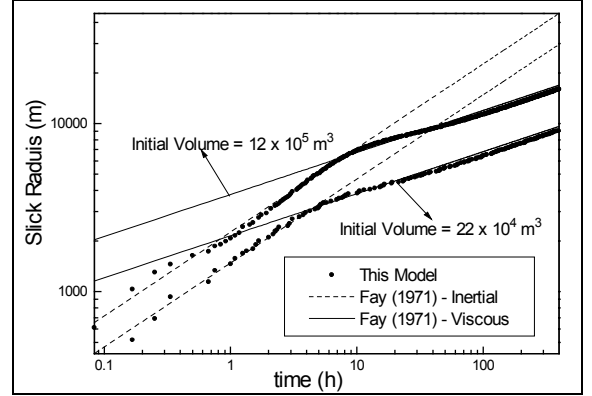
The first step in validating a numerical model is to compare with available analytical solutions. For this problem the semi-analytical solution of Fay (1971) are adequate. Physical validation requires field measurements. As was already mentioned, Fay's results describe the spreading of an instantaneous spill in calm waters. The results for the gravity-inertial and gravity-viscous spreading regimes are, respectively

$$R = K_{g-i} (\Delta g V t^2)^{1/4} \quad (17)$$

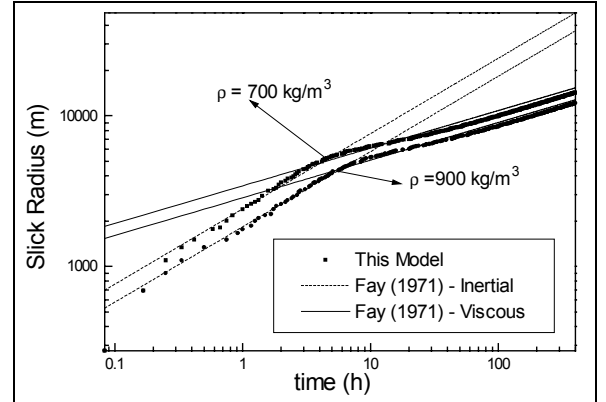
$$R = K_{g-v} \left(\frac{\Delta g V^2 t^{3/2}}{\nu^{1/2}} \right)^{1/6} \quad (18)$$

In the above equations R is the slick radius (in calm waters the spreading is axi-symmetric) as a function of elapsed time after the spill and K is an empirical proportionality factor depending on the spreading regime.

The following figures shows the results for the two spreading regimes considered by the model, for different oil densities and different initial spills.



(a)



(a)

Figure 2: Comparison of theoretical (Fay (1971)) and numerical solutions for axi-symmetric spreading in calm water, for (a) different volumes spilled and (b) different oil densities.

In the first problem, the water body was considered initially quiescent, with the water movement induced by the oil movement. The next figure shows the one-dimensional evolution of an oil slick, considering an instantaneous spill, in the case that the water is moving. In this case, it was considered a spatially and temporally constant current of magnitude of 0.5 m/s in the x -direction.

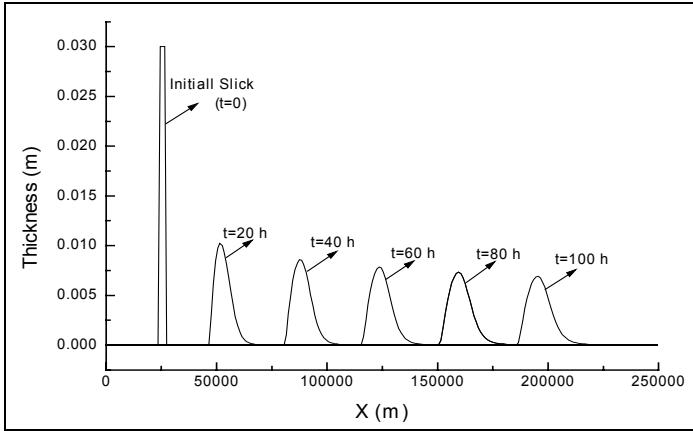


Figure 3: One-dimensional evolution of an slick subjected to a constant water current of 0.5 m/s. Note that the scales are distorted, the maximum thickness is 30 mm and the whole domain has 250 km.

As it was expected, after a period of time in which the slick accelerates, the mass center of the slick remains moving with the water velocity.

Finally, to show the model features, it was applied to simulate an eventual spill at the vicinity of the harbor at São Francisco do Sul, Santa Catarina, where there is an oil charge/discharge point at 9 km. off shore. Therefore, this is a local with high spill risk, which could be caused by pipeline rupture or failure in charge/discharge operations. Two pipeline break locals were simulated, one near-shore and one at approximately the middle of the oil duct.

The following figure, shows the domain definition at region of the port of São Francisco do Sul, the oil duct break locals and the definition of boundary conditions for the simulations. The domain has been extended into the sea just to cover the region of interest, reminding that, due to the locally parabolic condition far from the shoreline, if the slick passes through

these boundaries, this does not affect the slick position inside the domain.

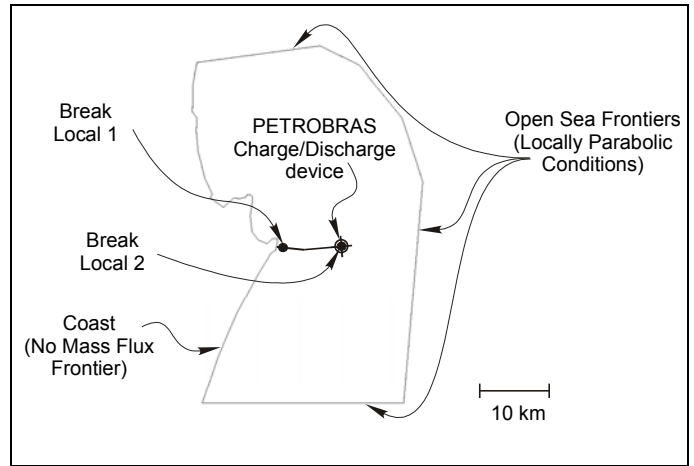
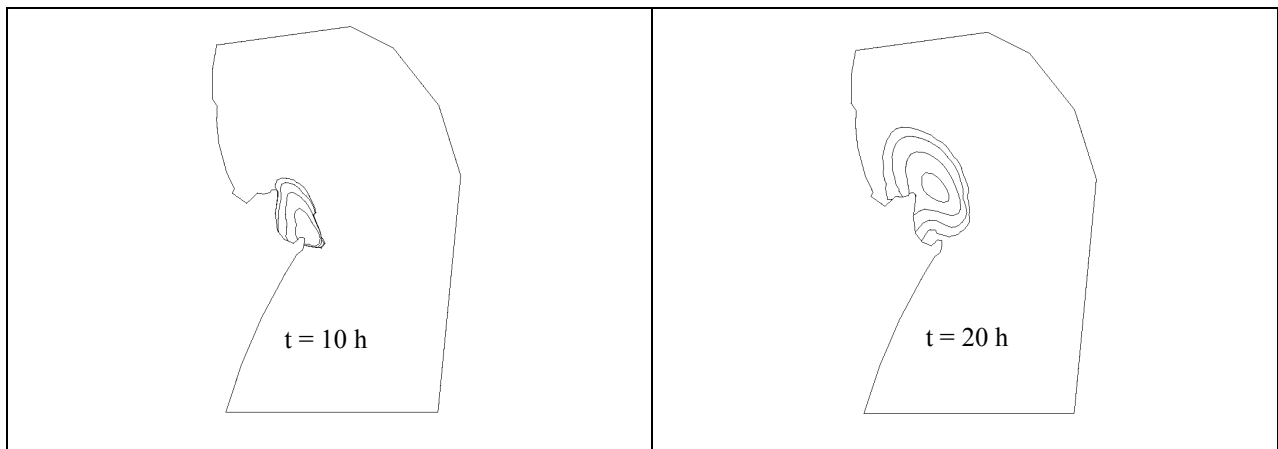


Figure 4: Domain definition for the simulations at the port of São Francisco do Sul.

As this simulation has the only purpose to show the generality of the model applied to a coastal spill, and not to simulate accurately a real problem, the current field was considered spatially constant and variable as a sine function of time, trying to represent approximately the tidal currents. Reports of experimental measurements at the region show predominantly south-southwest currents with residual currents of approximately 0.05 m/s and maximum tidal currents of 0.16 m/s. The wind was considered from south-southeast blowing at 30 km/h.

To simulate the pipeline break, it was considered a pollutant source with constant mass flux injecting 1000 kg/s during 10 h. Still, the model contemplates any variation of the mass source with time, in order to considerate any possible pressure variations in the pipeline.



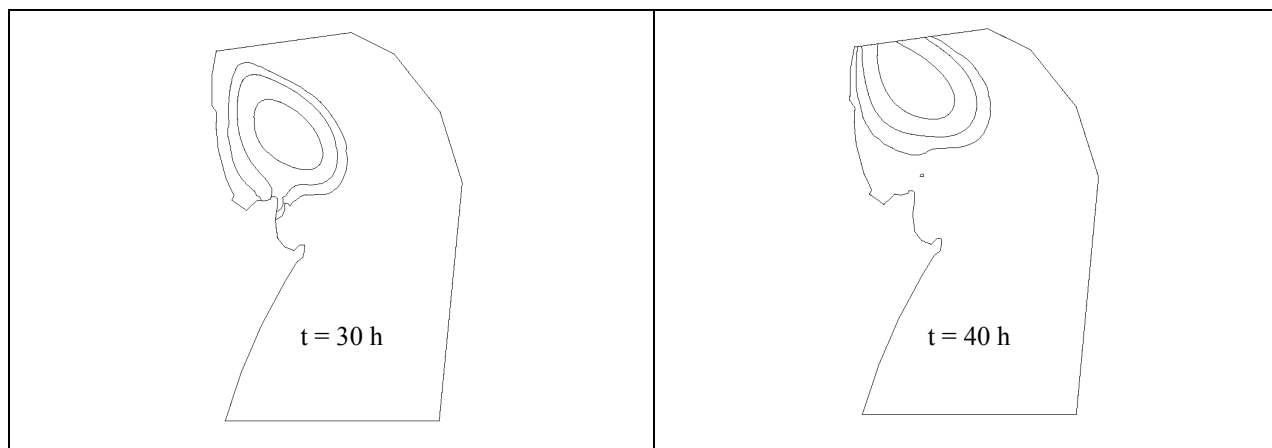


Figure 5: Temporal-spatial evolution of an oil slick spilled at the harbor of São Franico do Sul (Case 1)

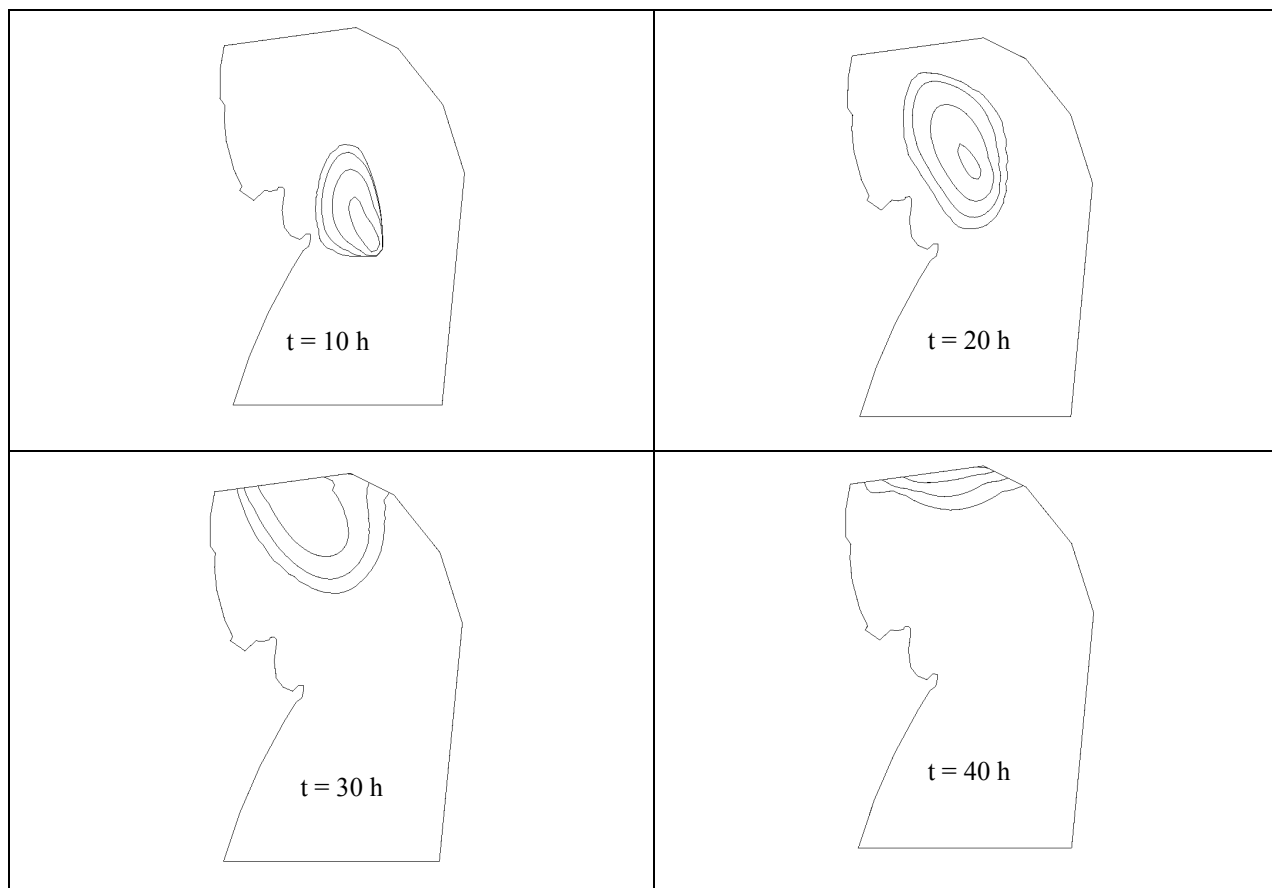


Figure 6: Temporal-spatial evolution of an oil slick spilled at the harbor of São Francisco do Sul (Case 2)

Due to the periodic behavior of the tidal currents, the movement of the slick is caused primarily by the action of the residual currents and the southeast winds. Since the residual currents are small in this case, the slick movement as a whole, i.e., the displacement of its mass center is principally caused by

the winds. The effects of boundary conditions can also be appreciated. At the shoreline, where no mass flux condition was imposed, the oil accumulates, increasing the slick thickness. In the case of an open sea boundaries, the slick leaves the domain without affecting its shape upstream

CONCLUSIONS

This paper presented a mathematical and numerical model to predict oil spill movements in the sea. Results for the spreading in the calm water were compared with semi-analytical solutions and the agreement was good. Although there are no benchmark solutions available for the case where the water moves, the results for a general problem, where the water moves periodically in time, follow the expected physical trends and the mass center of the slick moves with the water current velocity.

The model can be used to simulate *in situ* oil spills in order to assist pollution combat tasks, so it is an important tool in any oil spill contingency plan. It can be also used to estimate potential risks in decision support for tankers and oil ducts route selection, distilleries and ground tanks location, among other oil storing tasks.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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