Guimaras oil spill position paper

On August 11, 2006, MT Solar I sank in the waters off Guimaras Island and dumped into the sea an estimated half of the 2. 19 million liters of industrial fuel oil it was carrying. Since then, the Philippine Coast Guard has sprayed 115, 600 liters of chemical dispersants to contain the damage. But, the big question is this. What is the best way to clean up the oil slick? According to the PCG, the best way to do it is through the use of chemical dispersants. However, my opinion is different. I believe that the use of chemical dispersants post a great threat to our marine life and can cause more harm than good. The PCG acknowledges that the chemical dispersants could have adverse effects but said their use prevented far greater damage because they stopped the oil from reaching land and damaging more marine resources. By spraying a surface oil slick with dispersants and breaking this into small droplets, the slick was less likely to be pushed by the wind toward the shoreline. Dispersants also hasten the degradation of oil compared to when it was still a bigger slick. They said the dispersed oil could either be eaten by bacteria in the sea or degrade naturally. It is true that chemical dispersants can hasten degradation of oil. However, droplets of oil are more likely to sink in the water than a bigger mass of oil slick. These could affect marine life that would otherwise not have been hit by the oil had this remained on the surface. It is also true that small droplets of oil are less likely to reach the shoreline. However, dispersants used on the shoreline could harm corals and other marine life on land because the dispersed oil has a better chance of hitting them. Chemical dispersants causes the oil slick to sink in the water. This can create a far better damage than when it is on the surface. According to the Silliman University team, 47, 000 hectares of hard coral in the southern coastal areas of Guimaras were not affected by

the oil spill. This means that situation is far better off than when the oil is on the surface. A hundred hectares (or one square kilometer) of coral reef can generate between 15 and 20 tons of fish a year. The southern Guimaras reefs could yield five tons of fish per sq km. The continued use of chemical dispersants could cause the oil to sink into the coral reefs. Bunker oil is lowly processed oil and this can be eaten by naturally present bacteria after several years. It is better to leave it to nature. The effects of dispersants on living organisms are worse than the actual effects of the oil spill. What the government should do now is to help nature " clean-up" the oil slick by mechanical means. Meaning, it is better to use booms, skimmers and the scoopers. It is true that it is more tiring to do that. However, at least we are sure that were not posing greater threat to the marine life who in the first place we want to save. We have a lot of manpower. The PCG should take advantage of that. Their main reason in using chemical dispersants is that it saves time. But in my opinion, the short term solutions often lead to long term devastations. What is needed is a long-term rehabilitation and recovery plan. PCG and real experts should work on that.