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New Report Reveals Chronic Oil Pollution and Escalating Environmental Threats from Brazil's Offshore Oil and Gas Expansion Ahead of COP 30

179 Oil Slicks Detected as Production Surges 49% and Vessel Traffic Increases 81%

Just before COP 30 begins in Brazil next week, a new report was released by SkyTruth, a nonprofit conservation technology organization, that reveals the mounting environmental toll of Brazil's offshore oil and gas expansion.

The report, **Brazil Offshore Fossil Fuel Threats and Impacts**, documents 179 probable oil slicks covering Brazilian waters since 2017, alongside dramatic increases in production, vessel traffic, and methane emissions that threaten the country's marine ecosystems and coastal communities. The timing is particularly urgent as Brazil's environmental agency just approved Petrobras to begin exploratory drilling near the mouth of the Amazon River – a decision environmentalists warn undermines Brazil's credibility as a climate leader.

SkyTruth's analysis used satellite imagery, vessel tracking data, and government records to document the environmental impacts of Brazil's offshore oil and gas industry. The full report includes detailed maps and data visualizations showing oil slick locations, vessel traffic patterns, flaring activities, and overlap with protected areas and important marine mammal habitats. Download some of these images here.

"As Brazil prepares to host world leaders at a major global climate conference, this report provides concrete evidence of how offshore oil and gas development is already harming the country's marine ecosystems and climate," said **John Amos, CEO of SkyTruth**. "The recent approval of Amazon drilling makes this contradiction even starker. With new exploration planned for the ecologically sensitive Amazon River mouth, the risks are only growing. We need transparent monitoring and accountability -- and a strong shift away from fossil fuels and toward renewable energy -- to protect these important ocean resources."

Key Findings:

- Between 2014 and 2024, Brazil's oil production increased by more than 49% and natural gas production surged by over 78%, making Brazil the largest oil producer in South America.
- 179 probable oil slicks were observed on satellite imagery of the Brazilian EEZ since 2017 – 48 from oil and gas infrastructure, 131 from vessels. (This number likely

underrepresents the true pollution situation, because of the gaps in coverage of satellite imagery.) Oil tankers and oil field service vessels were responsible for nearly half (47%) of the vessel slicks with verifiable sources.

- Floating production, storage and offloading vessels (FxOs) have become increasingly utilized in the oil and gas industry. A single FxO in the Santos basin was responsible for 9 of the 48 infrastructure oil slicks. Another FxO location saw an increase in vessel traffic by 430% after it went into operation.

- Oil and gas facilities within Brazil's EEZ have been observed to flare 12.5 billion cubic meters of natural gas since 2012, equivalent to the annual emissions of about 6.9 million passenger cars.

- Three methane plumes, each large enough to be considered a super-emitter event at over 100 kg of methane per hour, were captured on the same day in April 2025 from offshore oil and gas infrastructure in the Santos basin.

- There are 162 producing fields and 143 exploration blocks in the Brazilian EEZ. In addition, Petrobras has started exploration for 9 blocks in ecologically sensitive habitats at the mouth of the Amazon River, and has recently been granted approval to drill at a site located 500km from the river mouth and 160km from the coast.

- 13 of the 160 Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) in Brazil overlap with oil and gas infrastructure, lease blocks, or detected oil slicks, and nearly all of the MPAs have some amount of oil-related vessel traffic moving through them.

- There are 20 important marine mammal areas (IMMAs) that cover over a quarter of Brazil's EEZ. Only about 6% of the IMMA area falls within marine protected areas, leaving 94% of these important spaces unprotected.

Implications for Climate and Conservation

Brazil's offshore expansion directly contradicts its commitment to climate neutrality by 2050 and the Paris Agreement's 1.5°C target. By 2040, Brazil is projected to produce about 50% of the world's offshore oil – a level incompatible with global climate goals. As Brazil positions itself to lead international climate discussions at COP 30, the disconnect between its climate rhetoric and fossil fuel expansion has drawn sharp criticism from environmental advocates worldwide.

The report also highlights serious threats to Brazil's marine biodiversity. Only about 12% of the area that falls within the country's 160 Marine Protected Areas is fully or highly protected, covering just 3.2% of the Brazilian EEZ. The Southwest Atlantic Humpback Migratory Corridor, which passes through the heavily industrialized Campos and Santos basins, is particularly at risk, with 73 oil slicks, 49 floating production vessels, and 20 operational oil platforms observed within the corridor.

"The patterns we're documenting – chronic oil pollution, coastal industrialization, habitat loss and degradation – represent significant threats to Brazil's coastal ecology and economy," said **Amos**. "Brazil has a window of opportunity to pivot from this extractive offshore legacy toward a future where ocean wealth is measured in healthy reefs, thriving fisheries, and resilient coastal communities. But that window is closing."

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About SkyTruth

SkyTruth is a nonprofit conservation technology organization that uses satellite imagery, data analysis, and digital mapping to motivate people to protect and sustain Earth's ocean, land, and air resources. Learn more at skytruth.org