



Image credit: NASA

[Download Image Here](#)

Sediment Plume, Calcasieu Ship Channel In Louisiana/Gulf of Mexico

From Lake Charles, Louisiana to the Gulf of Mexico, the 36-mile-long Calcasieu Ship Channel facilitates the movement of 7.5% of the nation's crude and refined oil products. The channel was cut in and around the Calcasieu River and Calcasieu Lake, natural bodies of water that were too shallow to support ship traffic. The channel serves as a major hub for the petroleum industry, and the economies of cities and towns along the channel are all based in some way on the processing of fossil fuels.

This image shows the southern end of the channel as it empties into the Gulf. Suspended sediments reveal the interaction between channel water and Gulf water as the two gradually merge.

Multiple toxic chemical leaks related to local petroleum production have been recorded over the years. The pollutants involved are denser than water, and settle to the bottom. Over time these pollutants become buried under layers of new sediment. Dredging up the sediments would re-suspend the pollutants and threaten the ecosystem all over again. So, what to do?

The brackish Calcasieu Lake happens also to be the home of a rare albino Bottlenose Dolphin, nicknamed "Pinky".

