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USFSP Senior Presents Research at OSM in Honolulu

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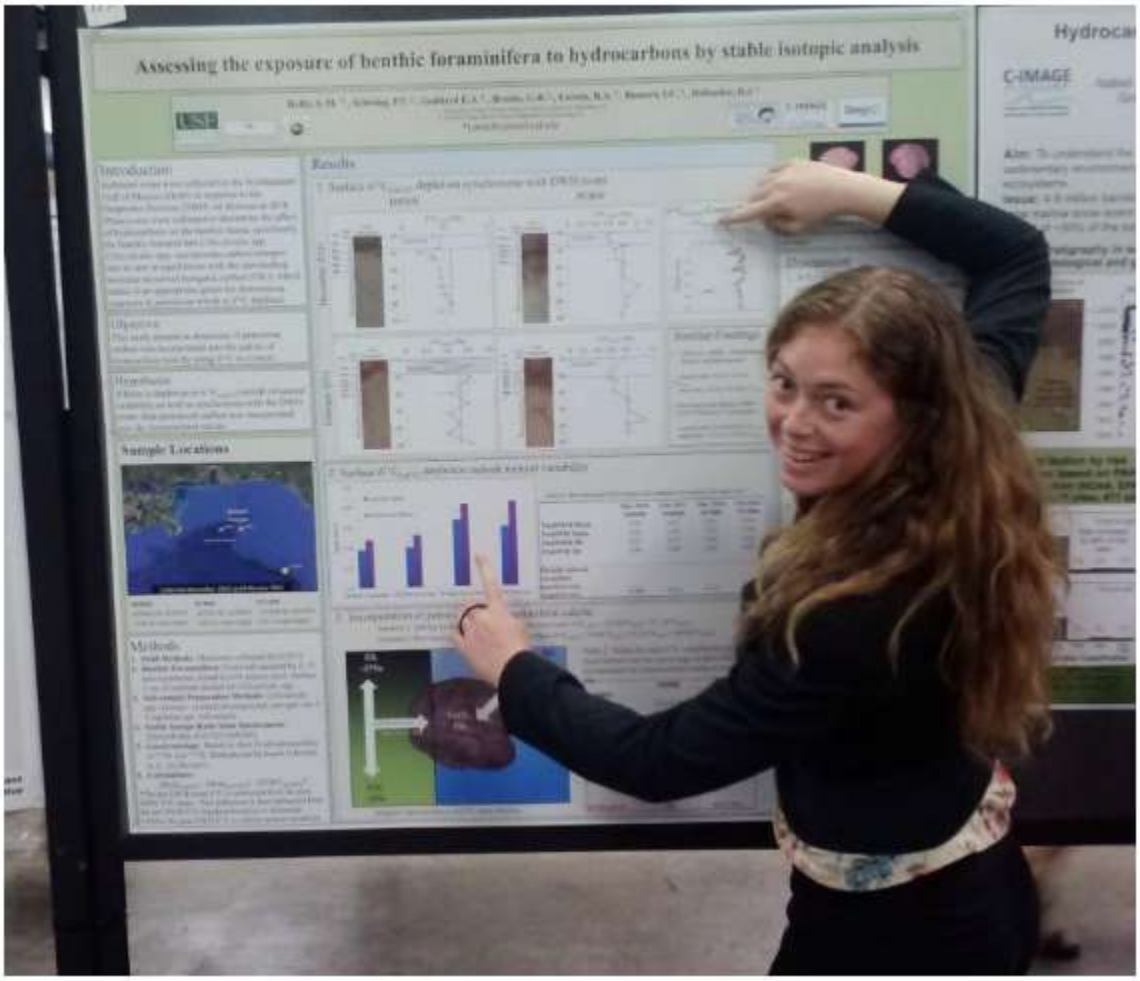
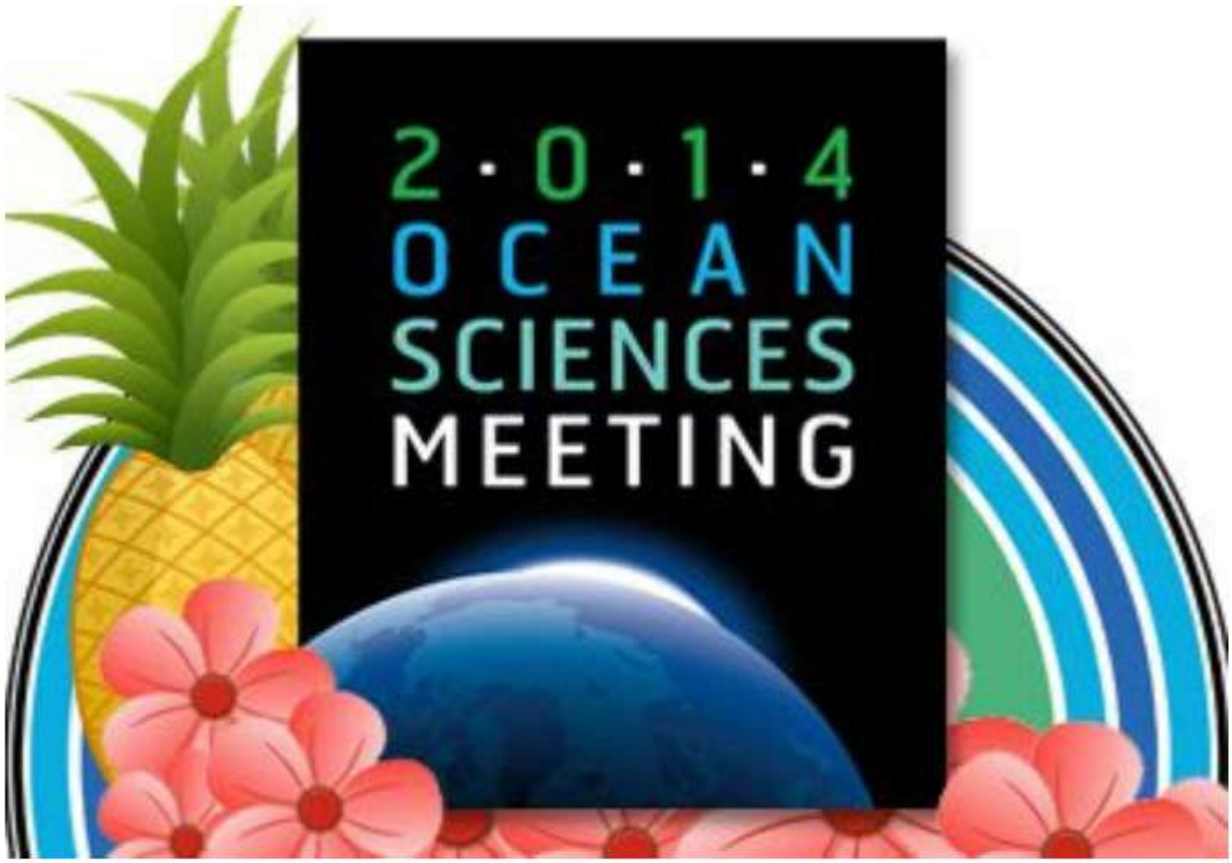


Reilly's poster illustrates that, yes, it appears that petrocarbons, the carbon molecules that make up oil, were incorporated into Benthic foraminifera.



USFSP senior Lauren Reilly will graduate in May with a diploma like everyone else. But in addition to her Bachelor of Science Degree in Environmental Science, Policy & Geography, Reilly can tell potential employers she has conducted her own research on the effects of the 2010 Gulf oil spill, that she's likely to be published and that she has presented at one of the world's largest conferences of marine scientists and students: the Ocean Sciences Meeting (OSM).

Reilly began working as a research assistant in the Paleo Lab in the College of Marine Science in November of 2011. She joined a team led by David Hollander, Ph.D., associate professor, Chemical Oceanography, which was analyzing the effects of the Gulf oil spill on zooplankton that live in the sediment.

"I literally learned the process piece by piece," said Reilly. "I started by rinsing sediment in a sieve. That evolved into weighing the sediment and eventually to running samples on a mass spectrometer."

Using carbon 13 depletion as a tracer, Reilly and the team found that, indeed, the plankton they studied, Benthic foraminifera, were lighter in weight, indicating incorporation of oil molecules into the shells of the tiny animals.

“We could not be more proud of Lauren and her contributions to this important research,” said USFSP Regional Chancellor Sophia Wisniewska. “Her work well represents the level of excellence coming from our campus.”

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