

STUDY TITLE: University Research Initiative on the Effects of Offshore Petroleum Development in the Gulf of Mexico

REPORT TITLE: A Social Science Research Agenda for the Minerals Management Service in the Gulf of Mexico

CONTRACT NUMBER: 14-35-0001-30470

SPONSORING OCS REGION: Gulf of Mexico

APPLICABLE PLANNING AREA: Gulfwide

FISCAL YEARS: 1991, 1992

COMPLETION DATE OF REPORT: May 1993

COSTS: FY 1991: \$0.0; FY 1992: \$99,946.00

CUMMULATIVE PROJECT COSTS: \$99,946.00

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KEY WORDS: Social Science; Research; Gulf of Mexico; Outer Continental Shelf; Offshore Oil; Social Impacts

BACKGROUND: On September 9th, 10th, 11th, and 12th, at a workshop in New Orleans funded by Minerals Management Service (MMS) through the Louisiana Universities Marine Consortium (LUMCON), a group of social scientists from all over the U.S., Canada, and Norway met with representatives of MMS and LUMCON, to design a social science research agenda for MMS in the Gulf of Mexico. This report describes the process by which the workshop was organized and conducted, and (in Appendix D) presents the descriptions of the recommended projects to implement that agenda.

OBJECTIVES: The intent of the workshop was to recommend a social science research agenda for the MMS's Service's Environmental Studies Program for the Gulf of Mexico, at a sufficient level of detail to describe specific studies, the justification for those studies, and the methods required to perform the stated objectives of each project.

DESCRIPTION: There were five main elements agreed upon for the scheduling and structure of the workshop.

First, approximately one month before the workshop was to take place each of the participants received an information packet prepared by the co-conveners and MMS personnel.

Second, the workshop itself was run by professional facilitators. Use of facilitators allowed the co-conveners to become participants in the intellectual work of the meeting, and provided the necessary skills to ensure that the group remained focused, and ensure that the sessions ran smoothly. Once the facilitators were chosen, they also became part of the planning process.

Third, the facilitators interviewed (by telephone) about a third of the workshop participants, and produced extensive notes on the background of the participants, their ideas for research themes, and their general concerns about, and advice for, the workshop. These interviews provided information for planning the workshop. Some of the concerns expressed in the phone conversations were addressed in the plenary sessions; in addition, the ground rules proposed to the group reflected some of the concerns expressed in the phone interviews.

Fourth, a field trip was planned as the first on-site experience of the workshop. It was designed to immerse the participants in the OCS oil and gas industry. The field trip took the participants by boat through the coastal environment of Louisiana (where most of the support activity for OCS activity exists) and then offshore to see some of the development. Not only did this give the participants an opportunity to see how unique the OCS resource extraction activities are, but also it allowed the participants to meet one another, to begin networking and to discuss the OCS activities that would be the focus of the workshop. By the first day of actual workshop activities, the participants were prepared both interpersonally and topically to begin collaboratively to develop the agenda.

Fifth, the actual workshop was structured around three plenary and a number of breakout sessions. The beginning plenary session introduced the project, set the ground rules and determined the broad sub-area topics for the four or five breakout groups. No attempt was made to set the themes of the breakout groups beforehand. To do so would have caused the workshop co-directors to have interjected their perceptions of the broad topics. It was the intent of the project to have the workshop participants--key experts in the field--do that. This was recognized as a risky design but essential to have the workshop product be truly the result of the workshop. Five breakout groups were agreed upon during the initial plenary session. Three of the work groups focused on the research needed to assess and monitor impacts on 1) individuals and families, 2) communities and 3) regional/state entities. The fourth group examined the needed research concerning the role of policy in monitoring and mitigating socioeconomic impacts, and the fifth group (other) worked on the issues that had

been raised in the plenary session, but that did not fit neatly into the typology. After deciding what the most important projects were within their specific charge, the work groups broke into smaller groups, or assigned individuals to provide the first draft of the proposed project description. A second plenary session was planned for the middle of the workshop to assess the progress of the breakout groups and to determine how to address any problems were being encountered which could be addressed. This session resulted in a clarification of the expected project description outcomes. Additionally, some groups discovered that they were producing similar proposals. Two of the breakout groups combined for the final breakout effort and other smaller groups evolved with members from more than one group. At the end of the workshop a third plenary session evaluated and ranked the projects.

SIGNIFICANT CONCLUSIONS: Workshop participants suggested that MMS consider carefully the packaging of the project components, using both theoretical and methodological criteria as well as practical criteria in place at MMS with regard to preparing and distributing RFPs. Carefully considering what should be changed in the way the funded projects are packaged may have a very positive payoff in terms of implementing a socioeconomic impact research program.

STUDY RESULTS: The workshop resulted in the recommendation of eighteen specific studies which were ranked by the workshop participants in order of priority. Each recommended study was described using a standardized format which discussed the following elements:

Title
Region
Proposed Period of Performance/Level of Effort
Applicable Planning Areas
Description of Proposed Project
 Objectives:
 Methods/Study Design:
Products
Justification
Current Status of Information on this Topic
Applicability of Information to Issues of Regional or Programmatic Concern
Qualifications of Investigators

STUDY PRODUCT: Gramling, R. and S. Laska. 1993. A Social Science Research Agenda for the Minerals Management Service in the Gulf of Mexico. A final report prepared by Louisiana Universities Marine Consortium for the U. S. Department of the Interior, Minerals Management Service, Gulf of Mexico OCS Office, New Orleans. LA. Contract number MMS 14-35-0001-30470, OCS Study 93-0017. 66 pp.

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