

BOEM ENVIRONMENTAL STUDIES PROGRAM: ONGOING STUDIES

BOEM OCS Region: [Gulf of Mexico](#)

Title: Ethnic Groups and Enclaves Affected by OCS (GM-08-05)

Planning Areas: Gulfwide

Total Cost: \$751,500

Period of Performance: FY 2011-2013

Conducting Organization: LSU Department of Sociology

BOEM Contact: [Dr. Harry Luton](#)

Description:

Background: United States society is notable for being largely defined by numerous and varied ethnic groups. Louisiana, Texas, Mississippi, Alabama, and Florida, states in which BOEM assesses the onshore effects of offshore petroleum development are not exceptions. Coastal areas of the Gulf of Mexico (GOM) have been long known for their ethnic enclaves; products of unique environments and history. Many of these groups have been affected by the rise of the offshore oil industry. Louisiana's Cajuns, for example have to some degree been self-defined by participation in the petroleum industry, while a smaller Alabama ethnic enclave also called "Cajuns" found work in the refining industry. More recent history has led to the creation of additional ethnic enclaves linked to the oil industry in one way or another. Vietnamese and Laotians have interacted with the industry as commercial fishermen but also as workers in the shipbuilding and fabrication workforce. More recently this role has also been assumed by Mexican immigrants.

Objectives: The research objectives are to:

- collect and synthesize information on the origin and distribution of ethnic groups, communities and enclaves, and on the historical processes affecting their distribution and conditions;
- identify the current socioeconomic conditions for selected ethnic groups and to highlight any significant direct and indirect effects that offshore petroleum-related activities have had or are having on these groups, communities, and enclaves; and
- report study results in formats that facilitate its use by BOEM analysts and decision makers, other governmental institutions, and the interested public and to facilitate future synthesis efforts by BOEM and others.

Methods: Available literature and census data on the origin and distribution of ethnic groups, communities and enclaves, and on the historical processes affecting their distribution and conditions will be collected and synthesized. Data collected from prior studies, in concert with some demographic data on the size of ethnic populations that can be readily compiled from US census data (particularly that collected following the 2005

hurricanes) will be used to identify potentially affected communities with significant ethnic populations. To guide the immediate selection of the case study communities, field researchers will compile and review field notes and newspaper articles from three prior studies: *Offshore Oil and Gas History Project*, *the Impacts of the Offshore Oil and Gas Industry on Gulf Coast Communities*, and *the Fabrication and Shipbuilding Study*. The classifications of ethnic communities (e.g., Vietnamese, Houma Indian, and Puerto Rican) used by interviewees in the previous studies will be utilized in the process of identifying the communities, locating them on a map of the GOM, and synthesizing in an excel database information about their members' occupations and connections to the offshore oil and gas industry.

The research team will identify the current socioeconomic conditions for selected ethnic groups and to highlight any significant direct and indirect effects that offshore petroleum related activities have had or are having on these groups, communities, and enclaves. The key tasks include the completion of qualitative case studies and socioeconomic profiles for selected ethnic groups in the study area. Fieldwork for the qualitative case studies will begin within three months of the project start and will include discussions with representatives of groups who are in touch with and gathering information on their members, and an initial analysis of how livelihood strategies, ethnicity, and the Deepwater Horizon accident and spill interact to differentially impact individuals and communities along the GOM. The researchers will work closely with community leaders to identify the data that exist and are being generated locally and gain local insights into the scope and nature of the impacts of both the Deepwater Horizon release and the offshore oil and gas industry in general.

Products: A comprehensive report, annotated bibliography, and databases.

Importance to BOEM: The information and analyses provided by this research will support BOEM assessment and decisionmaking. First, Executive Order 12898 and laws addressing Native Americans direct agencies to consider specifically the possible adverse effects of their decision making and proposed actions on minority and low income groups. Study results will support agency environmental justice assessments as directed by EO 12898, other laws and orders, and CEQ guidelines. Second, under NEPA environmental assessments consider the distribution of benefits and burdens among groups affected by agency decisionmaking. Study results will be sufficiently broad to support these more inclusive questions concerning who has been affected and who has not and what have been the benefits as well as the burdens.

Current Status: Study startup was delayed by Deepwater Horizon oil spill. The study plan was revised to increase its fieldwork component and to begin this it work immediately. Additional funds were added to support these changes. The three components of the research - demographic analysis, literature synthesis, and fieldwork are now underway. An interim report is currently being reviewed by BOEM. The project is proceeding on schedule.

Final Report Due: July 2013

Publications: None

Affiliated WWW Sites: None

Revised date: December 2011

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