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Bureau of Ocean Energy Management  
Scoping Meeting  
Gulf of Mexico  
Geological and Geophysical (G&G) Activities  
Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement (EIS)

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Gulfport, Mississippi  
Marriott Gulfport Beachfront Hotel  
June 13, 2013  
6:30 p.m.

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Reported by: Patsy C. Poteat, CCR

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Appearances:

- Beth Nord
- Gary Goeke
- Howard Page
- Bob Davidge

Also Present:

- Tamara Artz
- Travis Olivier
- Cathy Rosa

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MS. NORD:

Good evening. Thanks for joining us this evening. You have arrived at the scoping meeting for the Gulf of Mexico, G&G EIS. As you can see from the first slide, we're on our fourth meeting in a series of seven across the Gulf of Mexico Region. And we have our final meeting up in Silver Spring, Maryland, where our headquarters and the National Marine Fisheries Service headquarters is located, or in the general D.C. area.

Next slide, please. We're here to talk about an EIS document that we are going to be preparing. We have two agencies that are going to be co-leads on this EIS: the Bureau of Ocean and Energy Management, which is who we are with, which is a division of the Department of Interior. And our mission is to oversee the safe and environmentally responsible development of the Outer Continental Shelf. We are working on our EIS with the National Marine Fisheries Service, NOAA. And their mission is to protect

1 the nation's living resources, and not  
2 just in the Gulf of Mexico, but in the  
3 marine environments.

4 Go ahead. Again, here's our mandate.  
5 And basically we're to make resources in  
6 the Outer Continental Shelf available and  
7 expeditiously and orderly develop those  
8 resources, subject to environmental  
9 safeguards. And that's why we are  
10 involved in the EIS process.

11 Okay. The National Environmental  
12 Policy Act is the over-arching  
13 environmental law that deals with  
14 protecting the environment and relates to  
15 federal agencies considering actions,  
16 performing federal actions. NEPA  
17 requires us to identify and assess  
18 alternatives to the proposed action. It  
19 also requires us to get input from the  
20 public for decision-making and to  
21 incorporate environmental and other  
22 technical information into our documents.  
23 And another main thing that we need to do  
24 is to coordinate and consult with other  
25 federal, state, and local agencies.

1 To develop the EIS, the general  
2 process is identifying the purpose and  
3 need, alternatives, impacting factors,  
4 potentially affected environmental and  
5 socioeconomic resources. We also need to  
6 consider cumulative impacts, identify  
7 mitigation measures, measures where we  
8 can reduce the impact in our proposed  
9 alternatives. And we need to establish  
10 consultation and coordination with state,  
11 federal, and local agencies.

12 The Council on Environmental Quality  
13 is the federal agency that has identified  
14 the framework and the regulations for how  
15 federal agencies implement NEPA. You can  
16 see, we have a step-wise process, shown  
17 on the right-hand side of the slide in  
18 green, and it talks about preparing a  
19 notice of intent, it shows scoping, draft  
20 EIS, comment period, and finally EIS and  
21 decision-making.

22 And you can see, we're early in the  
23 process here. We're starting scoping.  
24 So we're out basically right now to get  
25 input from the public, resource agencies,

1 interested parties, industry. And what  
2 we're going to do with our scoping  
3 information is, we're going to use that  
4 information to help us make our decision  
5 in an informed manner. We're going to  
6 identify resources that are necessary to  
7 evaluate, because they're likely to be  
8 impacted, and eliminate other resources  
9 that may not be significant. And we're  
10 going to use -- We're going to identify  
11 information that may not be available.

12 Okay. So, again, we're early in the  
13 process. You saw that we were the second  
14 box as we dropped -- stepped through.  
15 And scoping -- The purpose of scoping is  
16 to gather input. So we're hoping that  
17 these meetings that we're having across  
18 the Gulf and in the D.C. area will allow  
19 us to get information, both from the  
20 public and from federal, state, and local  
21 agencies and other interested parties and  
22 organizations and industry.

23 We talked earlier about some of the  
24 consultations that we will be conducting  
25 as a part of the EIS preparation. Around

1 NEPA, there are -- which is kind of the  
2 umbrella environmental law -- we have  
3 some of the other environmental laws that  
4 we are going to be coordinating for.  
5 Most of these relate to activities with  
6 National Marine Fisheries Service, or  
7 NOAA, Marine Mammal Protection Act,  
8 National Marine Sanctuary Act,  
9 Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation  
10 Act.

11 But we also have consultations that  
12 we do with other agencies, state agencies  
13 like the Coastal Zone Management Act,  
14 Endangered Species Act. We coordinate  
15 both with National Marine Fisheries  
16 Service and Fish and Wildlife Service.  
17 So all these consultations will be  
18 incorporated into what we're doing with  
19 the EIS.

20 Go ahead. Okay. So what types of  
21 activities are we talking about when we  
22 talk about geophysical and geological  
23 surveys? So this is an example of a  
24 seismic survey that would be considered a  
25 geophysical survey. And what we have is

1 a vessel that is towing an acoustic sound  
2 source. And we have receivers that are  
3 also being towed by the same vessel. The  
4 sound source is emitting sounds. They're  
5 bouncing off the bottom, the subsurface,  
6 and they are being reflected up and  
7 information is gathered -- received by  
8 the receivers.

9 This would be a very basic type of  
10 seismic survey. Some of the larger  
11 surveys that go on currently in the Gulf  
12 of Mexico employ multiple vessels,  
13 multiple tow lines. They don't  
14 necessarily go in a straight line. Some  
15 of them do coil surveys, where they are  
16 actually running in spirals. So this  
17 just shows you a basic example of that  
18 type of survey. They utilize many  
19 different types of sound-producing  
20 sources. Or some activities -- You may  
21 have heard of air guns or other  
22 high-resolution geophysical devices. So  
23 our EIS would be covering a variety of  
24 activities, in a variety of sensors.

25 So what are these G&G activities used



1           for? They're used to generate data for  
2           oil and gas exploration and development.  
3           They're used to generate data for  
4           renewable energy, siting sites,  
5           identifying what is below the water -- on  
6           the sea floor that would identify if an  
7           area is suitable for, say, a platform for  
8           a windmill to be built on related to  
9           renewables.

10                 We also have marine mineral  
11           investigations. That would be looking at  
12           what's on the sea floor to see if the  
13           sand or the gravel is suitable, let's  
14           say, for a coastal restoration or a beach  
15           nourishment project. So the G&G  
16           activities cover a variety of activities  
17           and program areas that BOEM oversees.

18                 Okay. Go ahead. And this is just a  
19           listing of some of the geophysical and  
20           geological surveys. 2D, 3D, 4D seismic,  
21           high-resolution seismic, nodes and ocean  
22           bottom cables. That's where you would  
23           have your receivers actually strung out  
24           on the bottom instead of being towed by a  
25           vessel.

1                   And then geological surveys would  
2                   be cores, box cores, piston cores. So  
3                   that would be for mechanical removal of  
4                   some of the sand from the bottom.

5                   And then another type of survey that  
6                   we would likely be analyzing in the EIS  
7                   are some emerging technologies. And one  
8                   of those is called marine vibroseis.

9                   Go ahead. The area that we would be  
10                  evaluating in the Programmatic EIS is the  
11                  area outlined in white. It includes the  
12                  three Gulf of Mexico planning areas: the  
13                  western, central, and eastern planning  
14                  area, as well as state water bottoms,  
15                  excluding estuaries along the Coast. So  
16                  we're not just looking at federal waters;  
17                  we're going to be actually looking at  
18                  some state waters as well. The red  
19                  dotted line shows the federal-state line.  
20                  So you can see that the white line  
21                  extends further inshore than out.

22                  Go ahead. Okay. Why are we doing  
23                  this EIS? We need to assess the  
24                  programmatic impacts of multiple G&G  
25                  activities in the Gulf of Mexico so that

1 we can use this information for future  
2 permitting and approvals for G&G  
3 activities.

4 We need to identify monitoring and  
5 mitigation activities that we may need to  
6 implement in conjunction with these  
7 activities to reduce impacts. And we  
8 need to have information available so  
9 that our partner, National Marine  
10 Fisheries Service, can do what we're  
11 making under the Marine Mammal Protection  
12 Act to actually approve impacts  
13 associated with seismic activities.

14 Go ahead. Okay. So as I said  
15 before, we issue permits for authorized  
16 activities, for G&G activities, oil and  
17 gas, marine mineral and renewable and the  
18 National Marine Fisheries Service permits  
19 what are called Incidental Take  
20 Authorizations under the Marine Mammal  
21 Protection Act. And that relates to  
22 impacting marine mammals. In this case,  
23 it would likely be disturbance of the  
24 marine mammals from the sounds generated  
25 by the acoustic sources. And the goal is

1 to develop this EIS so that we can use it  
2 as our over-arching document,  
3 environmental documents for permitting.  
4 And they can use it as their over-arching  
5 document to develop the rulemaking.

6 Go ahead. Okay. So what kind of  
7 information are we looking for from you,  
8 or what kind of things could you help us  
9 with? One of the things that we talked  
10 about earlier is that we look at  
11 potential resources to analyze. A NEPA  
12 document is not necessarily encyclopedic.  
13 So what we would like to do is lay out  
14 what potential resources could be  
15 impacted, and then identify ones that  
16 could be impacted significantly.

17 Resources that we typically analyze  
18 in the Gulf of Mexico region are listed  
19 on the screen. And that is one of the  
20 ways that we could get public input in  
21 the scoping process, if you have any  
22 additional resources that you think  
23 should be analyzed and addressed in the  
24 EIS, or resources that you see on the  
25 list but you think are especially

1 significant that we should identify.

2 Go ahead. Another area where we're  
3 looking for information or help is  
4 identifying impacting factors. And,  
5 again, this is a list of potential  
6 impacting factors that we anticipate, you  
7 know, for this project. But do you have  
8 any other impacting factors that you've  
9 identified? We already said that  
10 acoustic sound sources and impacts to  
11 marine mammals were possible with our  
12 activities. There's also vessel  
13 equipment noise that are associated with  
14 these kind of activities. We could be  
15 impacting commercial and recreational  
16 fishing. There will be sea floor  
17 disturbance if we're coring or doing box  
18 cores. So, again, this is an area where  
19 we could get input from the public or  
20 industry.

21 Go ahead. As a part of the NEPA  
22 process, we need to consider and evaluate  
23 not just a proposed action or preferred  
24 alternative, but a variety of  
25 alternatives. So we have to evaluate a

1 no-action alternative as well as a  
2 proposed action and then other  
3 alternatives so that we can move through  
4 the process and fairly look at options  
5 before making a final decision about what  
6 the federal action is going to be.

7 Other alternatives that are potential  
8 for this project is various mitigation  
9 measures and technologies that would  
10 reduce impacts, in conjunction with  
11 performing the G&G activities.

12 Go ahead. Some examples of  
13 mitigation measures that could be  
14 analyzed and then potentially ultimately  
15 included in a preferred alternative are  
16 listed on the slide. And it talks about  
17 passive acoustic monitoring, which is  
18 identifying if they're using sound to  
19 identify if there are marine mammals in  
20 an area even if you can't visually see  
21 them on a surface.

22 Separation distances for concurrent  
23 surveys. So that's keeping those boats  
24 or those vessels that we saw on that  
25 slide apart so that the sounds that

1 they're making aren't impacting the same  
2 area. Lowest practicable sound source  
3 level. Minimizing the sounds that are  
4 coming out the devices. And then also  
5 things like avoiding sensitive benthic  
6 communities.

7 Next slide. Right now, we have our  
8 tentative schedule posted. There are  
9 many opportunities to participate in this  
10 process. They're indicated in red on the  
11 slide. And so right now we're in the  
12 scoping meeting is one opportunity. But,  
13 also, we have a public comment period  
14 that is associated with the scoping  
15 meetings that is between May 10 and  
16 July 9. So that you can have an  
17 opportunity, if you would like to provide  
18 comments, if you don't want to speak  
19 tonight, through another method that  
20 we'll talk about later.

21 And then as we develop the document  
22 and put out a draft EIS, there's an  
23 opportunity to comment on that. And  
24 actually, there's another opportunity  
25 when we publish the final EIS. So

1                   there's many opportunities to  
2                   participate.

3                   Go ahead. What we have set up is a  
4                   station for comments. However, we don't  
5                   have anybody signed up at this time to  
6                   provide comments.

7                   MR. GOEKE:

8                   Oh, we do.

9                   MS. NORD:

10                  Oh, we do? Okay. Super! So we have  
11                  Mr. Howard Page.

12                  MR. HOWARD PAGE:

13                  Go ahead? Three minutes?

14                  MS. NORD:

15                  Come on up. We'll have the  
16                  microphone on. And please address Gary.

17                  MR. HOWARD PAGE:

18                  Yes, my name is Howard Page. And I  
19                  work with a group called the Steps of  
20                  Coalition here on the Gulf Coast. And  
21                  the thing I would like to focus on is  
22                  sensitivity to the impacts of the BP  
23                  spill. So, you have some very thoughtful  
24                  considerations of marine mammals and sea  
25                  turtles and benthic environments, of



1           these activities in general. But I think  
2           we should be aware that we have some  
3           injured populations. And until the NRDA  
4           work is done, which is going to actually  
5           take quite a long time -- But as NRDA  
6           does their work, we really don't know  
7           what the impacts were yet.

8                        So, for example, the marine mammals.  
9           Not only do we always need to be  
10          sensitive of how this sonic activity  
11          affects whales and dolphins, but we need  
12          to recognize that these populations have  
13          somehow been harmed by the BP spill, and  
14          very likely at least we've seen a lot of  
15          dolphin mortality -- unusual dolphin  
16          mortality here on the Coast.

17                       And so I would ask that that be  
18          considered, that in the future, since  
19          we're recovering from the impacts of the  
20          BP spill that we be aware that we have  
21          not healthy populations that we need to  
22          be cautious with; we actually have some  
23          injured and recovering populations.

24                       And I would especially ask that that  
25          be looked at with benthic areas. Because

1 I think that's the most out-of-sight  
2 out-of-mind populations. And there's a  
3 great deal of concern that the oil and  
4 dispersants went down to the benthic  
5 layer and still may be down at the  
6 benthic layer.

7 And what I understand is, some of the  
8 species in the benthic layer grow very  
9 slowly and live very long. And so -- And  
10 we know less about them than we know  
11 about other parts of the ecosystem. So I  
12 would ask that any studies that we do  
13 really look at what harm has been done to  
14 the benthic layer, what was probably the  
15 healthy, you know, -- the healthy  
16 situation before the spill, what has been  
17 harmed. And I think that's the -- We  
18 know the least about them. And I just  
19 have this big concern that there's  
20 dispersants and oil still down there.  
21 And we really don't know what value they  
22 add to the ecosystem. And they probably  
23 do add some pretty significant values.  
24 That we look carefully at the benthic  
25 populations.

1                   And then I'd like to finish by saying  
2                   that I support all the mitigation  
3                   measures that I heard about, sonic uses.  
4                   And I know, it would seem like you would  
5                   want to do what's effective but minimize  
6                   the volume of the sound and be careful  
7                   that the marine mammals aren't in the  
8                   area and sea turtles aren't in the area,  
9                   as best you can.

10                   But one thing I didn't see, and you  
11                   probably do consider this, but in  
12                   addition to the individual events, I  
13                   would ask that you look at the frequency  
14                   and duration. So how often -- Even  
15                   assuming that these are relatively  
16                   healthy activities that you're doing or  
17                   harmless, I'm sorry, activities to the  
18                   populations, but even assuming that  
19                   you've taken some caution to look at how  
20                   often these populations are exposed and  
21                   how long these populations are exposed.  
22                   Thank you.

23                   MR. GOEKE:

24                   Good points. Thank you.

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MS. NORD:

Thank you. Okay. We didn't have anybody else sign up, but, sir, you just came in. Did you want to sign up to speak or --

MR. BOB DAVIDGE:

No. I work for BP, and I come to the various -- I don't know if you even want to know. My name is Bob Davidge.

MR. GOEKE:

If you wouldn't mind coming to the microphone so that we can all hear you. Thank you.

MR. BOB DAVIDGE:

Since you asked me to come up here, I apologize for coming late. I went to the Coliseum because that's where the Restore Council meeting was the other night. I just got programmed and realized when everybody was crossing the street for the fair, I was in the wrong place.

I'm Bob Davidge. I work for BP. I live here on the Coast. And I've been with them since the oil spill. I was with the casinos before that. And I'm

1 here because it's my community. It's my  
2 Gulf of Mexico. I raised my family here.  
3 I care. And they certainly support me  
4 and my efforts here. And if you have  
5 some questions, I'll try to help the best  
6 I can. But sorry about coming in late.

7 MS. NORD:

8 Oh, that's okay.

9 MR. BOB DAVIDGE:

10 Thank you for doing this.

11 MS. NORD:

12 Sure. Okay. What we're going to do  
13 is, we're going to just take a 15-minute  
14 break. But before we do that, let's  
15 quick go to the next two slides.

16 Okay. So if you don't want to  
17 comment on the microphone today, that's  
18 fine. That's no problem. We've got a  
19 lot of different opportunities to  
20 comment. The comment period is going to  
21 be until July 9. We have an email  
22 address that's listed on that slide. We  
23 also have regulations.gov. The  
24 directions on how to find those are  
25 listed in the special information sheet

1 that you guys already have in the packets  
2 that you received. And then the third  
3 old reliable way to send comments is  
4 always snail mail. So the mailing  
5 address is there. And I don't know if  
6 you notice, you have a comment sheet in  
7 your package. If you want to use that,  
8 there's already an address put on the  
9 back so you can use that for additional  
10 comments, if you have any.

11 One more slide, please. We also have  
12 a website set up that has more  
13 information about the different survey  
14 techniques, devices, information about  
15 the mitigation measures that are  
16 currently in use in the Gulf of Mexico.  
17 So if you would like to get some more  
18 specific information, you can go to that  
19 site. And if you want to get on our EIS  
20 mailing list, you see that other address  
21 below.

22 Again, your information packets have  
23 a variety of information. And the  
24 information about commenting is on there  
25 so you don't have to scramble to write

1 all those addresses down.

2 Okay. We're going to take a  
3 15-minute break. We'll come back. If  
4 you have questions in the meantime, talk  
5 to Gary, me. Tamara is in the audience.  
6 We'll go off the record.

7 (Recess)

8 MS. NORD:

9 Okay. We're going to go back on the  
10 record. Did we have anybody that wanted  
11 to come up and speak again? Howard, did  
12 you want to come back up?

13 MR. HOWARD PAGE:

14 I did want to say one more thing on  
15 the record.

16 MS. NORD:

17 Sure.

18 MR. HOWARD PAGE:

19 Howard Page with the Steps of  
20 Coalition. I did want to add that I  
21 understand that this year was the highest  
22 year of domestic oil production that  
23 we've had. And it was also the highest  
24 increase in domestic oil production that  
25 we've had. And based on that, I want to

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take from that that we don't have owners' regulations so that we're safe in having regulation of these activities. So even with the status quo, we're having huge increases and plenty of production. So I wanted to -- I'm sorry. There was something else I was trying to think of. Thank you.

MR. GOEKE:

Good. Thank you.

MS. NORD:

Okay. Did anybody else have any other comments?

Like I said, look at your information packets. There's all the email addresses and ways to comment on there as well as if you want to sign up for the EIS list.

So thank you, everybody, for coming, and we're going to close the meeting.

Thank you.

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C E R T I F I C A T E

STATE OF ALABAMA )  
COUNTY OF MOBILE )

I, Patsy C. Poteat, CCR, as Commissioner,  
hereby certify that the above proceedings were taken  
down by me and transcribed by me using computer-aided  
transcription and that the above is a true and  
correct transcript of said proceedings taken down by  
me and transcribed by me.

I further certify that I am neither of kin nor  
of counsel to any of the parties nor in anywise  
financially interested in the outcome of this case.

I further certify that I am duly licensed by  
the Alabama Board of Court Reporting as a Certified  
Court Reporter as evidenced by the ACCR number  
following my name found below.

So certified on this, the 13th day of June,  
2013.



*Patsy Casson Poteat*

Commission Expires: Patsy C. Poteat, ACCR #236  
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