

Access Number: 140M0119F0039

STUDY TITLE: Evaluating Connections: The Bureau of Ocean Energy Management’s (BOEM’s) Environmental Studies and Assessments

REPORT TITLE: Evaluating Connections: BOEM’s Environmental Studies and Assessments, Evaluation Methodology

CONTRACT NUMBER: 140M0119F0039

SPONSORING OCS REGION: Headquarters

APPLICABLE PLANNING AREAS: N/A, study is not specific to a geographic area

FISCAL YEARS OF PROJECT FUNDING: FY2021 – FY2022

COMPLETION DATE OF REPORT: Completion date of Evaluation Methodology is September 1, 2020

COSTS BY FISCAL YEAR: FY2021 (Base Year and Option Year 1) = \$379,064; FY2022 (Option Year 2) = \$272,707

CUMULATIVE PROJECT COST: \$651,771

PROJECT MANAGER: Daniel Kaufman

AFFILIATION OF PROJECT MANAGERS: Industrial Economic, Inc. (IEc)

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KEY WORDS: Program Evaluation, Science-to-Policy, Information Needs, Citation Analysis, Social Network Analysis, Studies Program, Assessment Process, NEPA analyses, Feedback Loop

BACKGROUND: Section 20 of the Outer Continental Shelf Lands Act (OCSLA) resulted in the development of BOEM’s Environmental Studies Program (ESP) to develop studies that establish information needed for the assessment and management of environmental impacts of oil and gas and other mineral development on the human, marine, and coastal environments. In fulfilling its mission, BOEM must comply with a range of environmental requirements, including but not limited to the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), Endangered Species Act (ESA), Marine Mammal Protection Act (MMPA), Coastal Zone Management Act (CZMA), and the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA). To comply with relevant statutes and policies, BOEM develops “environmental assessments,” including NEPA analyses, consultation documents, and other analyses that use the best available information. “Environmental studies” sponsored by the ESP provide scientific information to inform BOEM’s environmental assessments.

BOEM describes the process by which environmental studies inform environmental assessments and environmental assessments inform environmental studies as a “feedback loop.” To determine how well this feedback loop is functioning and to identify potential improvements in the science-to-policy process, BOEM is pursuing an evaluation of the linkages between the scientific research it is funding and the information needs within its assessments.

OBJECTIVES: The overarching objective of the project is to evaluate the effectiveness of BOEM’s science-to-policy feedback loop process.

DESCRIPTION: The base period (current phase) of the contract focuses on designing a process to thoroughly evaluate the Bureau-wide linkages between BOEM’s assessments and environmental studies. During the base year, IEc developed a mixed methods evaluation approach—including social network

analysis, citation analysis, interviews and survey—to assess the strengths and limitations of BOEM’s feedback loop process and make recommendations for improvements. Option Year 1 of the contract involves implementing the evaluation designed in the base period to identify strengths and limitations in the internal feedback loop process at BOEM and to make recommendations for improving this process. Option Year 2 of the contract involves designing and executing an evaluation of the external influence (outside of the Bureau) of BOEM’s environmental studies.

SIGNIFICANT CONCLUSIONS: N/A. This project is ongoing; the current phase (base year) is focused on designing the evaluation methodology. Conclusions will be presented as part of the Option Year 1 and Option Year 2 evaluations.

STUDY RESULTS: N/A. This project is ongoing; the current phase (base year) is focused on designing the evaluation methodology. Results will be presented as part of the Option Year 1 and Option Year 2 evaluations.

STUDY PRODUCTS:

- **Base Year Report (current phase)** - Evaluating Connections: BOEM’s Environmental Studies and Assessments, Evaluation Methodology
- **Option Year 1 Report** - Evaluating Connections: BOEM’s Environmental Studies and Assessments, Findings and Recommendations
- **Option Year 2 Report** - Evaluating Connections: External Influence of BOEM’s Environmental Studies and Assessments, Methodology, Findings, and Recommendations

MAP: N/A, study is not specific to a geographic area

* The affiliation of the Principal Investigators may be different from that listed for Project Manager(s).