

## **Environmental Studies Program: Ongoing Study**

**Study Area(s):** Gulf-Wide

**Administered By:** Gulf of Mexico OCS Region

**Title:** USA-Mexico Workshop to Coordinate Future  
Environmental Studies Related to Ocean Energy  
Management in the Gulf of Mexico (NSL #GM-16-05)

**BOEM Information Need(s) to be Addressed:** Coordination with Mexican scientists and government is a high-priority for BOEM as we actively partner to ensure safe and responsible development of oil and gas in the GOM. BOEM's environmental analyses under NEPA will be significantly strengthened through consideration of the GOM as a single Large Marine Ecosystem (LME), which accounts for environmental resources and processes on a basin-wide scale, in both U.S. and Mexican waters. BOEM and Mexico will benefit by exchanging information on current environmental studies and working together to develop a strategy for collaboration on research topics identified as high priorities, across a range of disciplinary needs in the biological, physical/chemical, and social sciences.

**Total BOEM Cost:** \$250,000

**Period of Performance:** FY 2016–2017

**Conducting Organization(s):** Harte Research Institute at Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi

**Principal Investigator(s):** Dr. Larry McKinney (larry.mckinney@tamucc.edu)

**BOEM Contact(s):** Dr. Rebecca Green (rebecca.green@boem.gov)

### **Description:**

Background: The U.S. and Mexico both require an understanding of the current state of science in the GOM, as well as a strategy for engagement on new research projects to inform future offshore energy development activities. The BOEM Environmental Studies Program has most heavily engaged over the last decade with Mexico in the area of Physical Oceanography. A previous MMS workshop was held in this regard in 2007, titled “USA-Mexico Workshop on the Deepwater Physical Oceanography of the Gulf of Mexico.” BOEM and Mexico are now strengthening coordination as we work together on issues related to the High-Level Economic Dialogues, Mexican Energy Reform, the Trans boundary Hydrocarbon Reservoirs Agreement, and other evolving issues. To fill related information gaps, moving forward BOEM requires a broader interdisciplinary understanding of research activities in both U.S. and Mexican waters which span the biological, physical/chemical, and social sciences.

Objectives: The goal of this study is to convene a workshop of U.S. and Mexican scientists to discuss the current state of science throughout the Gulf LME, across a range of disciplines, and to develop recommendations for future binational research partnerships with relevance to offshore energy activities.

**Methods:** Co-sponsorship will be sought with relevant U.S. and Mexican institutions and programs. The workshop will consist of invited technical presentations, workgroup sessions, and a final plenary session. A planning group will be formed to select the Chairs(s) and finalize the structure of the workshop, with participation from both U.S. and Mexican scientists. Topics to be addressed include Living Marine Resources and Habitat, Physical Oceanography, Water and Air Quality, and Social Sciences and Cultural Resources, with a strong interdisciplinary approach encouraged across the workshop to facilitate ecosystem-based management approaches. Topics related to Baseline Measurements, Fates and Effects, and Environmental Monitoring will be discussed, including appropriate observational, laboratory, and modeling methodologies. In addition to potential ocean energy impacts, cumulative impacts such as those related to climate change, fishing, and marine pollution will also be considered. Keynote speakers will be chosen to address selected topics and to stimulate further discussion in workgroups. A final synthesis report will detail major workshop findings. This workshop will provide a roadmap for recommended bi-national coordination on future environmental studies.

**Current Status:** The workshop was co-sponsored by BOEM, HRI, National Academies' Gulf Research Program, and NOAA. The workshop took place in Houston in March, 2017 with nearly 160 participants from around the Gulf of Mexico. HRI is now working to complete the inventory of southern Gulf science programs and the workshop proceedings.

**Final Report Due:** April 1, 2018

**Publications Completed:** -

**Affiliated WWW Sites:**

<http://www.gulfinventory.org/>

**Revised Date:** February 14, 2018