

## Excerpts from: *The Gulf Oil Disaster and the Future of Offshore Drilling Recommendations* by the National Commission on the BP Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill and Offshore Drilling, January 2011

### Excerpts related to recommendations for citizen advisory councils

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*From: Foreword, Page X (Roman numeral ten):*

“But those benefits have imposed their costs. The bayous and wetlands of Louisiana have for decades suffered from destructive alteration to accommodate oil exploration. The Gulf ecosystem, a unique American asset, is likely to continue silently washing away unless decisive action is taken to start the work of creating a sustainably healthy and productive landscape. No one should be deluded that restoration on the scale required will occur quickly or cheaply. Indeed, the experience in restoring other large, sensitive regions—the Chesapeake Bay, the Everglades, the Great Lakes—indicates that progress will require coordinated federal and state actions, a dedicated funding source, long-term monitoring, and a vocal and engaged citizenry, supported by robust non-governmental groups, scientific research, and more.”

*From: The Need to Strengthen State and Local Involvement, page 27-28:*

“Unfamiliarity with, and lack of trust in, the federal response manifested itself in competing state structures and attempts to control response operations that undercut the efficiency of the response overall. Federal responders improved their relationship with state and local officials as the response progressed—but had better coordination and communication existed sooner, that relationship could have been more productive in the early days of the spill response. Moreover, increased citizen involvement before a spill occurs could create better mechanisms to utilize local citizens in response efforts, provide an additional layer of review to prevent industry and government complacency, and increase public trust in response operations.”

*From: Recommendation, page 28:*

#### **“Recommendation**

**EPA and the Coast Guard should bolster state and local involvement in oil spill contingency planning and training and create a mechanism for local involvement in spill planning and response similar to the Regional Citizens’ Advisory Councils mandated by the Oil Pollution Act of 1990.**

EPA and the Coast Guard, as the chair and vice-chair of the National Response Team, should issue policies and guidance for increased state and local involvement in oil spill contingency planning and training. This guidance should provide protocols to:

- Include local officials from areas at high risk for oil spills in training exercises.
- Establish liaisons between the Unified Command and affected local communities at the outset of a spill response.
- Add a local on-scene coordinator position to the Unified Command structure.

- Provide additional clarification and guidance to federal, state, and local officials on the differences between emergency response under the Stafford Act and under the National Contingency Plan.

In addition, a mechanism should be created for ongoing local involvement in spill planning and response in the Gulf. In the Oil Pollution Act of 1990, Congress mandated citizens' councils for Prince William Sound and Cook Inlet. In the Gulf, such a council should broadly represent the citizens' interests in the area, such as fishing and tourism, and possibly include representation from oil and gas workers as ex-officio, non-voting members. The citizens' group could be funded by Gulf lease holders. The Commission further recommends that federal regulators be required to consult with the council on relevant issues, that operators provide the council with access to records and other information, and that entities (either in industry or in government) declining the council's advice submit their reasons to the council in writing."

*From Recommendation, page 42:*

#### **"Recommendation**

**Congress should dedicate 80 percent of the Clean Water Act penalties to long-term restoration of the Gulf of Mexico.**

**Congress and federal and state agencies should build the organizational, financial, scientific, and public outreach capacities needed to put the restoration effort on a strong footing.**

The Commission believes that having a comprehensive, binding strategy to guide the restoration effort is critical to success. By elaborating on the goals set by the governing entity and by providing specific milestones and restoration objectives, such a strategy would focus the overall effort and help ensure that projects are not duplicative. The strategy could also include a map that ties projects to specific places and provide a useful mechanism for public involvement. Congress should also ensure that the priorities and decisions of the Gulf Coast Council are informed by input from a Citizens Advisory Council that represents diverse stakeholders."

*From Moving to Frontier Regions, page 55:*

"The Inupiat Eskimos of Alaska's remote arctic and subarctic communities rely heavily for their subsistence on resources from the marine environment, particularly bowhead whales. Bowhead whales can reach 60 feet in length and weigh more than 120,000 pounds. They migrate from Russian to Canadian waters and back through the Chukchi and Beaufort Seas.<sup>48</sup> They are the most important subsistence animal for the coastal communities of northwest and northern Alaska.<sup>49</sup> Whale hunting and the customs surrounding it are also an important part of their cultural heritage. Oil and gas development has the potential, directly or indirectly, to affect hunting success or the habitats of species important to subsistence. (Of course, offshore oil development could play a positive economic role in the native communities; some Inupiat whaling captains also work in the oil industry, for instance.). An Arctic Regional Citizens Council could help assure the active participation of the people who know this region the best in planning and response."