

**Ocean Policy Task Force**

**Gulf Coast Region**

**Public Meeting**

October 19, 2009 3:30 p.m. (CDT)

Audubon Aquarium of the Americas & Entergy IMAX Theater  
1 Canal Street  
New Orleans, LA 70130

Texas State Aquarium  
2710 North Shoreline Boulevard.  
Corpus Christi, TX 78402

Dauphin Island Sea Lab  
Wiese Marine Science Hall, Room 102W  
101 Bienville Blvd.  
Dauphin Island, AL 36528

National Marine Fisheries Service  
Southeast Regional Office  
263 13th Avenue South  
St. Petersburg, FL 33701

J. L. Scott Marine Education Center  
703 East Beach Drive  
Ocean Springs, MS 39564

## P R O C E E D I N G S

>> CHAIR SUTLEY: Welcome to the Gulf Coast Region Ocean Policy Task Force Public Meeting.

>> Good afternoon, everyone.

Can you hear me? I'm delighted to be here and delighted to see you all here today and to welcome my co-Task Force members. It's great to be back here in New Orleans. I was here last week, joining the president on his visit, and I had a chance to meet some folks here and see a little bit but definitely looking forward to hearing more today.

This is the Gulf Coast Regional Public Meeting of the Interagency Ocean Policy Task Force. And I want to thank our folks here at the Audubon Aquarium of the Americas and the members of the Gulf Coastal Ecosystem Learning Center for sharing their videoconference technology with us.

Ron Foreman, President and CEO, Audubon Nature Institute, Historic President and CEO of the Florida Aquarium, George Crozier, Executive Director of the Dauphin Island Sea Lab, Tom Schmid, President and CEO, Texas State Aquarium, and Christopher Snyder, Director of the J.L. Scott Marine Education Center.

This is model technology for distance learning, and it's letting us hold this meeting live and interactively in four other

states of the Gulf Coast region.

So the video technology works. Microphone technology? Not so much.

[Laughter]

Joining me today, on behalf of the Task Force in New Orleans here today is Dr. Jane Lubchenco, Undersecretary of Commerce for Oceans and Atmosphere and the Administrator of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration; Admiral Thad Allen, Commandant of the U.S. Coast Guard and no stranger to many of you; Bob Sussman, Senior Policy Council to the Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency; and Laura Davis, the Associate Deputy Secretary of the Department of the Interior.

I would like to thank and introduce our hosts, Mr. Garrett Graves, who is the Director of Coastal Activities for Louisiana Governor Bobby Jindal.

Garrett?

>> GARRETT GRAVES: Thank you very much. My name is Garrett Graves. I am the Executive Assistant to the Governor for Coastal Activities, and I chair the Coastal Protection Restoration Authority of Louisiana. I want to welcome the OSHA Policy Task Force to the state and New Orleans today. I want to especially welcome Admiral Allen. Welcome back to Louisiana. You're a hero here for all you did after Katrina.

[Applause]

>> Welcome back to you. You are going to be held in incredibly high regard as we move forward on this.

I want to ask the Task Force to throw out everything that you have heard everywhere else. The Gulf of Mexico and Louisiana is a very, very unique place. This area is responsible for about \$2.2 trillion in economic activity, which comprises probably the seventh-largest economy in the world. We have an incredible seafood resources of 1.2 billion pounds per year that are recovered and have been harvested from the Gulf of Mexico each year. This area is responsible for 20 million jobs, 27% of the nation's domestic oil. We have six of the top 10 ports in the country and including five of the top 15 ports in the nation right here in Louisiana. Forty percent -- Going back to seafood, 40% of the recreational seafood extracted in the nation comes from the Gulf of Mexico. This area is incredibly important and incredibly productive. It's also very, very complex. The management issues in the Gulf of Mexico are incredible, trying to balance the energy, the maritime and seafood and the fact that we have these unique cultures that live and their livelihood depends upon coastal Louisiana.

I want to break this down for many of the agencies that are represented here. I know many of you are familiar with coastal

Louisiana. Since the 1930's, as a result of levees that have been built on the Mississippi River, we have lost 2,300 square miles of land, land and coastal wetlands. The extraordinary loss of land here and the loss of coastal wetlands here, and in light of the fact that we have a 404 program that prohibits the loss of wetlands, that requires mitigation to occur, that imposes civil penalties and in some cases even criminal penalties for the destruction of those wetlands. There's a no net loss program. We have a Wetlands Conservation Program, CRP, run by the Department of Agriculture. We lost 2300 square miles of coastal wetlands with virtually nothing in response to mitigate for that loss representing NOAA. Ninety percent of the species in the Gulf of Mexico are dependent on our coastal wetlands, our coastal estuary, for their life, ninety percent of all of the species available in the Gulf of Mexico, yet the largest habitat loss in the nation is occurring here in our gulf.

The President was just down here last week, an incredible visit and we appreciate him being here, a very positive message coming from the President. He talked about the fact that our reliance on imported oil has really increased consumption to 70%. Right here in the Gulf of Mexico, we have the largest reserves, and safe, stable, secure recovery with hydrocarbons, rather than importing these from other areas that have less sensitive

regulation for the extraction of energy resources.

Look, I know that oil doesn't taste good and I know it doesn't smell good and I know a lot of people here don't like it. The reality is it's an important part of our economy today. When you look at the resources of the Gulf of Mexico, the natural gas reserves there are going to continue to play a vital role in the future regardless of how we move forward with energy policy.

In addition, I saw on the interim report a number of comments based on the greenhouse gas emissions and climate change. It's important to recognize that the more we can produce here safely in the United States, you prevent the transportation of those fuels from the Middle East, from Venezuela, from Africa, and many other countries thereby preventing the initiatives related to those transportation costs.

In addition, while I'm talking about greenhouse gas emissions, and the scientists have recently indicated that the 2,300 square miles of land we lost in Louisiana is at least the equivalent of greenhouse gasses of operating 80 million cars for one year -- 80 million! It's incredible what is happening in our coastal area and how profoundly it impacts us.

For those of you from the Department of Interior that are historic preservists, New Orleans is one of the most incredible cities in the world in terms of the concentration of its source structures. I point

back to you representing DHS and being here after Katrina. I know you're familiar with the \$150 billion that Congress appropriated trying to respond to Hurricanes Katrina and Rita. \$150 billion for every taxpayer in the nation. From a fiscal perspective, making proactive, strategic investments in coastal Louisiana will prevent those types of expenditures in the future.

Coming back to the USDA and EPA, the hypoxic area, we have a 10,000 oxygen-depleted zone that grows every spring in the Gulf of Mexico, again, in an area that has some of the most productive fisheries areas in the nation. It's great to see the progress made on the Great Lakes at issue and the billion dollars commitment recently made for the Everglades project with our friends from Florida, and the \$500 million commitment that was recently made. Congratulations to you for the Chesapeake Bay program, Peugeot Sound, and any other large-scale restoration efforts. In Louisiana, we don't see the same type of action. In fact, virtually nothing is happening here today. Many deadlines have been missed in terms of moving forward on projects that were designed to improve the sustainability of the ecosystem.

The repercussions here are greater and the opportunities here are extraordinary. The developing sustainable coastal areas in Louisiana provides opportunities to demonstrate adaptation policies. We're experiencing a relative sea level rise in

Louisiana today. We have the greatest rate of subsidence for  
compassion of our coastal areas which, again, causes the relative  
sea level rise, and as a result of the sea level rise, the  
greatest rates of anywhere else in the world today. There's a  
opportunity to demonstration the adaptation policies. There's an  
opportunity to sequester greenhouse gasses in our restoration  
efforts. There's an opportunity to reduce hypoxia by diverting  
water from the Mississippi River into our wetland areas. The  
plants removed by nitrates and the phosphates, the plants  
benefit with surface removed, restoring our coastal lands and  
you send a disbursed water into the Gulf of Mexico, producing the  
oxygen-depleted zone, achieving many, many goals.

There are opportunities here to be proactive and develop  
sustainable communities, make a fraction of that \$150 billion  
investment and ensure that we never see a Katrina-like scenario  
again. We have an opportunity here to develop safe, sustainable,  
secure domestic energy development, and that's fossil fuels and  
alternative energy sources offshore. The infrastructure is there  
today.

So I ask of you, in closing, we commend you for establishing  
the Ocean Policy Task Force, we commend the President for  
establishing the working group on the Gulf Coast. Your mission  
is vital. There's no one agency in the Federal Government that

is capable of developing a sustainable Louisiana. Many, many agencies, multidisciplinary approach, expertise from many, many experts within the Federal Government and, of course, the resources properly being coordinated is vital.

We ask that you evaluate the use of the standard of fresh water coming down the Mississippi River to try to mitigate for or try to replicate the natural process that used to occur when Louisiana was growing to the tune of 2.5 square kilometers per year, rather than the current rate of loss at up to 20 square miles of land per year, coastal wetlands lost. We ask that you require the Corps or Engineers beneficially use dredge material rather than dumping that critical resource out into the Gulf of Mexico and wasting that sediment.

We ask that you allow for mitigation funds to be used for large-scale restoration. There's an estimate that 3- to \$400 million in mitigation will be spent related to the hurricane protection work ongoing in Louisiana. Use those funds to build a large scale restoration project in Louisiana. We ask that you mitigate to the levees, you help to advance the 17 restoration projects that Congress authorized over two years ago that have been stale since that time. We ask that you move forward on the State's master plan. There is a specific plan, specific projects, for coastal sustainability in Louisiana, looking at the

ecosystem, economic, and cultural sustainability.

We ask that you allow for revenue sharing as was indicated in the Ocean Policy Commission's initial report, allow for revenue sharing for onshore energy production that allows for 50% of the revenue to be shared with the states that host such production and allow the states to take the lead in ensuring a sustainable ecosystem in the coastal area.

And last and most importantly, we ask that you help to coordinate the Federal resources, the expertise within the Federal Government, the authorities within the Federal agencies, to be properly coordinated to help us achieve a sustainable coastal Louisiana, not in 40 years, as the Corps or Engineers current project process requires, but in a time that is much more appropriate, considering the vulnerability, considering the loss, and considering the priority to the nation and considering the repercussions of no action.

The members of the Task Force, I thank you very much for being here today and thank the President for the leadership and the recognition of the importance of our coastal communities and the coastal resources to the nation. And, again, thank you for coming back to Louisiana today.

[Applause]

>> Thank you, Garrett. I would also like to thank and

introduce our other hosts, Wynecta Fisher, the Director of the Office of Environmental Affairs for the City of New Orleans.

>> MS: FISHER: Good afternoon. Good afternoon. My name is Wynecta Fisher, and I'm bringing greetings on behalf of [inaudible], who couldn't be here today. I'm going to be brief because Garrett basically said it all. I want to thank the Task Force and the Chair for shining the spotlight back on this region. This region has a lot of critical infrastructure that needs to be protected. We have a lot of resources that the rest of the country enjoys and we want to be able to continue to protect those.

There are a lot of great panelists up here and a lot of great minds in the audience. And I'm very, very interested in hearing what everyone has to say. But more importantly, I'm interested in the policies developed based on the feedback that you guys are here to present. So without any other things that I would love to say, except for thank you, Garrett, for those comments, welcome to New Orleans, thank you for coming here, and please come back again.

[Applause.]

>> Thank you for the hospitality. We're happy to be here in New Orleans. I would like to give each of the Task Force members a moment to briefly introduce themselves and give some brief

opening comments.

Jane?

>> JANE LUBCHENCO: Hi, everybody. I'm Jane Lubchenco. I have the pleasure of serving as Undersecretary of Commerce for Oceans and Atmosphere and Administrator of NOAA, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. On behalf of the 12,800 employees of NOAA and on behalf of Secretary of Commerce Gary Locke, it's a great pleasure for me to serve on the Task Force.

We are here to listen and to learn from you. I look forward to that very much, both to the people here in New Orleans as well as to those of you in our other Gulf Coast cities that are joining us today.

>> CHAIR SUTLEY: Thank you.

Admiral Allen?

>> RAY ALLEN: Thank you, Madam Chair. It's great to be here and it is great to be back in New Orleans. Part of me will always be here. And I understand there's a lot of work to do, but I thank you and I thank the people of the Gulf Coast for what you continue to do.

I'm representing Secretary Napolitano, Secretary of Homeland Security, and the United States Coast Guard. We have held these meetings around the country, and it's been my honor and pleasure to serve, and thank you, Madam Chairman.

>> CHAIR SUTLEY: Thank you.

Bob?

>> BOB SUSSMAN: My name is Bob Sussman, and I'm Senior Policy Counsel to the EPA Administrator, Lisa Jackson. I'm pleased and excited to be here today on behalf of our agency and particularly on behalf of our administrator, Lisa Jackson, who is a native New Orleanean, went to high school and college here, and has enormous ties to this city and enormous affection for it.

I wanted to thank Garrett for his opening comments, which I think graphically underscored the challenge that we face in the Gulf region through a unique and truly difficult set of environmental stressors that have converged in this area, particularly over the last couple of years.

We have challenges in all of our regions, and those are substantial challenges. I'm very familiar with Chesapeake Bay. But the challenges down here are really daunting and, I think, are going to be very instructive to us as we think about Oceans policy broadly, but also think about the regional approaches that we would want to put in place to implement our recommendations.

So I am listening with an open mind and expecting to learn a great deal today and I wanted to express my appreciation for the opportunity to be here.

>> Great. Thank you to CEQ Chair Nancy Sutley for running

this Task Force, and thanks to the hosts here in New Orleans. It's very nice to be here. I am here to provide greetings on behalf of Secretary Salazar and the 70,000 employees of the Department of the Interior. The Department is very proud to be part of this effort to build a national coordinated ocean policy that our country needs. And the President envisions the entire department. Literally every one of our bureaus is engaged in this effort and lending expertise. It's the type of open collaborative process that the Secretary Salazar feels is critical as we're making important decisions about the land and water resources that really belong to the American people.

You're a really important part of the collaborative process for us, for this Task Force. So thank you for being here. And I look forward to your best ideas and your vision about stewardship of our oceans and coastal resources.

Thank you.

>>> Thank you.

Before we begin, I want to thank you again for coming today and just talk to you a little bit about the public meetings.

This is our fifth public meeting. We all find them to be very helpful and very instructive. We have heard a lot of very good comments around the country, and we look forward very much to hearing your comments today.

We know the benefit of hearing from people on their real-life experiences and the perspectives that you bring that will help the ground the work that we do in reality. We know that we will get good input from you, from people who live on or near, are dependent on, love and use the resources of our coasts and our oceans and that will help us to develop recommendations that make sense and work in the real world.

So I want to give you a little bit of background on the Ocean Policy Task Force and its work so far. The President created the Task Force by memorandum issued on June 12, 2009. The Task Force is comprised of 24 senior policy level members from executive departments and agencies across the Federal Government. The President charges the developing recommendations in four areas:

Within 90 days, he asked us to develop recommendations for a national policy for the oceans, our coasts, and Great Lakes; and, second, a framework for policy coordination of efforts by the Federal Government to improve the stewardship of the oceans, coasts and Great Lakes; and, third, an implementation strategy that identifies and prioritizes those actions that the U.S. should pursue in furtherance of that national policy.

This is a portion of the work that is covered by the interim report and is available for public comment and presenting the

interim report to the President in September. In addition, the President also asked us to provide a recommended framework for effective coastal and marine spatial planning by the end of December, and this is the focus of our work for the next few months.

Now, I will turn the microphone over to Dr. Lubchenco, who will give you a little more information about the interim report.

>> JANE LUBCHENCO: Thank you.

For those who haven't seen it, the report that we sent to the President in mid-September proposes a National Ocean Policy. It proposes a coordination framework for approved stewardship of our oceans, coasts, and Great Lakes, and nine implementation strategies that identify and prioritize the seven objectives that the United States should pursue to achieve to National Ocean Policy. A one-page summary of that report was available to you out in front before you came in here. I hope you have had a chance to look at it.

Just out of curiosity, how many of you have seen or read parts of the National Ocean Policy or the interim report that we sent to the President?

That is terrific. That is terrific, that is fantastic.  
Yeah, a best seller.

The report was out for public comment. The public comment

period closed October 17. Thank you very much to those of you who submitted comments. To anyone who would still like to weigh-in on the second phase of where we're headed now, which is very squarely on ecosystem-based marine and coastal spatial planning, we invite you to do so through the website that has been set up by the the Council on Environmental Quality. That website URL is on the materials that you have. It's [www.whitehouse.gov/oceans](http://www.whitehouse.gov/oceans), and we eagerly read all of the comments that are posted and thank you again for your input.

We are focused very much on this second phase of our task, on the marine and coastal spatial planning, and look forward to the public comments today as well as those that you submit through the website.

>> Thank you, Jane.

I would like to now ask Admiral Allen to give an overview of our efforts to engage the public in our work.

>> ADMIRAL ALLEN: Thank you, Madam Chair.

I think you all have seen the demonstration by President Obama regarding the commitment to robust citizenship engagement. And this memorandum creating the Task Force instructed us to involve the public in our work. We developed a public engagement plan that includes regional stakeholder meetings like this one today as well as expert stakeholder meetings, and we have created

a website to receive public comments.

Today's public meeting both allows us to hear views and suggestions to inform the Task Force as it develops its recommendations from the public to learn more about the Task Force and our activities. A tremendous foundation for our work was built by the early U.S. Commission on Ocean Policy, the Pew Ocean Commission, and the Joint Ocean Commission.. These commissions undertook a great deal of public and stakeholder input, including both holding public meetings in every state of the nation. We are mindful that several years have passed since those reports were completed and that in some areas where important scientific and technological developments have occurred, such as climate change and offshore renewable energy. We also know there have been several state and regional level activities to develop and deploy spatial planning programs.

This meeting is our fifth regional public meeting. We plan to hold one more at the Great Lakes region. In addition, we have held 25 expert stakeholder roundtables, representing areas such as commercial and recreational fishing, energy, tribal interest, conservation, human health, science, recreation, business, ports and shipping. We have also had seven expert roundtable briefings related to marine and coastal spatial planning and are planning several more in the next few weeks. These briefings and

additional public comment will inform the members of the Task Force for the final consideration that will be submitted to the President in December. The Task Force's primary focus to develop a recommended framework for effective coastal and marine spatial planning.

>> Thank you. Bob Sussman will now describe the structure of today's field journey.

>> BOB SUSSMAN: Thank you, Chair Sutley.

Today's public meeting has two parts, which is the format that we have been using at all of the public meetings.

The first part will involve hearing from a panel of eight experts on a variety of topics of special importance in the Gulf Coast region. We will then move to hearing thoughts and comments from all of the groups.

We are happy to introduce the moderators.

For Tampa, Florida, Heidi Reckite (phonetic) of NOAA.

For Dauphin Island Alabama, Dr. Susan Rees from the Army Corps of Engineers.

For Ocean Springs, Mississippi, Rick Clark from the National Park Service.

From Corpus Christi, Texas, Ray Allen of the Environmental Protection Agency.

And here in New Orleans, Louisiana, we have, on my left,

Dr. Virginia Burkett, who is the Chief Scientist of Global Change Research at the United States Geological Survey.

Dr. Burkett will lead the public comment portion of today's meeting and coordinate across the states.

This will allow for a truly Gulf Coast regional meeting.

We ask that you limit remarks to a minute and a half to ensure the maximum number of you have an opportunity to provide comments.

Those of you who wish to speak should complete the speaker cards that are available at the registration table and turn them in. Our emcees will call out the order of those who turned in speaker cards, including those at our satellite locations.

For those of you who would prefer to submit your comments online, there are computers in the back of the room here in New Orleans and at our satellite connections that you can use now or you can submit them later at the website indicated on the handout that you have all received.

You may also submit comments in writing today.

Please be sure to give written comments to a staff member.

>> Thank you.

Laura Davis will now introduce our expert panelists.

>> LAURA DAVIS: Thank you. In our first group, our first panelist is Wanda James. Wanda is the Interim Executive Director

of United South and Eastern Tribes who will speak on tribal interests.

Our second panelist is Bill Walker. Bill is the Executive Director of the Mississippi Department of Marine Resources. And he will discuss regional governance issues related to the Gulf.

Our third panelist is Dr. Marcia Allen Owens, who is the Assistant Professor and Environmental Studies Institute at Florida A&M University. Dr. Owens will be speaking on issues related to public health and environmental justice.

Our fourth panelist on this first step is Dr. Robert Twilley, a professor in the Department of Oceanography and Coastal Sciences at Louisiana State University.

He will be speaking on safeguarding coastal resources in the face of climate change, in addition to the issues related to habitat conservation and ecosystem based management.

Wanda?

>> WANDA JAMES: Good afternoon. My name is Wanda James, and I am the Interim Executive Director for the United South and Eastern Tribes. Our office is located in Nashville, Tennessee. We have 25 recognized tribes that we represent, and those tribes are located at 12 different states that range from Texas across to Florida, up to Maine.

For thousands of years, the American Indian, Alaskan

native's ancestors have lived by the sea, on the sea, and with the sea. For USET tribes particularly, the oceans and the waterways of the east and south have been critical to survival and play a central role in cultural and spiritual traditions.

For spiritual, environmental, historic, and economic reasons, we remain concerned and committed to the ocean and to the lakes which are the subject of this Task Force's important work. One of the key concepts this Task Force is addressing is coastal and marine spatial planning. The question that we ask is: How do we divide ocean space? Or as we put more stress on the ocean through increased shipping, fishing, aquaculture and new industries, such as wind and wave energy projects, we must not sweep aside the old users, which one of the oldest is that of the American Indians.

Our issues include fishing, traditional and sustenance gathering rights, and sacred and cultural uses. The tribes have experience of these oceans and lakes going back thousands of years. Much of that knowledge and experience is handed down through oral traditions and by other means. Tribes bring a different understanding of the oceans and of what they mean, especially to our tribes.

An activity that might pose no problem for many communities could be highly destructive to something sacred to our tribes.

The USET Natural Resources Committee has begun the work of looking at policy recommendations for the protection, maintenance, and restorations of our oceans, our coasts, and our lakes. Our first and foremost recommendation is to keep USET involved. USET is committed to being a constructive partner with the Task Force, consult with tribes early and often. I noticed in a cursory review of the interim reporter tribes are identified as part of the Government Advisory Committee and as collaborative partners in collaboration. We thank you for recognizing the significant engagement in this process.

Indeed, this is a fundamental obligation of the United States and the government-to-government relationship with the Indian tribes. This applies not only to this Task Force but all of those involved in the implementation of this Task Force recommendations.

Second, we recommend increased monitoring of the oceans and lakes. For example, in the Gulf of Maine and its bays, there are indications the the pH is lowering to a point that is stressing many shellfish. This may severely impact the clam and lobster industries in the very near future. This change must be better understood.

Third, USET tribes are concerned with the help of the Gulf of Mexico ecosystem. We're actively engaged in dialogue with the

EPA Gulf of Mexico. Program office and the Gulf of Mexico Hypoxia Task Force through the USET Natural Resources Committee and representation on the National Tribe Water Council.

Fourth, there should be an additional support for regional councils to work on the coastal and marine spatial planning and tribal involvement in those councils should be the normal and exception.

Fifth, perspective offshore windfarm sites should be properly vetted which includes providing the tropical community with ample opportunity to review and provide input. Sites must not have a detrimental impact on traditional lobster and fishing grounds or on tribal sacred practices.

Six, ocean acidification must be better understood. There is evidence that oyster spat in Washington state is dying due to the inability of the oysters to produce enough calcium for their shells. The Passamaquoddy Tribal Environmental Department has monitored pH levels in the Passamaquoddy and Cobscook Bays since 2003 and have seen pH levels steadily decline. If the clowns, periwinkles and the lobster become affected by the acidification, the livelihood of many Passamaquoddy tribal members will be severely impacted.

This is just a short list of our concerns. There will be much more to discuss as the work of this Task Force goes forward.

Again, UCET looks forward to an ongoing relationship with the Task Force and the Federal agencies tasked.

>> Thank you. Go ahead.

>> BILL WALKER: Thank you. I'm Bill Walker. I'm here to represent Governor Haley Barbour of the State of Mississippi, who currently leads the Gulf of Mexico Governors Alliance.

First, I want to thank President Barack Obama for his June 12th memorandum that established this Interagency Ocean Policy Task Force and directed you to develop a National Ocean Policy, a framework of policy coordination, and an implementation strategy.

Also I want to thank CEQ Chair Nancy Sutley for the superb job she has done in pulling together the numerous Federal departments and agencies that conduct ocean and coastal activities and for getting them to all focus collaboratively toward achieving the President's directive. Getting multiple agencies to work together toward a common good is difficult. It reminds me of former Mississippi Senator Trent Lott's book, "Herding Cats." Chairperson Sutley has done an outstanding job of getting this Task Force moving together in the right direction.

As was mentioned previously, the Pew Ocean Commission and the U.S. Commission on Ocean Policy both comprised of the best and brightest minds in our nation recommended in 2003 and 2004 that an integrated more regional focus on ocean stewardship was

desperately needed if we were to adequately restore, protect, and sustain our great water bodies and their associated coastal communities. The establishment of this Ocean Policy Task Force gives us the opportunity to achieve those recommendations, an opportunity that we must and, I believe, will achieve together.

Taking to heart the recommendations of the Pew and Ocean Commissions, the governors of the five states bordering the Gulf of Mexico formed in 2004 the Gulf of Mexico Governors Alliance, a state-led, Federally supported partnership that has and will continue to focus on improving the overall well being of the Gulf of Mexico region.

The Gulf alliance recently announced its second action plan, a plan focused on reducing nutrients entering the Gulf, improving water quality, characterizing and restoring habitats, making coastal communities more resilient and environment education. This is truly a regional plan, unlimited by state boundaries or political jurisdictions. And other regions have followed suit. Currently, all coastal regions in the continental United States have formed partnerships following the model of the Gulf of Mexico alliance. These are the West Coast Governors Agreement, the South Atlantic Alliance, the Mid Atlantic Regional Council of the Ocean, and the Northeast Regional Ocean Council.

While the idea of multiple states working together to

achieve regional and national benefits also reminds me of Senator's Lott's book, the five coastal regional partnerships are well on their way toward true regional army. And we have taken the next necessary step of creating a partnership of regions, a five-region national partnership with the goal of informing the national ocean policy this Task Force is directed to develop.

The implementation of a national ocean policy has, of course, a financial component. And simply increasing Federal budget lines will not ensure improved agency performance, higher ecosystem function...

*[Audio interruption due to technical error.*

*This transcript resumes with session in progress.]*

>> More and more cognizant of ecological issues.

The doctor told me and made a comment a little while ago, he says this is not just a Louisiana issue. He is certainly correct on that one. This is a global issue.

Seaports today are becoming advocates, of course, coastal protection, of advocating coastal protection and resources and facilitating commerce at the same time and balancing, if you will, almost like a juggler in the circus. Ports have become, over the last 20 to 25 years, more environmentally sustainable while at the same time reducing greenhouse gasses while moving

goods and carrying on international trade and keeping our GDP where it should be in the United States.

Water site infrastructure is a vital concern to all of us. Again, it's a balancing act with the environment and the ecology at the end of the day. But then again, where do you build a port if not on the water?

Drudging. Drudging maintenance used to be an issue of just maintaining our draft in our waterways for safe passage and navigation of ships. Today it's become not only a drudging for it to maintain ship passage but beneficial reefs of sediment are wetlands creation. Many of our speakers have alluded to that earlier, including Garrett.

Another area of interest, as far as we're concerned are the reduction of vessel emissions. We participated over the last ten years in the MARPOL Annex VI, the Annex VI treaty, and the creation of an emissions control area, which has affected positively both the United States and Canada. We have fought for better standards and standardization of balanced water treatment facilities. From state to state, it's going to ride about this point: We still don't have a national standard. And until we do, we will be subject and we will be victims of aquatic invasive species that come in aboard these vessels.

We're now looking at a marine highway source, many of you

know Sark sea shipping, to relieve landslide congestion. And we think that certainly barge movement and moving more and more cargo on the waterways, on the inland waterways, is certainly the greenest movement of all in transportation.

This morning we had the opportunity of commemorating the beginning of the real-time navigational information program with the National Oceanic and Dr. Lubchenco -- National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration and Admiral Thad Allen as well. Working with NOAA is a real treat. Their mapping, charting, surveying, sonics and current data are just absolutely second to none. And introducing that new port system this morning is going to be one that will put us head and shoulders above many other areas. But hoists we need in all maritime gateways will implement at some point in the future, alongside with the Coast Guard, the Corps of Engineers, and the Maritime Administration.

Your ports in America advocate the reauthorization of the Coastal Zone Management Act and always have. We are recognizing the importance of a working waterfront, but we also recognize the importance of what coastal zone management brings to areas like Louisiana in order that New Orleans doesn't become a beachfront property. Goods movement should be included in the next Service Transportation Act, and we hope that we can garner as much support for that as we possibly can.

Finally, we definitely need a balance of commerce and trade, but that balance of commerce and trade can only come with ecosystem preservation and protection.

Thank you very much.

>> PRESENTER: Thank you. And I also want to thank the Task Force for allowing me to talk to you, at least I think I want to thank you. I have had a lots of advice about what I should talk about. With apologies to my advisors, I want to concentrate on just three points. The implementation of ecosystem-based management such as is recommended in the interim Task Force report is vital to sustain Gulf of Mexico fisheries. The Gulf of Mexico supports one of the most productive fisheries in the world. While Gulf estuaries make up only 25% of our nation's estuary areas, they account for 50% of our wetlands, 85% of our shrimp, and 60% of our oyster production. Annual landings exceeding 1.3 billion pounds ensures that the Gulf yields more seafood than the south and mid Atlantic Chesapeake and New England regions combined. This has been possible because of the productivity and resiliency of the Gulf, but this cannot continue and traditional fisheries' management approach is we'll be overwhelmed by the challenges facing us. We have already talked a great deal about the challenges facing loss of wetlands here in Louisiana, but that is reflected also in other states of Texas,

Mississippi, Alabama, and Florida, where losses in seagrasses, oysters, and mangroves are a constant.

Over 41% of the Continental U.S. drains into the Gulf, and one of the consequences has been the annual formation of a dead zone in the area the low or no oxygen that can reach 70,000 square miles in area, about the size of Massachusetts. The Gulf of Mexico is basically a shallow subtropical sea. And of all of our country's marine waters, the most vulnerable to climate change. Sea level rise, warming temperatures and ocean acidification are an acute concern. Located between tropical and temperate regions, invasive species are already disrupting ecosystem function. And most ominous for the long-term, the accelerating deterioration of ecosystem services fundamental to the health of this large marine ecosystem. Unless fisheries managers can influence the broader context within which fisheries resources reside, they will be relegated to allocating increasingly smaller pieces of a pie to a growing number of users with diverse and often conflicting interests. An ecosystem-based management approach gives us the best opportunity to not only maintain what we have achieved but to improve upon it.

Recreational fishing is a constituency that has long been overlooked and under-appreciated in Federal fisheries management policy. This Task Force has the opportunity to correct that to

the benefit and advancement of the lofty goals contemplated in the President's charge to this Task Force and as expressed in the interim report. It is also vital to sustainable fisheries management in the Gulf of Mexico. Gulf anglers account for 42% of our country's saltwater angler and over 50% of the recreational fishing in the U.S. happens here, generating \$81.5 billion annually in economic benefits. Recreational fishing added 1,000 new jobs a year to the Texas economy from 2001 to 2006, according to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service reports. Recreational anglers are the only group, of which I'm aware, that has willingly taxed themselves with higher license fees and special use stamps not only to sustain the fisheries to which they are committed but to restore habitat and important ecosystem function, fund license and buy-back programs to help stabilize commercial fisheries, underwrite conservation of endangered species, and fight legislative battles to protect freshwater in-flows vital to the health of our Gulf estuaries, improve water quality, and ensure the ecosystem services of which we all depend.

As I moved one of the largest fisheries management organizations in this country from traditional to ecosystem-based fisheries management, this constituency was my sometimes nervous but always supportive partner because they were a part of that

process. They can be so for this effort as well. It is essential for success in the Gulf of Mexico. Failure to do so could prove to be an oversight fatal to this endeavor, which is so important to the future health and productivity of our ocean.

In summary, I wish this Task Force success in the efforts to construct a national framework for ocean policy as outlined in the interim report. It can revise the means by which we might successfully address the seemingly overwhelming challenges facing us in ocean management. However, I would urge you to pay special attention to the process of implementation and ensure non-Federal stakeholders, regional governors entities, states, industry, and for the Gulf of Mexico, especially oil and gas, and conservation organizations, a leading role in filling out that framework and making this policy a reality. They should, in fact, be positioned to lead it. Failure of Federal policy to do so in the past denied and is denying fisheries managers of the full range of tools we have needed to be successful here in the Gulf of Mexico.

Marine protected areas, catch shares, and related tools that must have committed stakeholder support to be successful are problematic. There are efforts to correct this, but the recovery curve is steep. I beg you not to miss the opportunity to flatten this curve and provide the means by which we engage all of the stakeholders in achieving the goals we all desire for our

fisheries and our ocean's future. We may never have another chance. I appreciate the opportunity to talk to you.

[Applause]

>> PRESENTER: Thank you for the opportunity to address what I would consider to be the human issues of ocean literacy and environmental education, community resiliency. While I'm here from the state of Alabama, I have to point out that I am also a graduate of Jesuits High School and Loyola University in New Orleans, so I have an emotional attachment to the issue of community resiliency. And this may be the most important of the ones that I am supposed to deal with.

I think one of the of the things that we have noticed, however, is that the resiliency of the natural environment is terribly entangled with the human-built environment of the Gulf Coast. I can't think of places that are more complex than that.

One of our problems is the growth in coastal population. According to the Census Bureau, we expect the coastal population of the Gulf of Mexico to increase from a total of of 44.2 million in 1995 to over 61.4 million in 2025. That's a 40% increase. Texas and Florida are the most rapidly growing states with the longest shorelines. The population centers are found specifically in Houston to the south of Houston, Tampa, St. Petersburg, to the south and in New Orleans and to the north for

the most part.

The Gulf coastline has to be considered among the most vulnerable, given the conditions of relative sea level rise as we understand them. Population of the Texas coast is large and getting larger, while the relative sea level rise is also increasing at a maximum rate for some of the reasons that you have already heard. The south Louisiana coastline is much less dense, but the impacts are stunning. It is obvious that the City of New Orleans was actually built much of it below sea level when it was founded over 300 years ago.

Resilience is a term that we have a lot of interest in. It applies at two levels, there's the personal level, considered psychological. It's the ability to recover from depression, from catastrophe, a variety of things that, in fact, influence the way we react as humans. There's system resiliency. This is less understood, frankly. We don't understand ecosystems as well as we should. I think the whole concept of moving to ecosystem-based management is extraordinarily sound. We must move it in this direction.

Generally speaking, however, there does seem to be a constant; successful resiliency appears to be supported by one or more concepts of diversity. We have looked at the resiliency of communities on the Gulf Coast. We know that we need to have a

diverse and flexible business capacity to respond to catastrophe, or we have to have an adaptable variety of native species, including people; we have to be adaptable.

Hurricane Katrina provided a striking lesson which demonstrated a remarkable natural ecosystem resilience in many ways. We have seen this before in other storms. Tropical storms are clearly part of the natural system of the Gulf of Mexico. The species are going to have to adapt or die, and we are among that group.

The issue of increasing storm activity is entangled in the issue of climate change, and trends and causes are still hotly debated. The media coverage for the population of the coast has become so exhaustive as most Gulf residents have become more than aware of storm impacts. And I think one of the most serious challenges that we face as a consequence of this growing awareness of our coastal vulnerability is something that I would simply call the "cost of living" on the coast.

The Mississippi coastal communities and New Orleans have flirted with the unpleasant opportunity to redesign and recover with all too predictable enthusiasm for rebuilding bigger and better. Urban planners preaching the virtues of sustainability, smart growth, and new urbanism swarmed to the area after the storm. I was part of the Corps of Engineers Environmental

Advisory Board. And the Corps threw itself on its collective sword after the failure of the systems that they had designed 50 years earlier; the collapse of which was as much a failure of local management and national support, all driven by an incomplete understanding of the natural process, the growth of the storm's impact, and the ability to understand how much we depended on these things.

We are a persistent species, and we've come back. Most have come back, but not all, and it remains a problem in Mississippi, in Alabama, and certainly in Louisiana. It remains to be seen just how resilient we are, given these circumstances. But resiliency does seem to be linked somehow to diversity, whether it's economic flexibility, cultural dynamics, physical topography or species plasticity, and that seems, to me, to represent one of the greatest challenges to our long-term coastal survival as a community.

The cost of reconstruction over and over again has made the taxpayer and members of Congress extraordinarily hostile at times. And whether it's a nation looking at the Gulf Coast as a whole or chronically exposed portion of our barrier island, this is the perception that we have to deal with, and we have to understand the factors that have been presented already. But the design of reconstruction has demanded a stronger detail and a

verticality in the face of what we now know to be problems associated with hurricanes. Going up along the coast does address relative sea level rise. That is the threat that we still do not fully comprehend and we do not quantify adequately. All of this is largely rooted in a better understanding of storm characteristics, storm surge, the impact of the duration of storms.

The point is that the cost of construction where the structure meets the sand has become prohibitively expensive to the vast majority of people in our nation. The ability to live or even visit the coast is threatened by this particular cost of living. The ocean remains the most tangible resource of our planet. And there are so many demands on its resources base that more and more often we're having to allocate access to those assets among the competing segments of the population. But much of the spirit that drives community resilience derives from the very diversity that is being practically discriminated against by economic reality. I worry about this as a polarizing factor in our society. Therefore, I think we have to have, number one, is a better appreciation of the asset base. We have to have a better understanding of processes, economic, natural, and psychological. These underpin our ability to manage the coast for all people. And that will indeed require a greater

commitment to ocean literacy and education. Only through this better understanding of the coast, its benefits, its costs, its jeopardy, and its potential are we ever going to be able to region a sustainable point in a coastal society.

Thank you.

[Applause]

>> PAUL KELLY: My name is Paul Kelly. And after a 40-year career in offshore oil and gas drilling in the United States and in Europe, after becoming a member of the U.S. Commission on Ocean Policy, I have retired. And my Ocean Commission experience was a life-changing experience for me. And today I'm devoting my time to try to bring various stakeholders on these issues together to find a common purpose. My responsibility this afternoon is to talk about responsible energy development, and what more appropriate place to have this discussion than here in New Orleans, in the center of the Gulf of Mexico region, where Federal waters contribute approximately 27% of America's domestic oil production. And as we sit here today, there's a lot more potential than that.

For decades now, the successful management system that we have had in the Gulf has made the United States the world leader in offshore energy technology. And each decade, just when the pundits thought the resources of the Gulf had been tapped out,

our geologists, engineers, marine specialists, manufacturing talent, and scientists have found new resources at deeper depths and deeper waters, and they have also found the means to produce them.

Today we're exploring for new natural gas resources in the shallow water of the Gulf under 600 feet at geological depths of below 30,000 feet. And the deeper waters of the Gulf, as deep as 8- to 9,000 feet, believe it or not, giant new discoveries of oil and gas are being made, which will enhance America's self-sufficiency and energy in the future. It is not an exaggeration to say that a true technological revolution is under way in the Gulf.

The technology that has been developed to search for hydrocarbons at these depths and pressures is truly extraordinary and owes its success to subsea equipment and robotics. More than 80% of the underwater vehicles in use in the world today are operating on offshore oil and gas projects. To put an accent mark on this point, that an analytical firm recently estimated that expenditures on autonomous underwater vehicles will reach \$3.2 billion by 2014. One company that is currently building a Mobile floating offshore drilling rig which will be capable of drilling wells in 15,000 feet of water. That's almost three miles. And lower than that, they will drill to a production

horizon that may be 25- or 30,000 feet.

For those of you listening in, and maybe students thinking about career opportunities, these developments will require a lot of ocean scientists, engineers of all types, electrical experts, construction managers, and all of the other talent required to build the multibillion dollar facilities that will be required in the deep offshore.

And for those who think that all of these economic benefits will resound to the oil-producing states, an analysis of ZIP Codes of providers of all of the equipment and services needed for the behemoths show supplies coming from 35 U.S. states and seven foreign countries.

As you all know, the word "responsible" is included in my presentation. And I would also like to add an important word to that, and that is "collaboration." Energy exploration offshore for the part is conducted on Federal offshore lands. The Minerals Management Service, MMS, an agency of the Federal Department of Interior, conducts lease sales to oil companies that wish to explore offshore. Before conducting those sales, the MMS carries out significant environmental studies of the lands to be leased to see if there are areas which may pose too great an environmental risk, requiring removal of the land from the sale or mitigation efforts or mitigation measures. The other Federal

agencies and the general public, as well as the industry, get to comment on those studies. Oil companies and their contractors take environmental study and training all the way from the rig floor up to the board of directors and senior management levels.

Another regulator offshore is the Coast Guard, whom we have heard about and from today, which has maritime safety responsibility, including environmental safety and covering the myriad of vessels that operate in the offshore energy realm. This is quite significant in that -- and it's a lot of ground to cover. Because, as we speak, there are about 30,000 people moving around in the Gulf of Mexico working on ridge platforms, various types of vessels, and commuting back and forth from offshore. The offshore Gulf of Mexico really can be described as a city offshore.

To give you some examples of how the industry takes their safety responsibilities to heart, the Minerals Management Service each year holds an annual safety award event in Houston where competitive rewards for good performance, good environmental and production performance, are made. The event has become much like the Academy Awards, where it's not unusual to have 800 or 900 industry people in attendance in anticipation of these awards and in a very excited fashion. Environmental safety has been

ingrained in the management of the companies operating offshore. And pressure to perform comes not only from regulatory bodies but also from peers who recognize in an accident by one is a stain on all.

The location of oil production platforms, as much as 200 miles south of New Orleans or Houston, has spurred interest by scientists in placing facilities onboard to study everything from storm predictability and loop currents to bird migration, ocean acidification, marine mammals, and most recently installation of satellite communication facilities to help direct air traffic in the Gulf region. The industry always tries to be as cooperative as it can in helping with these proposals, although we do have limited space on the facilities.

The presence of these facilities in the ultra deep waters of the Gulf has also led to a discovery of a population of sperm whales, not previously known. And special mitigating protocols for vessels conducting seismic operations have been implemented so as not to harm them. Other exciting happenings have occurred for marine biologists recently, such as the netting of a giant squid by researchers from MMS and NOAA; the spotting of a number of large whale sharks; and the observation in very deep water of a Greenland shark located a long way from Greenland. Workers offshore are just as excited about these discoveries as anyone

else -- as everyone else when he see them, and they try to be careful about them.

As my final point, I want to say that the popular acceptance of ecosystem-based management in the Gulf region has had a positive impact on the private sector in the region and, I believe, in encouraging more company involvement in our research institutions, our initiatives such as the Gulf of Mexico Alliance, and I would add to this, activities of the Gulf of Mexico Foundation, which I am involved as president, which strives to bring the private sector, the conservation community, and state and Federal agencies in this region together to collaborate on ocean education and habitat restoration projects. In many ways, our sites have been raised to think regionally, than just our own state perspective. We're also working with the Mexican states in the reality that we all share one Gulf.

Thank you.

[Applause]

PRESENTER: Thank you. Please help me thank all of the panelists for their excellent presentations.

[Applause]

I very much appreciate you all taking the time to be with us today.

So moving things along, I'm going to turn the meeting over

to Dr. Virginia Burkett, who will lead the public comment portion of today's meeting.

### **PUBLIC COMMENT SECTION**

>> DR. BURKETT: Thank you for inviting me to come to the public comment part of this meeting. It's really an honor.

The microphones will be held by people in the side of the room, and it will be important -- or in the middle of the room. It would be important that, as I call your name, that you raise your hands so we know where you are can get the microphone to you quickly. We will need to stick, as closely as possible, to the 1.5 minute time frame so as many people as possible can speak. And we encourage you to send additional comments in writing or online. So please be prepared to start with the 1.5 minutes as soon as you receive the microphone.

I will be assisted by Nancy Anu, to my left, with EPA, who will serve as our timekeeper. She will hold up a little Blue Plate Special for one minute. This is a one-minute into the talk, into the presentation, correct?

Oh, okay. One minute left. And then a 30-second clock showing you have you 30 seconds left. And again, it's just to try to let as many people as possible give the bottom-line of their perspectives to the Task Force.

This is an unusual sort of hearing because, as we take the first nine commenters here, then we're going to switch to our remote location in St. Petersburg, Florida, and then to three other locations around the Gulf. Then we will come back here. We will take four from each of those, and then we will come back here and we will take another sequence here. So that's the way it will go for the next couple of hours.

The first speaker is Charlotte Randolph. Charlotte Randolph, would you raise your hand?

>> We will get the mic to you. And she is with Lafourche Parish Government.

>> MS. RANDOLPH: Thank you for allowing me to speak today. Madam Chair. Admiral Allen, it's good to see you back on a pretty day.

I'm here today to speak as president of Lafourche Parish, which is southwest of Pierre, as well as president of PACE, Parishes Against Coastal Erosion. Lafourche Parish is about 90,000 people, which PACE represents about 2 million people, all along Louisiana's working coast. We recognized early on that the channels dug by the oil and gas industry were detrimental to our environment here in Louisiana and recognize also the coexistence of oil and gas in our fisheries industry. Our stewardship has been self-imposed. Because of the cyclical energy industry

changes, we most often rely on our fisheries as our foundation.

It's important that we are stewards of our environment. One of the issues that was brought up earlier are tribal ancestors. Many of the tribal ancestors are buried on land that has now disappeared in our region of the country.

Thank you.

>> Thank you.

Our next speaker, Michael Tritico [phonetic], with Restore in south Louisiana.

>> MICHAEL TRITICO: Thank you for coming to New Orleans and Louisiana. Thanks to President Obama for making this possible. I could thank each of you who are sitting at the front table. Because in my 45 years of advocacy, each of your departments or agencies has done something heroic, as they mentioned about the Coast Guard, but something heroic about the environment.

I have put together a written testimony which I turned in, and I hope that you will get a chance to read it. I started understanding about renewable resources when my uncle would take me shrimping when I was a child. I grew up in the Lake Charles area, Calcasieu basin, Calcasieu River basin. One of the greatest things was that the Department of Interior gave me a chance as a park ranger in Glacier in 1965 and then again as a

ranger naturalist in Yosemite.

To understand about ecology, part of our Mission 66 was to talk about ecology. And by the time we got to Yosemite in 1970, the tourists were talking about it. So a small seed can grow and can become a great accomplishment. I think that's what is going to happen with your Task Force.

My written testimony addresses one portion that I considered weak, which was the obstacles and the opportunities sections.

If you will look at what has happened across the last 40 years in that testimony, you will see the obstacles and opportunities in a real-world sense.

Thank you again.

>> Thank you, Mr. Tritico.

Our next speaker, Mr. Ross Frasier with ATP Oil & Gas Corporation.

>> ROSS FRASIER: Good evening. I hope to give you back about 30 seconds.

>> Okay.

>> The proposed system, in my view -- the system proposed as it stands right now in my view is biased toward regional and conservation groups. Their potential authority to circumvent or to establish and quite well perform in procedures and existing Federal government entities, such as MMS and Department of the

Interior, is commensurate with their position of stakeholders in the [inaudible] economy or that of our nation.

For instance, there's a possible -- there's the potential to override the DOI OCS leasing plan. The present system of local, state and Federal bodies provides more than adequate oversight of oil, gas, and sulfur exploration and production. This is manifested in the fact that the US OCS ENP industry is among the safest, cleanest, and most environmentally responsible in the U.S. economy. In short, since that part of the system is broken, so please don't fix it.

>> Thank you.

The next speaker, Mr. Mark Davis, Tulane University, Institute on Water Resources Law and Policy.

>> MARK DAVIS: Hi. It's a pleasure to be here. It's a pleasure to see you all again.

I believe that the challenge that you have in front of you is immense. A matter of spatial planning is going to be a daunting challenge. And I think it begs the question of what spaces, planned by whom, and to what end. And I would like to at least suggest a beginning point, and I think a couple of panelists certainly alluded to it. One is estuaries and their associated watersheds.

Oceans don't begin and end with blue water. They need to be

fed, nurtured, by estuarine coastal wetlands which on themselves depended upon riverine input. Historically we have ignored that inland watershed component to ocean health.

The second piece is the legal landscape that goes with all of this planning. Because, as we know, the Mississippi River that flows by New Orleans built coastal Louisiana, the estuaries, the Gulf of Mexico, but we don't manage it as a river. It's the Mississippi River and Tributaries Act. It's the Clean Water Act. It's the River and Harbors Act. It's many, many different programs and pieces, none of which add up to a river which add up to a healthy ocean.

We really need to make sure that we're thinking in terms of both the legal landscape, the physical landscape, and the ecologic. And if I can make one clarification, an earlier statement was that New Orleans was built below sea level. It became below sea level as we developed the city. I don't think the settlers were as foolish as that. Thank you.

[Applause]

>> Thank you.

Charlie Smith with Plaquemine Parish in Louisiana Charter Boat Association.

>> CHARLIE SMITH: Thank you. For 90 seconds, I will skip the social amenities. I am extremely disappointed in the Obama

Administration's NOAA representatives approving offshore aquaculture for Louisiana. We're tired of being used as an experimental state. We know now that kudzu is not good ground cover, water hyacinths are not just another ornamental plant, nutria are not going to bring back the fur trade, oil field canals have destroyed the marsh, and offshore aquaculture is not going to help us in our fishing. We're taught that fishing in closed spaces is susceptible to diseases and parasite, potentially damaging to our overall fishery.

They have to have 24-hour feeding, which will contribute to dead zones and more hypoxia. We will have a depletion of our forage fish. It takes five pounds of forage fish to make one pound of aquaculture product. Restrictive areas would put areas off limits to fishermen and shrimpers. A escapement where they can get loose and breed with our native population with the best fishery in the world, that's a very real possibility of that. It's almost inevitable since there's no hurricane-proof system. We now have discovered Asian Tiger Shrimp, a predacious species in our waters, and that's already got us worse.

Finally, there's no liability for any of these people that screw up our fishery. And our elected officials, the Legislature and the Wildlife and Fishing Commission both unanimously opposed it and yet we're being ignored.

[Applause]

>> Mr. David Ball with the Society for Historical Archeology.

>> DAVID BALL: I'm here today as a Board member to the Advisory Council Underwater Archeology and also as a member of Society for Historical Archeology's Committee in support of the UNESCO convention for the Protection of Underwater Cultural Heritage.

The national policy that includes, as its mandate, preserving our nation's maritime heritage must consider submerged cultural resources, including historic shipwrecks and submerged prehistoric sites as an equally important aspect in the coastal environment. The vast majority of the sea flora in the US EEZ remains unregulated and unprotected from the impacts of treasure-hunting operations on historic shipwrecks. Current and future development in rural gas mining, renewable energy, sand dredging for coastal restoration and other projects also potentially threaten submerged cultural resources.

In the Gulf of Mexico alone, there are over 4,000 reported historic shipwrecks. Many of these sites provide essential biological habitat. Examples of historically significant shipwrecks that have been identified in the Gulf include the remains of 19th Century wooden vessels, which can

provide valuable information history to the nation, and World War II tankers and merchant vessels, many of which are [inaudible].

Unfortunately, legislation to protect these nonrenewable cultural resources is limited, leaving the sites open to potential salvage operations and loss of our national heritage. The SHA and ACUA commend the Task Force for holding these meetings and also want to submit an interim report, particularly in regard to the protection of American heritage. One of the key things identified in the interim report was support for joining the 1982 UN Convention of the Law and Sea. The SHA and ACUA also support of the US becoming a party to the UN Law and Sea Convention. And, in particular, I would like to highlight Article 303 of the convention, which reads: "States have the duty to protect objects of an archeological and historical nature found at sea." We request that the final report adopt the annex rules of the 2001 UNESCO Convention of the protection of underwater cultural heritage as part of the U.S. policy permitting the studies, these duties, and for the conduct of any research and other activities directed at underwater cultural heritage. Several Federal agencies have already voiced their support for underwater cultural heritage management principles outlined in the annex rules, including NOAA, the MMS, the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation, National Park Service,

and the Department of Agriculture.

>> Can you wrap it up, please, sir?

>> Unlike natural resources, cultural resources do not regenerate, and once-historic information obtained from these sites is lost forever.

>> Thank you.

>> Okay. Next, Mr. William Fontenot, CAC, Gulf of Mexico.

>> WILLIAM FONTENOT: Thank you, Virginia. I'm legally blind so Tracy Kuhns who is here is going to read a statement.

>> Okay. Thank you.

TRACY KUHNS: Argument in support of a permanent ocean protection board.

Threats to the ocean and coastal integrity are local. Isolated spills, local dredging, physical destruction, other local land uses that cause coastal problems, regional packs of watershed-wide pollution resulting in dead zones, national transportation policies that affect chronic pollution, and globally ocean acidification caused by global climate change, gas emissions, and pandemic coastal problems associated with sea level rise.

Current management and oversight of the ocean and coastal integrity is disbursed across a complex web of local, state, Federal, and international governmental agencies. Similarly,

even within a single governmental level, different agencies may be in conflict with each other because of divergent goals, improving the navigability, maximizing harvests of fisheries, avoiding spills, promoting tourism, development of recreational property, etc. There is no oversight of the overall effectiveness of this complex web nor any systemic approach towards identifying gaps in authorities to achieve national improvements.

The work of of the ad hoc Interagency Ocean Policy Task Force is vitally important towards protecting our oceans; however, by its very time-limited nature, the Task Force efforts will be circumscribed by the boundaries of current knowledge. The unfurling of future problems and measuring the effectiveness of implementing proposed solutions will not be within its purview. Major recommendations: Partner with Congress to authorize and fund a new permanent independent Federal ocean policy oversight board.

>> Are you going to testify afterwards, separately?

>> Yes.

>> Or will you continue to read his as part -- as yours?

>> No.

Then we need to wrap up. And we do have Mr. Fontenot's comments, including those points, so we can forward to the

Commission.

>> Thank you.

[Applause]

>> TRACY KUHNS: I'm Tracy Kuhns, and I represent fisheries for the State of Louisiana on the Gulf of Mexico's Program Citizens Advisory Committee. I am from a community within the estuary in the Barrataria watershed. Our economic and cultural base is dependent on the natural resources, its commercial fish and recreational fishing, tourism, all based on that.

And over the past 20 years or so, we have watched as the dead zone has grown and nobody has come down to do anything about it and it has been virtually ignored. We have watched as our coast has disappeared and as our fishermen are working out there. We see it every day, day in and day out. It's not just a wetland. It's not just a swarp out there. People live out there. You know, when we lose all of that, we lose our culture and our livelihoods and our whole social connection, the connection to family, the connection to community, and the connection to life cycles out there.

We have seen repeatedly where fish have been taken away from commercial and recreational fishing because that's an easy thing to do. It's much more complicated to deal with restoration. We need those dollars down here. We need the dollars that

Chesapeake Bay and Great Lakes and everybody else is getting.

Thank you.

>> Our last speaker from this location is Steven Lohrenz with the University of Southern Mississippi.

>> Thank you very much.

>> STEVEN LOHRENZ: Thank you very much. I'm Steven Lohrenz. I'm Chair and Professor of the Department of Marine Science at the University of Southern Mississippi. And I want to first of all thank the Obama Administration and the Task Force for this effort. It's certainly very commendable.

I thought I would provide a science perspective on some aspects of this, and my complete comments have already been submitted. But, first of all, what I want to point out is the critical need for high-resolution coastal mapping in implementing marine fish and planting, as well as being able to better forecast storm surge and coastal restoration activities.

We need improved physical models for circulation, wave, and tide forecasting, as well as for prediction of transport of pollutants and other threats such as harmful algal blooms. These need to be coupled to biological and chemical models to be able to better characterize complex ecosystems; and coupled with that is the need for integrated ocean observing systems, satellite ships, buoys, as well as autonomous underwater vehicles and

airborne vehicles. These types of monitoring systems provide the real-world vision, which, coupled with models, provide a comprehensive effort and suite of capabilities to better address complex issues dealing with our coast and oceans.

And then lastly, we need improved education for technically competent ocean workforce in order to be able to implement a lot of these capabilities.

Thank you very much for this opportunity.

[Applause]

>> Thank you.

Now we are going to shift to the St. Petersburg office of the National Fisheries Service. Heidi, are we are ready to go?

Heidi, we will trust you to be the timekeeper there, but we will back you up.

[Mic feedback]

>> Welcome to St. Petersburg. I would like to just thank our attendees today and also our volunteers that have helped us out. We do have one speaker who would like to make some comments today. I would like to introduce Valerie Kleinschmidt. Valerie is with the Gulf of Mexico Alliance, Environmental Education Network.

>> VALERIE KLEINSCHMIDT: Thank you for the chance to speak,

and I'm glad the Gulf Coast region is able to voice the challenges that we are facing. I wasn't aware that I was going to be commenting today, so I have two brief comments.

I would like to recommend continued support of regional ocean governance. The more opportunity states have to collaborate and share data, information and experiences of successful projects enables better management of our water bodies. I would also recommend increased funding for the environmental education.

If we expect people to be stewards of the ocean, we must provide experiential learning opportunities to spark their passions to protect our seas.

>> Thank you very much.

And I guess that we're ready to go to the next location. Dauphin Island?

Dauphin Island, are you ready?

>> We're here.

>> Our first presenter is Jeff Collier. He is the Mayor of the town of Dauphin Island.

>> JEFF COLLIER: Thank you, Susan.

As mayor and on behalf of the Council and the citizens of Dauphin Island, I extend my greetings to everyone within listening range and welcome you to come to see us sometime. I

certainly want to join the masses for commending the Administration for putting together such a task force. I think it is certainly something that is very much needed and certainly something that is also very much long overdue.

As the mayor and a life-long resident of Dauphin Island, a barrier island, I certainly understand the importance of barrier islands, also of all of the associated -- the environments, the economical benefits, the historical, the cultural, the recreational, a lot of those things that have already been discussed earlier. Dauphin Island is certainly not different in that respect.

But I want to kind of focus a little bit on the importance of barrier islands, because we're certainly living here knowing the dynamics that we have. But I think that is something that we need to be aware of and certainly focus on as to the roles that they play.

One example I can give you is that the west end of our island was breached in Hurricane Katrina. We had about a mile breach. That has changed the dynamics in Mississippi Sound. It's adversely affected the oyster population, which involves loss of jobs, loss of revenues. It's just trickled down. So we need to understand and keep in mind the importance of those.

Also, I think that it's commendable that we're looking at it

from a regional standpoint. That, too, is of great importance. And I know that you have a very daunting task. I give you all my best and wish you all the best to get something successful for us.

Thank you.

>> Thank you, Jeff.

Our next speaker is Barry Vittor, president of Vittor and Associates.

>> BARRY VITTOR: Thank you.

I have three fairly quick comments to make. And I appreciate the opportunity to do that. I have been looking at natural ecosystems in the area about 38 years, and a few of these are really focused on ecosystem management foundation. For example, universities typically around Gulf of Mexico and elsewhere in the United States need better support for the basic research needed to the systematics. We need to be able to train the graduates of the universities, working in marine biology or estuarine biology in the taxonomy of the resources that are present in those systems. We can't adequately evaluate those ecosystems unless we adequately identify what is there.

Following that comment, the monitoring, consistent monitoring, and tracking of those resources, for example the seagrasses, the oyster reefs, and phytoplankton communities,

epiplankton, so forth, need to be better sustained. We need a good foundation for tracking what these resources are and how they change naturally over time.

Thirdly, I think we need a better recognition of the objective data that are available for wise management of our hydrocarbon resources, what the impacts really are, what they have been demonstrated to be, rather than political rhetoric.

Thank you very much.

>> Thank you, Barry.

Our last commenter is Lee Yokel. She is representing the Gulf of Mexico Alliance Environmental Education Issue Group.

>> LEE YOKEL: Thank you all. And I would like to thank the presenters that either implied or directly addressed environmental education. The Gulf of Mexico Alliance Environmental Education Issue currently is addressing community education and outreach to include adults and professional audiences, public awareness to a variety of target audiences, including communications and public awareness.

Kindergarten through college: Environmental literacy, and communicating the economic value of our ecological as well as commercial resources. Within the plan, I would like to encourage you all to continue the connection to regional governance and to include that in your structure in bringing that to a higher level

to bring the states more into your planning.

I would like to encourage you to engage more deeply with the Department of Education to show them the value of being involved in this policy.

And finally, when asked what educators would like --

[Brief Interruption]

>> Can you hear Dauphin Island now?

>> Yes, Susan, we hear you loud and clear.

>> All right.

Lee, would you finish, please?

>> LEE YOKEL: Okay. My final contribution to all today, when asking educators if they had more funding what they would put it toward, it's experiential or hands-on learning activities. Something got us all interested in pursuing the path that we're on today, and something may have changed someone's career as an adult. So we would like to see you all address that more deeply.

Thank you.

>> Thank you, Lee.

Dauphin Island is out.

>> Moving on to Ocean Springs, Mississippi. Scott Marine Science Center, are you with us?

>> Hello, New Orleans. Can you hear me?

>> Yes.

>> Hello, New Orleans. Do you hear me?

>> Yes, we hear you, Rick. Go ahead.

>> RICK CLARK: Hi. Rick Clark, Chief Science and Resources Management with the National Park Service, Gulf Islands National Seashore. Our first speaker, Mr. Cory Anderson with the University of Southern Mississippi, Gulf Coast Research Laboratory. He is going to speak to the sector of research, coastal science.

Cory?

>> CORY ANDERSON: As a student, I greatly appreciate the chance to comment today. I believe that the Task Force's plan must address the funding of graduate student research, which is important for filling of knowledge gaps and critical for training the next generation of competent ocean scientists.

Thank you.

[Laughter and applause]

>> Our next speaker is Dr. Jeff Butts, University of Southern Mississippi, Gulf Coast Research Laboratory.

Jeff?

>> JEFF BUTTS: Thank you. I'm actually going to read some comments prepared by Dr. Jay Grimes, a professor of coastal sciences, the Gulf Coast Research Laboratory at the University of Southern Mississippi.

"The Obama administration is to be applauded for its visionary creation of the Ocean Policy Task Force. The oceans clearly have a profound effect of the biosphere including humans and their well being. For this reason, I encourage the Task Force to include as a priority objective the concept of "One Ocean, One Health" that is developed by the Oceans and Health working group of NOAA's Science Advisory Board."

Thank you.

>> Our next speaker is Dr. Sharon Walker, again from the University of Southern Mississippi, Gulf Coast Research Laboratory. She is also speaking to the sector of research with an emphasis in education.

>> SHARON WALKER: Thank you. I would just like to take this opportunity to thank the National Ocean Policy Task Force, for pages 16 and 32 in the interim report for addressing informal and formal education as well as teacher professional development, public understanding of the relevance of the ocean on their everyday lives, and looking at under-served and under-represented audiences, workforce development, and also you have addressed evaluation and assessment.

And I would ask you to please consider with the National Academy of Sciences meeting last week and another one scheduled for next week and then subsequently over the next two years, to

look at how we can incorporate ocean and climate literacy in the National Science Education Standards and Benchmarks. Because the National Education Science Standards were developed in 1996 and benchmarks in 1993, and we would very much like have more ocean and climate science introduced in the standards, because they are being revisited for the first time in many, many years. And it will be very helpful to our students and future workforce if we can let our teachers better understand the relevance of the ocean and its watersheds and coasts so they, in turn, can teach it through the standards to our students.

Thank you.

[Applause]

>>> Our fourth and last speaker is Captain Gary Williams, representing the sector of fisheries.

Gary?

>> GARY WILLIAMS: Good evening. I'm Captain Gary Williams, and I own a charter boat business here on the coast.

Charter fishing is delicate, like everything else here. This hurricane did a lot of damage. Fishing has come back better than I have ever seen it. There's a lot of people who make their living from the water here. Whatever we do, we need to make sure that we can continue to do so.

Thank you.

>> We're clear here from Ocean Springs, Mississippi.

>> Okay. Going on to Corpus Christi.

>> ROY ALLEN: Thank you.

Roy Allen with the Coastal Bend Bays and Estuaries Program here at the Texas State Aquarium in Corpus Christi. We have two speakers. First up is Ms. Carla Clay with the Artistpoke [phonetic] Environmental Education Program.

>> CARLA CLAY: It is with great pride that I listened to Garrett Graves and the expert panel and all of the Gulf citizens describe to you the Gulf Coast watershed, our estuaries and coast, our offshore environment, and our people.

The gulf is a beautiful place. It's large, productive, and very impacted representing a 33 state watershed. I hope that the Task Force has realized that it is hard to live in the United States without benefiting from the Gulf of Mexico and that it is also hard to live in the United States without impacting the Gulf of Mexico.

I wanted to speak to you about resiliency. I'm a citizen of Galveston Island. And after Hurricane Ike rolled ashore, I realized now, a year later, after living in a travel trailer, that no one at the local, state, other Federal level is interested in my community being resilient. We have no tools and no skills to build in a resilient manner. Our benchmarks are all

old, our flood maps are old, and we had to fight for nine months to elevate our home, prove to insurance that we had the right to, and fight with the City to get a permit for stairs.

And we cannot have a healthy Gulf Coast if people cannot return to their homes after a hurricane and build back in a better and smarter way. And I think this should be a primary issue of the Task Force.

[Applause]

>> Thank you, Carla. Our next speaker is Tom Schmid, Director of the Texas State Aquarium.

>> TOM SCHMID: Well, thank you. Our main focus here at the Texas State Aquarium is marine environmental education. What we hope to do with that is build awareness, inspire care, and ultimately create positive action by the behavioral change.

Now, we're just one facility. There are 35 major aquariums in the United States. And in 2007, we saw a combined attendance of 27 million people, almost 10% of the U.S. population.

Now, if we include in that number ACA accredited zoos, the number increases specifically. And if we add science centers, museums, and other informal science learning centers, the number goes dramatically higher.

Recent findings by the ocean project indicate that Americans have a low level of awareness regarding ocean conservation

issues; however, they indicate support for protecting the oceans.

These findings illustrate to me the incredible opportunity that exists within the framework of U.S. aquariums as informal marine education centers. I would urge the panel to reach out to these institutions and provide support for programs that actively engage Americans in ocean and aquatic conservation issues.

Thank you.

>> Thank you, Tom. And with that, we send it back to New Orleans.

>> Thank you. Okay. Our first speaker on the second round is Bob Zales with the National Association of Charter Boat Operators.

>> Bob Zales?

>> BOB ZALES: Thank you. I'm Bob Zales, II. I'm president of the National Association Charter Boat Operators. I'm also a past vice-chairman of the Marine Protected Area Federal Advisory Committee for the Departments of Commerce and Interior. I appreciate the opportunity to speak to you here. We have submitted comments and probably will submit more. I also appreciate the comments from the panelists that were up here, especially Dr. McKinney when he mentioned the concern about the recreational fishing community and being discounted in this whole process. I think I share that same sentiment with pretty much

every recreational fishing organization in this country that this Task Force has probably heard from regarding this.

A quick example of what we do: In a for-hire fishing business, in 2003, we took over 13 million recreational anglers fishing. It's a serious impact. And as you also heard from this panel and we agree with a lot of the information that was presented here, you see that the various industries that are involved on the oceans are working to make things better. Recreational Fishermen we consider to be the stewards of the resource. We really love the resource. We've got nothing to do. So we try to protect it. We want to be involved in this process.

We think we deserve a serious seat in this process and look forward to working with the process more and thank you very much.

[Applause]

>> Dr. Lynn Barr from the louisianacoast.com.

>> LYNN BARR: Thank you, Virginia. I didn't come planning to speak, but I will take 90 seconds, and in that time I can only talk about one issue that I'll guarantee is not in the interim report. I'm a coast scientist, retired, and former advisor to five coastal -- five governors in Louisiana.

The one issue that I'm very concerned about has to do with the Interior Department and MMS. We have a sediment deficit that Robert Twilley mentioned. And it's an absolutely serious

problem, since it's not on the river anymore, it's all offshore. There's some prime sediments offshore that we need to restore barrier islands. But unfortunately, MMS has allowed pipelines to be laid willy-nilly. And we cannot dredge sand that's close to a pipeline. And that's another example of Government not coordinating effectively and precluding the use of very valuable source river that we absolutely need. so to the extent that, in the future, that can be coordinated, I would urge the committee to take that into consideration.

Thank you.

[Applause]

>> Dr. Kerry St. Pe with the Barrataria-Terrebonne National Estuary Program.

>> Dr. KERRY ST. PE: Thanks, Virginia. I think I can keep my remarks down to an hour and a half.

[LAUGHTER]

I'm currently the Director of the Barrataria-Terrebonne National Estuary, but I'm here on behalf of the National Association of National Estuary Programs, comprised of 28 national estuary programs designated as nationally significant. We strongly support the Administration's effort to develop a new national ocean policy.

A strong national ocean policy must include a structure for

implementing Federal policies at a local and regional level. In NEP experience, no single management structure fits all. NEP approach inherently allows for a flexibility to ecosystem restoration. Estuaries of the United States all have remarkably similar issues to deal with. Although the issues may differ in magnitude, but they have considerable socioeconomic and political differences that require a regional and local approach.

To say the development of a plan of restoration of our oceans and estuaries is complex would be an incredible understatement. Restoration has many different meanings. What are you restoring the system to? Who are you restoring the system for? The definition of what is meant by the term "restoration" must be established early in a process.

>> Thanks.

>> Thank you, Dr. St. Pe.

[Applause]

>> Dan McKenzie with the New Orleans Aqua Aces Diving Club.

>> DAN MCKENZIE: Ms. Burkett, thank you very much. Task members, thank you very much for hearing us today. We really appreciate this public input.

My name is Dan McKenzie. I am the past president and the current treasurer of the New Orleans Aqua Aces Diving Club, a local diving club that has been around since 1961 and a

charitable organization here in town benefiting Children's Hospital.

What I wanted to do today was just come here and learn. It's been a very good learning experience for me. We just wanted to make sure, as Dr. McKinney said earlier, as well Mr. Zales mentioned, that the recreational sector, that the scuba divers are also given the opportunity to add input to the Task Force.

We offer a very passionate group of people with a very unique perspective in the world's oceans. And, again, thank you very much for having us today.

>> Next, Mr. Douglas Drennan of CCA Louisiana.

>> DOUGLAS DRENNAN: My name is Douglas Drennan. I'm a recreational fisherman and current president of the Delta Chapter of CCA.

Recreational Fishermen have a massive impact of the U.S. economy, \$78 billion are spent in annual retail sales, \$225 billion total economic impact, and creation of some 687,000 jobs nationwide, according to the National Marine Manufacturers Association.

We are increasingly concerned that the public's access to our nation's ocean and aquatic resources are being unduly restricted. The interim report focused while appearing to have preservation objectives does not seem to address recreational use of these

resources. Recreational users enjoy public resources without monetary gain, which is unique among ocean users. We strongly recommend the Task Force recognize our unique status and order a national oceans policy to reflect this fact by encouraging the continued open access and sustainable recreational use of our oceans, coastal areas, and Great Lakes.

CCA, with its 100,000 plus members in 17 states should be involved in the development of any national ocean policy affecting race directional boaters, fishermen, and fishwomen.

Thank you.

[Applause]

>> Mr. Jim Grant, with BP America.

>> JIM GRANT: Thank you. My name is Jim Grant. I'm the regulatory manager for BP America in the Gulf of Mexico. Thanks for taking input from [inaudible]. The ocean's coast plays a major role in the nation's --

>> Speak up, Mr. Grant, please.

>> JIM GRANT: -- U.S. waters and coastal natural resources. Most industries have demonstrated that we can operate responsibly in these areas, supporting American jobs, contributing to the national industry. We take these responsibilities very seriously. BP supports the Administration's view that energy security is inseparable from national security. And it's our

strong belief that the greatest potential as far as renewed domestic energy is the oil and natural gas that lies off of our shores, the Intercontinental Shelf.

The MMS, U.S. Coast Guard, and other Federal and state agencies have laws and regulations in place to provide robust oversight to protect the OCS environment and marine land, allowing diverse input enabling responsible development in the OCS. these stable and predictable regulatory regimes in the Gulf of Mexico foster effective multiple uses. Recent studies by PriceWaterhouseCoopers concluded that U.S. oil and gas industries supports 9 million American jobs. The industry total contribution to the national economy is \$1 trillion, or 7.5% of the Gross Domestic Product. Employment and economic benefits will grow as other areas of the OCS are made available for lease and exploration.

We caution the Task Force to carefully weigh policies that may establish exclusionary zones, disrupt the MMS fishing program or affect opportunities for economic growth. BP strongly supports continuation of the regular leasing program in the central and western Gulf of Mexico. In conclusion, we support additional access areas previously influenced such as the Gulf of Mexico. It's our opinion that economic development of ocean resources is compatible with responsible ocean stewardship.

Thank you.

>> Next, we have Mr. Robert Tannin is Rand Corporation.

>> ROBERT TANNIN: For 50 years, the Rand Corporation has been engaged in consistent analysis for many agencies of Federal government in the cities and the states. We are talking about developing an ocean's policy without, in my judgment, a better understanding of the systems we're dealing with. There needs to be -- and this is not an advertisement for Rand. There needs to be a better systems analysis of the systems that we're dealing with before we can have an effective policy to address these issues.

A second point I would mention is that, thinking about the previous speaker, Mr. Grant, we have extraordinary resources within the oil and gas industry that should be partners with these agencies that are addressing these matters. And if we could develop a contractual relationship where the oil and gas industry is also a full partner in this process, I think the benefits and the resources will be missed.

>> Our next speaker is Darrell Hall Ward from The Garden of Eden.

>> DARELL HALL WARD: I say the Garden of Eden because Aaron Broussard, the parish president of Jefferson Parish, gave me all of the seeds of Jefferson Parish to plant the Garden of Eden at

Interstate 10 throughout America.

Dear Ocean Task Force Policy. June 12 was my birthday. Ocean pressure is going to be a fuel of the future. I spoke to Mary Landrieu and I spoke to Obama and Martin Luther King, just a few days ago. And I wrote a letter to Hillary Clinton that said, "It takes a village to raise a child." We should think about our natural resources of air, wind, water solar, current game, ocean pressure, fishing, people that have lived like to understand the moral. Let's think outside of the box. You can see the underground world of natural resources and land that we can engineer. We have a light. We have to open our eyes and we start to feel the air and water. New wave gravity compression of air and water pressure through the transmission of time. The cost factors, the benefit of green credits are extended with land as a factor of our financial benefit to outweigh costs. At the top of MR-GO should be a paradise of grass, trees, animals, parsed for children to say, we the village have taken a step forward to underground fuel, air, water, pressure, and steam to be a part of tomorrow's transmission. Let's get together and feel the light. Blood is our path on the air, land, water, rebirth of our fuel, perpetual love to reflect our blessing. Boom! You did and we're born in the name of the Messiah!

[Applause]

>> Okay. The next speaker will be Ms. Ann Milling.

>> ANN MILLING: With Women of the Storm.

Thank you so much. I'm Ann Milling, founder of Women of the Storm, which is a nonprofit nonpartisan organization of diverse women of metropolitan New Orleans and south Louisiana, whose mission has been to keep the focus of people like you in Washington on our area. And, of course, coastal restoration has become such a priority for all of us.

Our wetlands as you have heard today are eroding at such a rapid clip. We're losing a football field of marsh every 50 minutes. And I have this little football, which I won't throw to you, but I will give tonight at the reception so you will have a constant reminder of how rapid the erosion is for us.

Let me just say to you this this is not a parochial problem. It's a national problem. And I think you have heard the speakers today talk about the economic situation. Think about the Mississippi River, 6,000 vessels up and down that river annually, the impact if the fingers of the Mississippi River are closed because of coastal erosion.

Energy. Who do you think fuels and warms the homes in northeast America? It's the oil and gas that comes and traverses our fragile wetlands. A third of all oil and gas comes across Louisiana that fuels America.

Finally, the environment. Over 2 million people reside and work along our working coast. Their livelihood, their homes, are at risk.

And, of course, finally, I think you all know so well that our wetlands are the speed bump, the first things that occur to deflect and absolve the velocity from a hurricane.

So today we ask each of you, all of you are in a position of great influence and importance in our country. We ask you to have President Obama include in his 2011 budget to Congress, which is due in February, dollars for four major coastal restoration projects, which were approved by WRTA in 2007.

Those four projects include restoration of the barrier islands; a Lafourche channel expansion; a major seventh diversion at Myrtle Grove. And I think you have heard the scientists say today something we all believe and know; the Mississippi River created these wetlands, and it will be the Mississippi River that must restore them. And the fourth, of course, was the restoration of wetlands along the MR-GO project, which has recently been closed. The price tag will be between \$500 million and \$1 billion. Think about it in the context of what is going on today.

Finally, let me just conclude by telling you that in the 2011 budget, if you prorate this over the next three to five years, in the 2011 budget, we would ask for \$150 million, which

is the same amount that it cost our country for the inauguration of President Obama.

Thank you.

>> Our next presenter is David Cresson with CCA Louisiana.

>> DAVID CRESSON: Good afternoon. My name is David Cresson. I'm the Executive Director and CEO of CCA Louisiana. I believe it was Dr. Marcia Owens that said earlier that all segments of our population should be considered when we're making this policy. And as you have heard a few of my friends and Dr. McKinney down here say, the recreational fishing community feels left out so far. This 37-page report that I have in my hand has no mention of recreational fishing in it, and that's unacceptable.

The recreational community is a forgiving one, though, and we believe that the omission was not intentional, rather a reflection of the hurried nature of issuing a report within 90 days. For the interim report not to focus or even mention recreational fishing is a substantial concern, one that must be addressed and appropriately reflected in the final report.

Regarding the interim report, we share many of the Administration's goals and values, with respect to the appropriate environmental stewardship, management of the American marine natural resources. CCA does not believe the interim

report properly reflects the social, economic, cultural, or conservation benefits associated with marine recreation, including boating and angling in the United States. This is both unfortunate but easily remedied.

Thank you for allowing me to speak today.

[Applause]

>> Jeff Andrews with the Center for Coastal Conservation.

>> JEFF ANDREWS: Thank you, ma'am. My name is Jeff Andrews. I'm with the Center for Coastal Conservation. I represent today the Coastal Conservation Association, the American Sports Fishing Association, the Congressional Sportsman Foundations, BASS, The Billfish Foundation, IGFA, and the National Marine Manufacturers Association.

Holding listening sessions is a visible and tangible public outreach. And I think all of us here today do applaud all of you for being here to receive public comment. However, listening sessions are not the same as agency hearing or committees markups, and they're not subject to Federal notice or specific legal requirements or regulatory timelines for providing public comment or the ability to amend or ultimately change the outcome.

The concern, in particular for new concepts like marine spatial planning or ocean zoning, is that these concepts will be developed entirely within the bureaucracy of the Administration.

Our recommendation would be to provide the relevant committees in Congress with the opportunity to hold oversight hearings and consider legislation for any ocean management proposals that do not already have statutory authority.

We do not want the national ocean policy to attempt to enforce new legal mandates under the auspices of some existing legal authority. My simple theme to you today is to include in any final national ocean policy, a policy that celebrates, promotes, and ensures the sustainable recreational uses of the ocean environment.

Thank you.

[Applause]

>> John McLachlan, Tulane University.

>> JOHN McLACHLAN: I would personally like to thank the Task Force for the time they have taken to come and get community input from all over the United States. My name is John McLachlan. I'm a Professor of Environmental Studies and the Director of the Environmental Center at Tulane and Xavier Universities here in New Orleans.

Before coming to New Orleans 15 years ago, I did a tour as the scientific director of the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences, NIH, in collaboration with the National Science Foundation, under Director Rita Caldwell, we

crafted an oceans and human health initiative that still is being funded and worked on.

I have two comments for your consideration. The first, to be bold, is I would ask you to add the word "rivers" to your work scope. I sat here being a little rankled when it was going to be "Coast, Oceans and Great Lakes." And I think the case for the river was made earlier by Robert Twilley and has been made over and over again. And as you all know, determining what the title of something is determines what our emphasis is. And I think we for too long spent too much energy on coast and marine science and not enough on our internal waters which are actually a national security issue.

The next point to make is in terms of managing policy, research, implementation, what we have learned here in New Orleans is, then, that you have to bring together a private sector, academics, and you have to do it in consultation with the whole community and, rather than talking to them about it, you actually have to involve them from the outset.

Thank you very much.

[Applause]

>> Pamela Dashiell from Lower Ninth Ward Sustainability Center.

>> PAMEL DASHIELL: Thank you, Chairs Sutley and Task Force.

Greetings from the Lower Ninth Ward, soon to be the most sustainable community in America, our climate and carbon-neutral, strong, protected, prosperous, and growing.

We heard a lot today about interdependence and diversity and communities and engagement. And that, especially the interdependence aspect of all of this, is so very, very important that we look at the natural and the built environments and the human piece of it, the human environment. And it's all interdependent.

We need support where there is infrastructure. Where there is not infrastructure but where there is human need and desire, we need development, a development that takes into account the best practices of ecosystem management and the needs of the people. We need to reform the implementers of the policy. We need reform of the Corps of Engineers. We need reform of the MMS. Someone mentioned that those who did the damage should pay, and you can't help but agree with that. We need safe, healthy neighborhoods and communities. We need wetlands as a beneficial resource. We need structured funding and structured implementation. We talked a little bit about the Chesapeake Bay and how that is at the forefront of everyone's consciousness. Well, that needs to happen in Louisiana. That's up to us with your help and support.

So thank you.

>> [inaudible]

Mr. Collin Thomas.

>> COLLIN THOMAS: I'm Collin Thomas. I'm a resident in New Orleans. I would just like to throw out some statistics that you are probably familiar with.

So the U.S. has about 3% of the world's energy reserves, and 5% of the the population believes use 25% of the world's oil. So we are never going to make ourselves energy independent in terms of oil. So drilling for whatever we have left really doesn't make much sense, especially when we look in terms of the environmental impacts that oil and gas activity have had on the coast of Louisiana. Roughly 40 to 60% of our wetlands loss is attributable to oil and gas activity. And assuming that they are going to be any less of an issue on the tropic coast and extending that to the eastern continental shelf [inaudible] or we can develop other sources of energy, I should say, particularly here in Louisiana, we have the best potential for offshore -- potential for wind energy off the shore of Louisiana. And so we should focus on that and create some jobs around sustainability, also restoration projects.

And, I guess, on the other side of that, worry about the impacts of the global climate change in this region which is, you know, 2000

miles worth of coastline and I also would mention about 45 million people. And this is going to be the area that suffers the impacts that will be down serial up climate change and we need to make sure that we're doing our part regionally to mitigate those impacts and activity to the sea level rise and potential for stronger storms that are coming down the way. So thank you.

>> Quenton Dokken with the Gulf of Mexico Foundation.

>> QUENTON DOKKEN: Hi. I'm Quenton Dokken, Executive Director of the Gulf of Mexico Foundation. Thanks for the opportunity to be here. For the sake of brevity, I'm going to go real fast here.

Certainly if you look at generational time frame, trend-line analysis, the economy has certainly been on a positive while the environment has been on a negative trend line. We have got to reverse that somehow. Not reverse the economy down, but we have to bring the environment up on a parallel trend line with it.

Spatial planning. If the end point of special planning is to support the economy and support the environmental productivity, we have got to look at the onshore part of spatial planning. It cannot be just simply focused on the offshore areas. It has got to be an international effort. We cannot manage effectively half of the Gulf of Mexico and expect to save the whole. Mexico has to be a part of this as we move forward.

The fourth point, this is an industry that must be given the opportunity to lead. We cannot keep them in a reactive mode. That's not only the oil and gas industry. That's tourism, that's agriculture, fisheries, the agrochemical industries. They have all got to step up to the plate. Oil and gas is always stepping up. We have to get the other industries in there with them. With that, thank you very much.

[Applause]

>> Mr. Ian Boporo with Shell Exploration and Production Company.

>> IAN BOPORO: Thank you very much. I'm a marine scientist with Shell Exploration Production Company. We offer these following items for your consideration:

One, critical first step in the national oceanic policy process should set measurable targets for responsible use of our oceans, including conservation and economic uses. If we don't have a measurable metric, we can't celebrate our successes nor can we fix our failures.

Two, a National Ocean Council should be chaired by the National Security Council and the National Economic Council in order to rebalance the objectives so that the proposed NOC.

Three, there should be more meaningful opportunity for non-Federal input to the President and paralleled with the

proposed NOC. A better example was developed, in fact, by the Commission on Ocean Policy, which considered a public-private mix of representation on a Presidential Advisory Committee.

Four, the interim reports nine priority objectives, do not reflect the environmental, economic, and societal goals that ought to guide a national ocean policy.

Five, national ocean policy must also be adapted and future focused. It is not yet clear from the interim report where all of the hard work occurs on balancing objectives, desires, and in reality. Apparently this occurs at a regional level, but there's little information existing on what the structure will hold.

Finally, at Shell, we are committed to working with you to help inform and develop the policies that solve challenges facing our nation, particularly around energy and environment.

Thank you very much.

[Applause]

>> At this point, we do have two additional speakers, and there may be others coming in from other remote locations. But we will go to the Gulf Coast Research Lab in Ocean Springs, Mississippi.

Rick, are you with us?

>> Our first speaker is Kay Baggett. She is from the Ocean Springs area, she is a mother, to speak to the sector of public

at large.

>> KAY BAGGET: Thank you. My name is Kay Baggett. I am the mother of four, the grandmother of almost eight, and I'm a retired teacher, and I figure I taught probably 5,000 students in my 28-year career. I have a vested interest in the future. I know that the way to reach people, to teach people, is to get to them early, when they are in school. Not only do we teach our children, they go home and their teach their families as well.

As a human species, we will only save what we love. We will only love what we understand. And we will only understand what we are taught. I urge you to include monies for education in any program that you suggest.

Thank you.

>> Our next speaker is Chris Snyder, affiliated with the University of Southern Mississippi Gulf Coast Research Laboratory.

Chris?

>> CHRIS SNYDER: First of all, thank you for the opportunity to make these comments.

In my 30 years as a marine biologist here on the Mississippi Gulf Coast, I have worked as a researcher, a research manager, a resource manager, a public information specialist. And for the past seven years as a marine education specialist at the J.L.

Scott Marine Education Center here at the Gulf Coast Research Lab. And throughout my career, I have been continually amazed at the level of interest people have for our coastal environment and for the ocean in general.

I'm also routinely dumbfounded by the lack of understanding that the general public has for the importance of the ocean plays in the daily lives and, more importantly, how their actions affect the health and well being of our oceans.

And the ultimate success or failure of our national ocean policy will not be determined by the specific measures in this report but, rather, by the level of understanding the American public has for the role the oceans play in their daily lives and, conversely, for how their daily actions affect the health and well being of our oceans.

I ask that this Task Force recognize the important role education plays in the successful management of our ocean resources and that adequate resources and attention be directed towards educational efforts to increase the public's understanding of their connection to the health and well being of our world ocean.

Thank you.

>> We're clear from Ocean Springs.

>> Okay. Our next speaker from here in New Orleans will be

Mr. Monus Clavery [phonetic] with Marine Recreational Fisheries.

>> Mr. CLAVERY: A few things. One, recreational fishermen are very conservation oriented because they fish inefficiently and they need a lot of fish before they can be successful.

[Laughter]

Two, I fully agree with Dr. McKinney and Bob Zales said, I agree with what Charlie Smith said about mariculture but he was not emphatic enough. Before I retired from the Gulf Council just before Katrina, we had discussed ecosystem-based management. It's not a brand new concept. And it is very, very complex. It's like telling somebody, before you grow corn in Iowa, you have to see what that's going to do to cotton in North Carolina. That requires a lot of research. And in order to do that, it's going to be a big commitment. And I just want to point out straight to NOAA, I was on a national sea grant review panel for years. And when we went to get more money, they told us, whoa, don't get too much, our infrastructure is such that we could not afford -- we couldn't handle it if we got it. We don't want to be wasteful.

So to NOAA, I say, please build us sea grants so you can have the academic research input into this process because you will need a lot of it.

Thank you.

[Applause]

>> Patricia Whitney with BISCO.

>> Hello. I'm with BISCO, Bayou Interfaith Shared Community Organizing, along with all of these lovely people from down on the bayou region.

BISCO is a faith-based community organizing nonprofit authority with the diverse populations of the bayou region of coastal Louisiana in Terrebonne and Lafourche Parishes. We have a combined total population of 210,000 people.

We would like to ensure that any policy adopted include, at a minimum, the equal voice of local people and communities impacted by any particular coastal projects. We should have at least an equal voice with industrial, economic, environmental, and governmental organized stations and agencies.

When we are constantly instructed that we should move away because our land is going away, we typically respond, "We were here first." As one of, if not the least-transient populations in the country, most of us have ancestors here for centuries. We state that we are not expendable. Our space is not expendable.

We were here before the Corps or Engineers engineered us out of existence. We were here before the oil and gas industry drudged and drilled us into the gulf. And we resent our populations and our communities becoming an endangered species

because of the agendas and profits of others. We are the people who can look at our back door today and see less land than there was yesterday. We submit that restoration delayed is restoration denied. And if you start yesterday, you have already started too late.

Thank you.

[Applause]

>> Paul Harrison with the Environment Defense Office.

>> PAUL HARRISON: Thank you. I would like to second that.

I'm Paul Harrison. I am senior director of the Mississippi Environmental Defense Fund. I'm excited that the Task Force is here as well as the fact that the working group on Gulf Coast restoration will be ranking up efforts on coastal Louisiana and on the rest of the Gulf Coast.

The critical thing that you heard here is that the health of the Gulf of Mexico and everything that we do relies on restoring the natural function of the Mississippi River Delta in a way that works with communities and the economy. You have heard the enormous capacity and commitment to this issue from people here, from scientists, from NGO's. We're pleased to work with a broad partnership of NGO's on this issue but also economic interests and community interests. Two fundamental things as you move forward with marine and coastal spatial planning.

Number one, we need to be very defined about whether we're expecting success on restoration of the Mississippi River delta wetland's ecosystem. It will make a huge difference on what the final outcomes of the entire effort are.

Number two, we need to be very clear about the Federal resources, multiagency coordination, how this comes about, and what the expectations are there because similarly that will have a huge impact on the success.

Thank you.

>> Tom Becker with the Mississippi Charter Boat Captains Association.

>> TOM BECKER: Thank you for allowing us to speak today.

NOAA's own display has a statement statement that you have been tasked with a very, very large project with a lot of unknowns in it. Your statement at the NOAA display at Stennis Space Center and your taped trailer that you have there, or display unit, says "We know more about our universe than we know about our water."

As a charter boat operator, as I read this over the weekend, I was appalled that we did not see anything in it about the recreational fishing for recreation for people. We do a service. We are very environmentally safe with what we do. We try to have a resource that we can go back to tomorrow and a water that is

clean. We try to do that daily.

>> Thank you.

[Applause]

>> [Name inaudible]

>> Good afternoon. Thank you for coming. I want to reiterate many of the comments that are made already. And I really want to emphasize the comments that Robert Twilley made. There should be no doubt about the science on this issue. No doubt at all. The future of coastal Louisiana is intimately related to how we decide to manage the resources of the lower Mississippi River.

In the 19th century, we decided to manage the river for navigation. In the 20th century, we decided to manage the river for flood control and navigation.

How we decide to manage the river in the 21st century, I have to say, I think you may have a great say in that. And that means that is the future of coastal Louisiana. There may not be as much sediment in the river as there used to be, but there's 120 million tons of sediment a year on average coming down the river. That's enough to fill the Superdome 11 times every year.

That's a lot of material and a lot of land that we could be building. This is land that could provide us sustainable platform for the ongoing oil and gas activity. This is the

sustainable landscape that can provide and contribute to hurricane protection for communities that landscaped won't be the same as it was before. It will probably be smaller. But this is not about the past. This is about future. And this is about decisions that we will make for the next century.

It's not about a choice between navigation and ecosystem restoration; as many people have said already, it's about their interdependence. It's not about zoning these different issues, but in one thing there and another thing there. It's about recognizing they're all integrated and that we want to do navigation on this river and that we want oil and gas and that we want the wonderful things that this ecosystem can provide.

Louisiana is undoubtedly in crises, but we don't need short-term fixes. We need deliberative thinking about what the next century holds.

Thank you. I look forward to working with you.

[Applause]

>> Next is Leslie Swaga [phonetic] with Terrebonne Parish Government.

>> Leslie Swaga, Director of Coastal Restoration for Terrebonne Parish. And I think it would be impossible to state our needs in just a minute and a half today. But I would like to thank you all for giving us the opportunity to speak. And I

would like to reiterate Lynn Barr's comments on the need for effective management of our offshore sand resources.

MMS currently has jurisdiction of the offshore sands, and that puts us at a great disadvantage for using the sands for restoration needs. And in the Terrebonne Basin, it was predicted in 2004 by the late Dr. Shay Penland that in a no-action scenario our Terrebonne Basin chain of barrier islands would be subaqueous by 2011.

Fortunately, they are not there yet, because we have had some aggressive action through ongoing restoration programs. However, they are still eroding at a very rapid rate. They provide important breeding ground for a lot of the fisheries that our recreational fishermen were referring to earlier and a vital habitat for the brown pelican. So that is of great importance, and I think would be a great step forward in our restoration efforts.

And on a final note, we have a large native American population in the Terrebonne barrier basin. And any move toward an aquaculture form of fisheries management would mean a massive dislocation, not of a population from loss of land but loss of a culture and an economic way of life, and that extends to subculture like the Islanias over in St. Bernard Parish that first were displaced by the hurricanes of 2005 and are just

starting to come back, and that could be a major blow to them economically.

>> Thank you.

[Applause]

>> Next, Michael O'Connell with BISCO.

>> MICHAEL O'CONNELL: Hello. I'm Michael O'Connell. I'm from Terrebonne Parish also. We were affected by Hurricane Katrina. We were flooded by Hurricane Rita which hit in Cameron Parish, which is miles away from Houma. We were also affected as a direct hit from Hurricane Gustav and we were flooded again from Ike. Forty percent of the parish was flooded in Hurricane Ike, which hit Galveston, miles from where we were at.

Over the years, they haven't done enough to rebuild the barrier islands, which was like our fortress, making the tides -- the storm surges come in level. When they hit the barrier islands, they have been decimated. Now they're basically sandbars. And we're not afforded the protection from the barrier islands anymore, which basically makes normal tide surge come in and pull sediment from our coast away which is causing more coastal erosion. So we need to look at doing more for the barrier islands.

When we went to the CPRA meeting, the public meeting held, the main objections or main obstacles that the head scientist

explained was there were too many pipelines that were left out around the barrier islands to be able to dredge and efficiently rebuild the islands.

The other objection was environmentalists talking about the birds that laid eggs on the island. And if the islands aren't rebuilt, sooner or later they are going to disappear completely and there will be no place for the birds to lay eggs.

[Applause]

>> Mr. Rob Treshim with the CCA of Louisiana.

>> ROB TRESHIM: Yes, ma'am. Thank you.

Folks, I am speaking on behalf of an organization that was extremely alarmed by the recreational fishing being ignored in the interim report. We repeat large, large group of people with a huge economic impact. There were over 14 million salt water licenses purchased in the United States last year. Just in Louisiana alone, it creates a \$3 billion impact. That's something in the state of Louisiana that we don't take very lightly.

So we urge you to do a couple of things. One, please consider us when creating new policies. And also please don't take out the local authorities. We have a system today that -- of regional councils and state regulators that is far from perfect. But they do a job and they have a lot of ability to get

input from the local people like all of the people sitting in this room.

So, please, listen to your local authorities. We want those people to be involved. And we appreciate you looking at the recreational fisheries a lot more.

Thank you.

[Applause]

>> At this point, we're going back to Corpus Christi, Texas, to the Texas State Aquarium where we have one additional public speaker.

>> We have one speaker, Julie Galbreath.

>> JULIE GALBREATH: Hi, I'm Julie Galbreath. I'm a resident of the Texas coast. And the windows of my home are decorated by salt spray from the Gulf of Mexico.

Why should I care? I think each citizen of the United States needs to reflect and be able to answer that question. And to that end, we must supply continued funding to ocean literacy in the formal education arena.

Likewise, the ocean projects newest research shows that more and more people are looking to aquariums and informal science centers to gather relevant information and to discover opportunities to take action to help the environment, informal and formal education in partnership. These are the places that people learn to care and to take action. These are the places

for which we should continue to make funds available to help people answer that basic question, why should I care, and then inspired to take positive action.

Thank you.

[Applause]

>> We send it back to you in New Orleans.

>> Thank you.

>> Lee has graciously agreed to extend the public comment period another 30 minutes. And the next speaker is Mrs.-- I have several stacks here.

>> Do you want me to go ahead and start?

>> Let's do that. Say who you're with.

>> I'm with National Wildlife Federation.

Because of the rapid loss of Louisiana's coastal wetlands, rising sea levels, and the indications of these issues, for the safety of the people of Louisiana, the health of our fisheries in the Gulf, and our nation's energy infrastructure, it is our recommendation that the coastal Louisiana restoration be a top priority for the Task Force. The sustainability of our coast is vital to the nation. And time is of the essence here in Louisiana. Bold and urgent action must be taken to restore the protective wetlands along Louisiana's coast.

We will have success in restoration only if there's a

careful coordinated Federal effort that accounts for all of the Federal interests in the region. CEQ's interagency workgroup must consist of assistant secretary level individuals, and let's begin work immediately.

Thank you.

[Applause]

>> Next is Chris Pulaski with the National Wildlife Federation.

>> CHRIS PULASKI: Thank you. I urge this Task Force to consider the importance of the Mississippi River's resources, as you develop your priorities and recommendations for the enhancement and protection of our coastline and its communities.

It is these communities that provide the nation with the means to enjoy the benefits that such a bountiful region can offer. The survivability of a community and its culture is contingent upon its ability to coexist with its surrounding environment. We can no longer afford any delays. This Task Force must develop a policy to provide these communities with the means to implement safe, effective collaborative plans that have the ability to adapt to the region's changing dynamic.

>> [Applause]

>> Juanita Hardin with the Advocates for Environmental Human Rights.

Is Juanita still here? If not, we will move on.

Okay. Doug Daigle with the Lower Mississippi River Sub-basin Committee.

>> DOUG DAIGLE: Thank you.

Since 2003, I have been the coordination of the Lower Mississippi River Sub-Basin Committee on Hypoxia, which joins the states of Arkansas, Louisiana, Missouri, Mississippi, and Tennessee as part of the National Gulf Hypoxia Task Force. And it has been pointed out the problem of hypoxia is manifest in the Gulf, but its roots and its solutions lie upstream. And the Sub Basin Committee is just one example of the collaboration that's occurred between the Federal Government and the states in the Mississippi River Basin and among the states of the Mississippi River Basin.

But the Federal Government for the last eight years, while it supported the process, didn't provide implementation for doing something about the problem. That changed very recently with the Mississippi River Basin initiative announced by the U.S. Department of Agriculture. And that is a key step. Because it has finally provided us with targeted funding to deal with the problem. So I would urge that this be replicated from the other key Federal agencies, EPA, the Core, NOAA, U.S. Fish and Wildlife, U.S. Geological Survey so they also get the target that

can help begin to turn that problem around. And it should be included in the President's budget, as has been pointed out before, and we would like to see a comparable level of investment with the Great Lakes and the Chesapeake efforts as one of obvious importance. Thank you.

Thank you.

[Applause]

>> Thank you. Karen [inaudible] with the Nature Conservancy.

>> KAREN: Thank you. I'm Karen with the Nature Conservancy. And we submitted comments from the national office and would like to just offer some regional comments.

First of all, we're partners with NOAA in the oyster reef restoration in the Gulf and we're also partners with the Fish and Wildlife Service, EPA, and others, for the largest flood plain restoration in the United States, which we hope will ultimately reduce the hypoxic zone about 25,000 acres of flood plain restoration. We're also partners with a number of organizations and agencies in the restoration of the Mississippi River Delta and the coastal ecosystems.

If you have heard, it's a system that is collapsing, mainly it's a result of policies that were developed by the Federal Government, either directly or indirectly. So we urge you to

make coastal restoration a centerpiece of your new policy.

We also ask that you support regional government, such as the Gulf of Mexico Alliance. We think it's a very effective mechanism for ecosystem base management. We also ask that you clarify that the protection of our ocean and coastal resources is not -- it's a priority, not a competing use, so that we continue to be able to enjoy all of the coastal activities, a full suite of activities that we depend upon for our coast.

So with that, we offer you, as you develop your recommendations and implement your plans, we continue to offer the nature conservancy as a science and policy resource. So good luck and thank you for your efforts.

[Applause]

>> Chris Dorsett with the Ocean Conservancy.

>> CHRIS DORSETT: Hi. Chris Dorsett with Ocean Conservancy. First I would like to thank the Task Force for the production of the interim report and for opportunities for public comment such as this.

We support the efforts of the Task Force to develop a strong ocean policy which uses marine spatial planning as a tool to achieve ecosystem based management. Perhaps nowhere better exemplifies the amount and types of demands we have placed on our oceans in the Gulf of Mexico. You have heard today about the

numerous activities we are going to hear, including shipping, commercial and recreational fisheries, and the drainage receipt from 31 states in the nation.

Add to this possible new demands such as offshore aquaculture, alternative sources of energy, a coastal population that is expected to continue to grow, and the impacts the climate change, and one thing is clear: The national ocean policy that can put into practice the concept of ecosystem-based management, taking the consideration both the human and natural demand on the ocean in order to strike a balance between wise ocean use and ecosystem protection is desperately needed.

Marine space planning is a valuable tool that can be used to achieve this holistic approach to management which brings together multiple ocean users to develop a comprehensive plan. Its results can reduce user conflict and advance sustainable economic and social benefits while protecting ocean ecosystems.

Fortunately, we're not starting from scratch in developing the principles in marine spatial planning. Great strides have been made in this country as well as others. We encourage the Task Force to use marine spatial planning as a tool to draw important lessons from each of these examples.

In closing, I would like to thank the Task Force for hosting a meeting in the Gulf of Mexico and for the opportunity to

provide these comments. We look forward to working with you in the future.

Thanks.

>>> Thank you.

>> Next is Sydney Coffee [phonetic ]with the U.S. Wetland Foundation.

>> SYDNEY COFFEE: Thank you, Virginia.

Yes, I'm Sydney Coffe, and I'm Senior Advisor to the America's Wetland Foundation and America's Energy Coast Initiative. And I want to tell you a little bit about that and ask you to work with us on something that we feel is very important.

The America's Energy Coast Initiative has a lot of very diverse partners at the table. In fact, a lot that you have heard from today, everyone from Environmental Defense Fund, National Wildlife Federation and the Nature Conservancy, Ducks Unlimited, CCA, and many other national and environmental groups, as well as Shell, Chevron, Conoco, Phillips, British Gas, Entergy, and many others in the energy industry, as well as navigation and fisheries and every other coastal industry you can imagine along the coast of Texas, Louisiana, Mississippi, and Alabama. It's a very unusual group, but one that is completely focused on sustaining this energy coast, mainly because it

depends on a very sound environment and we believe that both are sustainable and should be.

One of the things that we want you to focus on, that we ask you to focus on, came from a resolution that we passed this summer. And it's asking you to please work with us and with all interested parties in helping to reconcile the conflicting Federal policies and agency missions that really do stop great ecosystem efforts like this one. And if we do that, it doesn't matter whether we have all of the money in the world to make this happen, we really can't get there from here without reconciling those differences. And all of the other ecosystem restoration efforts and they will benefit from that as well.

Thank you.

>> Okay.

[inaudible] Are you still here?

Okay.

Miss Farmer. Can you state your organization as well?

>> MS. FARMER: I am with A Studio in the Woods, a program with Tulane University. We are located in the bottomland part of the forest, which is part of the wetlands. I'm here to advocate for artists who have not spoken today but they have great forces.

Great art of the world is what raises human consciousness of our oneness and the interdependence of all life. And I would

like to suggest to all of you tonight here, a great piece of theater that is happening right here in New Orleans focusing on the loss of wetlands, and it's called "Loup Garou," which is the cajun name for the werewolf of the wetlands. It's being performed outdoors in the wetlands of City Park. It is being produced by ArtSpot Productions. It will be running Friday, Saturday, and Sunday of this coming weekend. It's been running for two weeks already. It is Friday, Saturday, and Sunday, both one performance at dawn, one performance at sunset. It is a masterpiece of an environmental statement of art of what is happening in the cajun wetlands. It's the most magnificent theater I have ever experienced in my life, and it will galvanize every single person in here to get busier than they are, even though they think they're busy now.

>> Thank you very much.

>> [Applause]

>> Is Chris Lagarde in the room? Chris LaGarde?

>> CHRIS LaGARDE: Well, I didn't sign up to speak, but that's okay. I work for Congressman Gene Taylor in Mississippi. Actually I work for the House of Representatives and have worked for 19 years in that capacity doing special fisheries and natural resources. That's my title. If I could say two things to the council, coast restoration, you keep hearing it, it's pretty

simple issue.

We have the river water going past the wetlands and dumping into the Gulf of Mexico which is also helping, as you know, create the problem. We have got to figure a way to get past all of the local politics and the state politics, the Federal politics, and work on rebuilding those coastal wetlands that are so important, for all of the issues, the hurricane protections, the history and resource, the oil and gas. And then the freshwater diversion is also tied to that, especially along our part of the coast, we have a severely eroding coastline, which is serving not only a national agenda, but it's a small part compared to what is happening in Louisiana, but it is also a similar part.

So if you could take a message back to the Whitehouse, and I know y'all can, the coast restoration is pretty much a no brainer. That's what we need down here in the gulf south.

Thank you.

>> Mr. Matt Rota with the Mississippi River Collaborative.

>> MATT ROTA: Thank you for the opportunity to speak.

My name is Matt Rota, and I'm speaking on behalf of the Mississippi River Collaborative, of which the Gulf Restoration Network is a member. Environmental organizations and legal centers from states bordering the Mississippi River, as well as

regional and national groups, working on issues affecting the Mississippi River and its tributaries.

If we are to have a healthy gulf system, we also must take into account the freshwater inputs into the Gulf. A poster child of the impasse of pollution from these inland systems is the dead zone that forms at the mouth of the Mississippi River and Atchafalaya Rivers each Summer.

Despite knowledge of the cause of the dead zone and series of action plans put out by the hypoxia Task Force, we have not seen substantive reductions in the average size of the dead zone. This lack of action has been echoed in a series of reports from the National Research Council, calling the Mississippi River "an orphan," because no Federal or state agencies have taken full responsibility for developing protective policies against the river.

Further, our recent EPA Inspectors General report emphasized the obligation of the EPA to make sure that protective numeric nitrogen and phosphorus criteria were in place throughout the nation. The EPA has fallen behind in this duty and the nitrogen and phosphorus pollution that is having direct impacts on the ocean of the United States in the form of harmful algal blooms and dead zones.

It is also important to note that while most coastal states

have been delegated authority to implement the Clean Water Act in the state waters, it seems that EPA is hesitant to fully enforce the Clean Water Act by enforcement in the Gulf. The EPA must work with the sister agencies such as NOAA and USDA to develop and implement a meaningful cleanup plan.

In conclusion, the effort on the Federal and state level have not been adequate to address the issues of nitrogen and phosphorus pollution and the dead zone. We need a national ocean policy that considers impacts of [inaudible] pollution on estuaries and the open Gulf to comprehensively address threats like dead zones throughout the Gulf of Mexico.

Thank you.

[Applause]

>> Mr. Richard Wells with the Offshore Marine Services Association.

>> RICHARD WELLS: Thank you. The Offshore Marine Service Association is a trade association representing the owners and operators and crew members of the vessels that serve the offshore service industry. We have three recommendations:

To the Task Force as a whole, we recommend that you consider and recognize that commercial ports are a valuable national and regional resource, with offshore energy production, both traditional and green and renewable as well as fisheries, both

commercial and recreational, can't happen. And unfortunately, too often, when ports are displaced by housing, they never reappear again.

Secondly, and this one is to Ted Malowe and Mr. Sussman, the recent ballast water regulations that were just published focuses on people either operating from a single port or anybody else. This Task Force urges regional ecosystem recognition. I urge you to do the same with the ballast water rigs.

And lastly, to Admiral Allen, we urge the Coast Guard and the Customs and Border Control to wrap up enforcement of the Jones Act. The Jones Act requires that most vessels carrying cargo in U.S. waters are built at a U.S. shipyard are owned by an American owner and crewed by American crew members. With American vessels out there, we will have better environmental protection, we will have better environmental security, we will have better economic security, and every one of those employees we be spending their paycheck in a coastal port or region.

Thank you.

>> Miss Sarah DeBacher with the Holy Cross Neighborhood Association.

>> SARAH DeBACHER: My name is Sarah DeBacher, and I'm the vice president of the Holy Cross Neighborhood Association in the Lower 9th Ward. My neighborhood has been fighting the Port of

New Orleans and the Army Corps of Engineers for 50 years over the expansion of the inter-harbor navigational canal lock. The Port and the Corps would like to turn the IHNC lock into a MR-GO style deep draft shipping channel, at an expense of \$1.3 billion to the American taxpayers.

Chairman Sutley, you were in my neighborhood last week. You saw firsthand the damage the IHNC and MR-GO caused my community. You have seen the mismanagement of inland-to-ocean waterways by the Corps and the Port has led to results that are representative of anything but what Mr. LaGrange of the Port of New Orleans earlier called, "The greenest movement of all in transportation."

I ask that the work of this Task Force reflect a commitment to closely monitoring the Port, the Corps, and their work on navigation infrastructure projects, to ensure that they are doing more to help our communities and the environment than to hurt them.

Thank you.

[Applause]

>> Ms. Barbara Clise [phonetic], Army Corps of Engineers, Mississippi Valley Division.

>> DR. BARBARA CLISE: Good evening. I am Dr. Barb Clise. I am in the Science and Technology Office. I work for the U.S.

Army Corps of Engineers out of Vicksburg, Mississippi, the Mississippi Valley Division.

As the Interagency Ocean Policy Task Force moves forward on their important tasks, we would also like to ask you that you would consider, while developing your recommendations and Stewardship framework, something that we call America's inner coasts, the Mississippi River, including its many tributaries and distributaries, as you heard from the several, Denise, Robert and many others, the Mississippi River watershed is a critical component of the nation's water infrastructure and must be linked to any plan to address coastal issues.

>> The importance of America's inner coast does not escape the consideration of others. There is, for instance, the Midwest Natural Resources Groups, the Environment Protection Agencies Hypoxia Task Force, the Gulf of Mexico Alliance, the Aquatic Species Task Force, and others. But we would like to call to your attention a couple of additional projects that we believe help begin the link between these systems.

One is the Louisiana coast area or LCA project. The LCA is a joint effort of the Corp of Engineers in the state of Louisiana. Currently 12 large cultural restoration projects are in the feasibility stage. The Louisiana Coastal Area Science and Technology Office seeks to support these efforts by supplying

critical scientific information, such as the high-priority research projects on the quantitative measurement of role of wetlands and storm surge mitigation, wave continuation, and the measurement modeling sediment availability in the Mississippi River for coastal restoration and the ecological impacts of introducing nutrient-rich river water into Gulf Coast estuaries.

Finally, The Mississippi River Commission, established by an act of Congress with presidentially nominated members and headquartered in Vicksburg, recently developed a 200-year watershed vision to support their mission on the Mississippi River. It is our hope that America's inter coast and watershed will be a significant consideration in recommendations and frameworks developed by Task Force.

We offer our support to the effort as appropriate and request it.

Thank you.

[Applause]

>> Cynthia Sartu [phonetic] with the Gulf Restoration Network

>> CYNTHIA SARTU: Thank you very much.

I'm the Executive Director of the Gulf Restoration Network, and I just have a few comments. I'm going to not address coastal restoration because a lot of people have addressed that, but we want you to know it's important. I have three-points in the

short time I'd like to make.

One is that in the 14 years I worked in the Gulf, I can tell you that the central thing that has been missing in most management systems is the requirement that Federal agencies actually cooperate with each other. Good-faith cooperation among the agencies with competing missions has really been absent and, as a result, you really have very little cooperation and coordination.

I think one critical area there among many is the fact that there is very little, if any, coordination among coastal restoration, including barrier islands, oil and gas development, navigation and flood control. And on top of that, there's very little coordination between permitting any of the above that I spoke about. So the need for coordination and cooperation is really critical.

Next, I really think that people here have not made the point that a lot of our fisheries are in trouble. A lot of things seem to be rosy to many people. But we actually have a lot of fish that are overfished or undergoing overfishing. And it's critically important, in looking at the ocean policy, you look at both the habitat and the overfishing practices or the practices that are leading to the overfished status.

One example of that is the Bluefin population, which is

almost reaching critical stages and may face extinction in the next several years. We really need to protect their spawning grounds as well as stop the indiscriminate and wasteful bi-catch of the species by the pelagic longline fishery. I think that that is just one example of a rampant problem with overfishing and the bi-catch of species as well as the failure to protect the estuaries and the habitats critical to these species.

Thank you.

[Applause]

>> Henri Boulet of Louisiana Highway 1 Coalition.

>> Good evening.

>> HENRI BOULET: Yes, good evening. My name is Henri Boulet. I'm the Executive Director of the Louisiana Highway 1 Coalition, a coalition with a mission of securing critical energy infrastructure to our Gulf Coast in Lafourche Parish, about one hour west of New Orleans. Louisiana Highway 1 supports 18% of the nation's daily crude oil needs. It's the sole highway access to America's busiest energy port, Port Fourchon, and LOOP, the Louisiana Offshore Oil Port that's 18 miles offshore and is the only national offshore oil port that can unload very large crew carriers.

Four more significant investments in restoring our coast is needed at this time, above what our state coffers and Federal

offshore revenue sharing can provide. I ask this Task Force today, as a way to contribute to a more independent energy future for our country, and as a way to support needed funding mechanism for Louisiana's extensive coastal needs, to support the Department of Interior's Gulf of Mexico proposed five-year lease plan for 2012 through 2017 and to support the protection of at-risk critical energy infrastructure like Louisiana Highway 1.

I say this because four Federal agencies who have a tremendous stake in a functioning LA-1, the U.S. Department of Transportation, the U.S. Department of the Interior, the U.S. Department of Homeland security, and the U.S. Department of Energy, all realize that LA-1 is vulnerable to a storm washout at any time, yet none of them have adequate resources to fund this \$300 million national vulnerability. That answer is just not sufficient.

So I ask you today to support policy which addresses an appropriate funding mechanism for critical coastal infrastructure like Louisiana Highway 1. Thank you.

>> Next is Grace Morris.

>> GRACE MORRIS: Hi. Thank you for the opportunity to speak today.

We talk about recovery here and rebuilding our wetlands and restoring our coasts. And I definitely support the multiple and

the defense strategy with barrier island replenishment and the strategic closure of manmade channels and a sustainable natural defense system for community use. And as we moved forward to rectify this situation in southern Louisiana, which is largely been called or caused through the mismanagement of levee and jetty systems and the dredging of oil and gas canals. And as we restore the fisheries and protect and try to revitalize the diversity of the Gulf, as we move forward, I support a national oceans policy that, as far as an area of responsibility and resiliency, does not repeat what we now have to restore.

Thank you.

[Applause]

>> We will go to Mr. Bob Stokes with the Galveston Bay Foundation next. Mr. Bob Stokes?

>> BOB STOKES: Thank you. Let me also thank this Task for at this late hour for being here today. I am the president of the Galveston Bay Foundation. I am also a board member of an organization called Restore America's Estuaries, which is an organization, a coalition of 11 different bay conservation groups from around the country, six on the East Coast, three on the Gulf Coast, including a coalition to restore Louisiana, and the Galveston Bay Foundation, and two on the West Coast.

The issues in front of you are very complex and far

reaching. I want to try to quickly talk about two, that would be funding and coordination. There's never been more demand for habitat restoration funding, and that is illustrated by quick point. With Congress that allocated \$167 million as part of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, the stimulus money to NOAA. And NOAA opened that up to a competitive process. They expect to fund about 50 projects. Well, they got over 800 project applications for \$3 billion worth of funding, which goes to show, again, how much need there is, how much pent-up demand there is for this restoration funding, not just in coastal Louisiana but across the Gulf Coast and across the country.

There's lots of ways to talk about coordination. But let me use one particular vehicle that exists already, which is the Estuary Restoration Act. We would like to see the Estuary Habitat Restoration Council directed to update the National Estuary Habitat Restoration strategy to better coordinate the agency efforts and to develop and execute. Let's see your plan of action for the strategy's full implementation.

And then finally, we support reauthorization of the Coastal Zone Management Act. We want to make sure that the act strengthens the existing partnerships with the states, because they're strong partnerships, through the Coastal Management Programs, because these will definitely further national policy.

Thank you very much.

[Applause]

>> Mr. Windell Curole with the South Lafourche Levee District.

>> WINDELL CUROLE: Hey, Virginia. How are you doing?

As you said my name [inaudible ]

[Laughter]

This Task Force kind of reminds me of the differences that delta's having, and I hope you can address this. Deltas are extremely different. And I have talked to people from Bangladesh, from the Netherlands, and they easily understand the issue that we deal with. The problem with a big country like the United States, if you didn't grow up south of Baton Rouge and east of Lafayette, the experience with the Delta is a different thing. The laws that apply to wetlands, the way we operate, it's completely different because our geology, from the beginning, is a different thing. And hopefully you can capture that difference. if you try to make us like everything else, we will have a failure. It's part of the reason why people don't understand. But the delta offers great opportunity and great risk.

Now, if you're in the risk business, you will wonder why do people live there to begin with. If you're in the opportunity business, you say, how can you not be there? We talked about the

great productivity that we have here. We talked about the trade with the rest of the world. The mind of the Midwest meets the rest of the world through south Louisiana and New Orleans.

That's why it's here and that's why Jefferson bought it.

If you can understand that difference and that importance and we can translate that to the rest of the country, I think we have a chance of dealing with these issues. The simple issue of what Louisiana supports in offshore oil, some \$7 billion a year, and none of it to take care of the consistency of the programs of coastal zone management, which started in 1976 when I began working with it. To not have that followed up and taken care of, it's depressing. But we know this opportunity that you have now when you take this and get it done and improve our situation here.

Thank you.

[Applause]

>> Mr. Gary Robert, retired, Army Corps of Engineers.

>> GARY ROBERT: I'm here as a private citizen today. I did retire from the Corps or Engineers a couple of years ago. And I came to add my voice to those calling for an urgent need for restoration of the coastal wetlands in Louisiana.

The last 16 years I worked at the Corps, I did wetlands restoration, planning, and project management. And from that,

the insight I have from that tells me that, if nothing more is done than is currently going on, then the entire ecosystem of south Louisiana, will probably collapse within my lifetime. It's disappearing that fast.

But there have been enough voices talking about that. And I wanted to offer one suggestion to the Task Force. Because a lady a few speakers ago talked about the lack of cooperation of agencies. And I worked on an interagency program for those 16 years. And some of you guys are head of the agencies, and you can't help but bring your agency bias to the table when you -- if you try and coordinate at a very top level, you're not going to get past those agency biases, as far as whether there are conflicts in terms of policies you might recommend. So I would suggest that you break down some of your work into separate working committees that have experts from those agencies and report back to the committee structure and not through the agency pipelines. Because when people working at a grunt level, like I was doing on this program for years, you may have agency biases but you continue to see those and report those up. But if you go through the agency pipeline, you would just be at loggerheads when you're at the top, trying to iron that out.

>> Thank you.

>> The Task Force has been extending the comment period to

try to hear as many people as possible. So please give them your bottom-line within a minute so that everyone may be able to speak tonight.

Next, Mr. Brooks Mountcastle, The Food and Water Watch.

If you could keep it to one minute, it would help.

>> BROOKS MOUNTCASTLE: Thank you for the opportunity to speak tonight. I'm Brooks Mountcastle, a camping organizer for Food and Water Watch. I work with a consumer organization whose mission is to challenge corporate misuse and privatization of our food and water resources. I'm here tonight to inform you about a concern regarding serious deficiencies of British Petroleum's Atlantis project, which is located 150 miles up the coast of Louisiana.

We're very concerned that the project's problems we're about to address could prevent the need for serious environmental disaster, the scale of which would make the Exxon Valdez look like a drop in the bucket. We urge the Minerals Management Service to launch an immediate and thorough investigation.

Before leasing acres of the outer continental shelf for lease for drilling, MMS needs to demonstrate that it's capable of managing the acres it's already leased to offshore energy developers. Both parties, the government and the energy companies, need to follow Federal regulations and comply with the

law.

In the case of EPA Atlantis, the world's largest oil and natural gas platform, the Government performance to ensure that the engineering and crew documents are in place and approved by the MMS before allowing the platform to start production October 2007 has been inadequate. In March 2009, it was told to MMS that BP does not have the proper engineering documents in place. These documents are necessary to operate the Atlantis safely.

Later, an independent engineer examined Mr. Webber's claims and concluded that Atlantis should be shut down until these documents are in place. An internal email correspondence from BP states that the risk of turning over incomplete drawings could lead to catastrophic operator errors. Although these allegations were brought to MMS's attention nearly six months ago, and BP has known about them for longer, the agency nor the company has indicated that the company -- has not indicated that the company currently has the crew documents that are needed to run the platform. We're very concerned about this increased risk of operator errors that could lead to harm platform workers, marine environment, and local fishing communities. We look forward to working with you as you develop a more coordinated, comprehensive approach of ocean zoning and management. Thank you.

>> Thank you. Sandy Rosenthal of Levees.org. Sandy

Rosenthal?

>> SANDY ROSENTHAL: Thank you for extending the comment period very much. I'm Sandy Rosenthal. I founded an organization after Hurricane Katrina. It's called Levees.org. We're now 24,000 supporters nationwide with chapters in six states. Our mission is education and why New Orleans was so vulnerable on August 29 when Katrina arrived.

We have a policy recommendation to please resist using the term "Katrina flooded New Orleans." Please resist Katrina shorthand. In New Orleans and St. Bernard Parish, the flooding was due overwhelmingly and primarily due to civil engineering mistakes.

To say that Katrina flooded New Orleans would be like saying traffic broke that bridge in Minneapolis. Both the traffic and Katrina exposed civil engineering mistakes and structural flaws. And in the city of New Orleans and St. Bernard, those civil engineering mistakes were overwhelmingly and primarily our Army Corps of Engineers. So in closing, please resist "Katrina shorthand."

Thank you.

[Applause]

>> Diana Sole?

Mr. Paul Johnson, Reef Relief from Florida Coast and Ocean

Coalition.

>> PAUL JOHNSON: Thank you, Task Force members. My name is

Paul Johnson. I'm the Policy Director for Reef Relief, a coral reef protection organization based in Key West, Florida. I'm also here today on behalf of the Florida Coastal and Oceans Coalition, a group of national and state coastal and marine conservation organizations working to protect and establish policy. We're protecting Florida's oceans.

Basically, cutting to the shorthand today, I very much appreciate you wanting to have all of the people here. This is not going to be an easy feat. It's not going to happen quickly and it's not going to be cheap. It's going to take a good while. Spatial planning will get you where you want to be. Ocean policy is the precursor to that, but marine spatial planning is where you want to go.

In south Florida, we're familiar with the process. I had the privilege of working with a stakeholder group for about a decade to draft the plan to approve the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary Program Plan. That involved a lot of stakeholders. It extensively involved spatial planning to avoid conflicts of use and to avoid those conflicts of use. Everybody that was involved in that plan gave a little bit to get a lot.

The Florida Keys is the number one charter boat platform in the world. It's the number one dive destination in the world. It's the number one recreational fishing location in the world. So we're pretty familiar with marine resources and how those things happen. And this is all happening in a very small chain, a very small island, with a very big ocean out there. So this can be done. And we appreciate you looking at that as a potential model.

Florida has a lot of other great things going on with it. And one of the new activities that coming on is offshore oil and gas. And that's something that the state is looking at, our policy members are looking at it and the public and we would encourage you to take a good look at it as well. Thank you very much.

[Applause]

>> Ms. Barbara McArthur.

>> BARBARA McARTHUR: Hi. My name is Barbara McArthur. I am a resident of the St. Charles Parish. My family owns a couple thousand acres of land in the far east of New Orleans.

It is in a nine-mile stretch of an island which is the first part of New Orleans and it's outside of the levee system. We are considered the last land protection against the Gulf from going into Lake Pontchartrain. The hurricanes have pretty much wiped

out the whole entire island. There are a few camps that remained after, homes of people and businesses. People are rebuilding. But I'm concerned that y'all are going to implement more policies that's going to make it difficult for the landowners to maintain their land and rebuild it.

We also -- the hurricane protection, which back in the '70s did not include us, which also with ocean rising and so forth is eroding away the rest of our wetlands and our property that isn't above sea level. We would like for y'all to please protect us and, you know, let us maintain rebuilding our property and, just like Texas, a Galveston lady that spoke earlier, she would like to rebuild her property, and I'm sure there are other areas in southeast Louisiana and other parishes and states of the Gulf Coast that would like to do the same. Just consider that.

Thank you.

>> Thank you.

>> Mr. Walter Williams with Dream Site Productions.

>> WALTER WILLIAMS: Hi. I was born and raised here, and I'm an independent filmmaker. And I even created Mr. Bill from "Saturday Night Live." You might remember, "Oh, Noooo!" Where else would he come from? New Orleans.

But anyway, I went through Betsy as a kid, and it turned out to be a bigger storm when it made landfall than Katrina. We were

on the worst side of the storm for surge. Yet we had no colliding. And we never heard the word "evacuation" as a kid. This is something that has just happened in my lifetime, the last 40 years. None of the canals flooded, 17th Street, and so on, and they didn't even have sea walls back then whatsoever.

So something has happened in forty years. We lost our wetlands obviously. And to correct the opening statement by Mr. Graves about the river was leveed in 1930 and that caused all of the wetlands loss. That is not true. The oil and gas industry caused, in the majority of that period, at the same time the dredge, all of these issues were predicted. Army Corps of Engineers Environmental Impact Report of the Oil and Gas Industry. In 1973 they said saltwater intrusion would cause land loss; and extraction of oil beneath us would cause subsidence, and this has all come true.

So why is the oil and gas industry not paying their 50% of the restoration costs since they caused the damage? President Obama is a very smart man. When he sees all of these details, I think he will pass an Executive Order, just like Jimmy Carter did against the chemical industry in 1981 because of Love Canal and create the Superfund. So I don't want to wake up some morning without New Orleans. We have the biggest land building machine on the planet. We can do this. We just need the money. And the

people should all come to the table that deserve to contribute.

That's it. Thanks.

[Applause]

>> LaKesha Johnson with the American Petroleum Institute.

>> LAKESHA JOHNSON: Thank you.

The oceans' ecosystems are vital to the health and well being of the planet and the world economy, and all sources of energy including oil and natural gas will be needed to fuel feel economic growth. The goal of the US Ocean policy should be to protect our ocean ecosystems in a valid and equitable way. The value of the commercial ocean uses to the U.S. economy and national security cannot be overlooked. A balanced policy can only be accomplished if all stakeholders have balanced participation in the development process, including the oil and the natural gas industry.

Industry has proven that environment protection of the ocean can be accomplished in harmony with development. The Flower Garden Banks National Marine Sanctuary is an excellent example of how long-term cooperation between industry and government can work and maintain our valuable environmental resources at the same time as developing energy production.

The MMS five-year leasing program is also an example of a system that already balances multiple uses of the ocean and could

be used as a basis to develop marine spatial planning without creating a new structure.

It is our belief that in summary the U.S. oil and gas industry has a vested interest in the continued health and economic viability of the oceans and the API and its members fully support the development of a national ocean policy that maintains the health and viability of the oceans while recognizing the substantial benefits these offshore waters provide to us every day.

>> Thank you. Natasha Boyd, Life Savers Community Development.

Natasha?

Mr. Devin Martin?

>> DEVIN MARTIN: Hi. I come today as just a simple member of the public, a resident of Lafourche Parish, Louisiana, and most importantly a citizen of the earth. And I commend President Obama and your Task Force for trying to congeal the multiple policies that deal with our nation's oceans and how we use them, and I think this is a great step to go into. I think that our rivers should be included. There have been several things that people talked about.

I don't want to harp on the issues over and over again. But I would like to give my testament to the fact that, not only is

the ecosystem here in Louisiana being destroyed by things like the leveeing of the river, the oil and gas industry, which has completely, completely changed the way that Louisiana looks and feels, but it is destroying our culture and people. And these are things that cannot be restored. We cannot restore a language. We cannot restore customs. We cannot restore the history and the heritage of people whose lives are being destroyed bit the loss of their land. Not only Native Americans. Cajun people, Creole people. These are people that are indigenous by the definition of the word.

So I encourage you to remember that there's a human factor behind all things.

Thank you.

[Applause]

>> Thank you.

Steven Peyronnin with Coalition to Restore Coastal Louisiana.

>> STEVEN PEYRONNIN: Thank you. Steven Peyronnin with Coalition to Restore Coastal Louisiana.

In reviewing the interim report, I was struck by a few overarching themes that I think are shared by most in coastal Louisiana. First of all, looking at an ecosystem base management regime. We got ourselves into this problem here in coastal

Louisiana because we value flood control and navigation over sustainability of system. And as a result, both of those two key features of this economy are starting to struggle and will collapse if we don't sustain the ecosystem that benefits both of those.

Also although science-based decision making is essential to the path we are on but requiring 100% certainty before moving ahead will cost us the precious element of time. All leading to the idea of improved coordination and ensuring that our policies are adequately funded, key observations by this interim report, all must acknowledge and should be included in your report the notion that we are in an urgent situation.

While we identified the need nor priorities within this structure and management plan, we have to understand that some of these areas are in urgent need of restoration and cannot be bogged down in this process.

Thank you.

>> Mr. Alex Miller, Gulf State Marine Fisheries Commission.

>> ALEX MILLER: I thank you for the opportunity to speak today. I would urge you to include economics and economic analysis into future policies as they relate to oceanic resources. Economics allows for a proactive approach to management. Furthermore, economic serves as a tool to understand the

tradeoffs between the economy and ocean resources. For example, economics can help make decisions about marine spatial planning and catch shares. In closing, I urge you include the value of this skill study into future ocean policies.

Thank you for your time.

>> Ms. Meridia Freeman with Miller McCoy Academy.

Miss Freeman?

Ms. Charlotte Bick with the Bick Search Foundation.

>> CHARLOTTE BICK: Hello. In the interest of time, I'm going to let it go because there have been wonderful comments this afternoon.

>> Thank you.

[Applause]

>> Sean Cosgrove with the Conservation Law Foundation.

>> SEAN COSGROVE: Hi, I'm Sean Cosgrove with the Conservation Law Foundation. I'm the marine campaign director. I'm afraid I won't get the round of applause the last speaker got.

I very much want to thank you for the work that you put into the interim report and the process here. I think the listening sessions that you're having is a great opportunity for people all over the country, no matter what they care about, to be involved in the policymaking, and that's the right way to go about it.

We submitted written comments, but I wanted to talk a little bit about the vast amount of support that I hear here for habitat restoration, basically from agencies on the Federal and state level, from different ocean users and from citizens all across Louisiana and the rest of the Gulf Coast.

"One of the most important aspects of intelligence tinkering is to save all of the parts." That's quote from Aldo Leopold, one of our nation's foremost scientist on land restoration. And what that means is that habitat protection is just as important as restoration. And that means here in the Delta, along the Gulf Coast, and the different coastal habitats but also offshore. So I would encourage the Task Force to look at offshore habitat protection, as an important component of restoring the species diversity, the habitat heterogeneity.

This is something that has been pointed out in both ocean Commission. Several hundred scientists have issued a concession statement on ecosystem-based management, habitat protection is an important part of that. And so thank you for your work and the time that you spend here.

>> Okay.

Sandy Fury with Chevron

>> SANDY FURY: Thank you. My name is Sandy Fury, and I'm testifying on behalf of Chevron USA. Chevron is one of the

largest energy companies in the United States. We are committed to and look forward to continuing being a responsible supplier of energy to ensure our nation's energy security into the future.

We support the Administration's efforts to develop a national oceans policy. We are encouraged that the Task Force has decided to utilize reports from both the U.S. Commission on Ocean Policy and the Pew Ocean's Commission in developing a comprehensive framework to use in the creation of a national issue policy.

These reports contain the assessments and recommendations from many stakeholders involved in ocean management, governance, and utilization. Successful management of our coastal waters and ocean should provide for a healthy ecosystem that sustains for most multiple use. These assets should be available to the American public for both recreation as well as commercial use.

The Gulf of Mexico is an abundance of resources that provide not only enjoyment but also critical to our way of life. The Gulf Coast is a working coast valued locally and nationally for its ports, its history, as well as its vital role in providing domestic and energy security for the nation.

A few comments with regard to the recommendations in the interim report. We applaud many of the recommendations offered. We offer few concerns. And one in particular has to do with the

need increased stakeholder input.

We appreciate the opportunity today and we look forward to more inclusion in the future.

>> Last point, please.

>> Last point. Upon review of the report, the absence of costs associated with many implementation objectives was noted. We view this as a significant gap. It's critically important that the Task Force recognize in its deliberations that recommendations designed to promote protection, maintenance, and restoration, the health of the ocean and coastal ecosystems and resources cannot be assured if costs cannot be met.

Thank you.

>> Thank you. Joel Devalcourt with the University of New Orleans, a student.

Melanie Driscoll with the National Audubon Society.

>> MELANIE DRISCOLL: Thank you. At Audubon, we believe birds which cross oceans and continents during migration show us the scale at which we must develop policy and undertake restoration to safeguard our ocean resources. Even Palearctic birds which lived most of their lives on the way over on oceans rely almost totally on food resources whose nursery is our disappearing coast.

Louisiana's coastal habitats form a bottleneck and all are

recognized by Audubon as important bird areas based on the immense concentrations of waterfowl, shorebirds, raptors, and land birds that exist within these habitats. Continued loss of the habitats and their associated food resources will hurt birds populations continentally if not globally. Birds, always indicators of environmental health, are facing steady declines; a foreshadowing of the impacts us as our coast continues to collapse.

We ask that this Task Force fully integrate coastal restoration into oceans policy and planning and to do so at a scale both representative of the environmental damage we have caused and at the scale at which birds use the oceans and the associated resources.

In determining whether this is doable, we ask that the Task Force also remember that we managed to make flood protection and navigation continentally doable, and we need to do the same with restoration and habitat protection.

Thank you.

>> Thank you.

>> Maura Wood, National Wildlife Federation.

>> MAURA WOOD: Thank you all so much for being here. I'm Maura Wood with the National Wildlife Federation. I'm encouraged by the attention in the interim report to coordination and integration among agencies and government entities, by its

emphasis on resiliency, by its recognition of climate change and its sense of urgency. Because when it comes to restoring Louisiana, coordination of Federal, state, and local agencies couldn't be more necessary; emphasis on resiliency and planning for climate change couldn't be more critical; and taking bold action on restoration couldn't be more urgent. We commend the Obama Administration for the creation of the Interagency Work Group, and we urge that it work quickly, boldly, and at the highest level.

In September, National Wildlife Federation along with a number of other NGO's, both national and local, held a Coastal Louisiana Day in Washington, D.C. Chairman Sutley, I would like to leave you with this DVD of the briefing that we gave. It focuses on solutions. Restoring coastal Louisiana is a big job, but it can be done. It's an hour and 14 minutes, so it's just about right from 10,000 feet to 10,000 feet, from here to Washington, D.C. It features a lot of people that you have heard speak today, and I hope you will find it interesting.

Thanks.

>> Thanks, Maura.

>>> Mr. William Knuckles of Knuckles Consulting.

>> WILL KNUCKLES: Hi. I'm Will Knuckles. And I would like to argue that now is the time that we need to move forward with

our announcement of our new national ocean policy and get to implement the strategies that have been laid out.

I think there's a great deal of wisdom when the President said that you're going to have days to work on this and that there was to be a fast turnaround. And that there was a lot of work that's been done for a number of years and a lot of collective wisdom that has already been put out beforehand, and then we are going to move forward quickly.

Well, there's been nothing official, but the rumor mill in D.C. is that it looks like the announcement for this work is going to be delayed in terms of there being an actual national policy announcement until after the Task Force's work is complete, including this work on the marine spatial planning, putting us somewhere in about mid December at best case scenario, and then with the holidays, and we're likely to push off and get possibly even January and into an entirely different calendar year.

This creates some awkward situation, one of which is the work that you're doing right now doesn't get to occur within the context of the national policy, which you have now at your own recommendations and a collection of public comment, which has not been reconciled and actually spun back out to the public. The next piece which is fairly awkward is also in December the

President is looking at going to Copenhagen to talk about climate change in a condition where a national policy is announced.

And it also will effectively be able to make the ability for anyone to look at the 2011 President's budget proposal in the light of the new national ocean policy, because the President's announcement for the budget will be tripping over the announcement time, really eliminating the ability for staff to look at this issue.

>> Thank you.

Jordan Macha with Sierra Club?

>> JORDAN MACHA: Thank you. The development of a national ocean policy is critical for the health of Louisiana due to the effect of climate change and manmade influence, such as offshore drilling and coal-fired power plants. Coastal communities will clearly face greater risks. Policies should emphasize the importance of protecting and restoring coastal wetlands.

In addition to the Louisiana wetlands, the Gulf of Mexico is a resource-rich interconnected ecosystem. The Gulf of Mexico fisheries are some of the most productive in the world, boasting both abundant commercial and recreational fishing. Unfortunately, this region is under siege from numerous threats such as heavy metal pollution, such as Mercury from coal plants, and industrial pollution from offshore drilling.

In Mississippi the Gulf Islands National Seashore, a unit of the National Park System is faced with the threat of offshore oil and gas drilling from Federal leases by MMS under the Bush Administration. The destruction of the view shattered, more importantly, the loss of the islands as a whole from a geological phenomena as the subsidence as a direct result of the extraction of the oil and gas.

We need a policy which will require more coordinated management between Federal and state agencies in order to protect the coast's wealth of interdependent natural resources. We urge the Administration to make clear that continued delay in setting standards as unacceptable and that the Federal Government will impose standards if states are unwilling or unable to act.

Thanks you.

[Applause]

>> Mr. John Colfero [phonetic].

>> JOHN COLFERO: Thank you. I'm John Colfero. I have been trying to get MR-GO closed for 20 years. Our neighborhood is just a couple of blocks -- a couple of miles down. We were flooded when the MR-GO flooded. And if you think repairing our coast is going to be easy, consider this. Even though we're trying to get this thing closed, at the same time, our Government is trying to build the last part of it, which was never built,

which is in the inner harbor, which is a new lock project, to take it out deep for container ships. And it bypassed the neighborhoods. It went right to Congress. The sediments, dredge sediments, are going to go into areas that we're trying to restore. And this is wrong. And it's an example of the way things shouldn't be. And we don't want you to buy it. We want you to use science and common sense and take care of this business for us.

Thank you.

[Applause]

[Name inaudible]

>> FEMALE VOICE: Thank you for being here with us. I would like to talk about corporate responsibility and accountability. And I think that the companies that have had a hand in destroying our wetlands should be responsible for that and should be held responsible by the government and the citizens of the United States of America.

But also in a development of a national ocean policy, not only should we think about what kind of natural resources we will be leaving to future generations, but what kind of paradigm about human interactions with nature will we leave as a legacy. Coastal scientists estimate that oil companies have caused 40 to 60% of coastal land loss Louisiana is experiencing. And NGO's

and other entities and individuals have asked, for example, show oil company to contribute to wetlands restoration which they have not yet directly done anything about.

But our policies and philosophies should not be based on a position of breaking and destroying something and then trying to fix it, but starting from protection and respect for natural environment to begin with. Thank you very much.

[Applause]

>> Mr. Brett Levin with Tulane Green Club?

Mr. Levin?

If not, we have one last speaker.

Casey Callaway, Mobile Bay Keepers?

>> CASEY CALLAWAY: Thank you. It's Casey.

Thank you all so much. And I'm sorry to be one more person, but I'm fast.

>> Federal Law requires that all states meet the same minimum standards of the Federal laws established to protect our air, land and water. Yet each of the five Gulf states, not to mention Pacific, Atlantic and Great Lakes, all treat our oceans, wetlands, estuaries, everything so very differently.

A major priority of the President's administration of each one of the agencies, EPA, Council on Environmental Quality, NOAA, the Corps, must be to get all states up to meeting the minimum

standards and minimum requirements to protect our precious natural resources. Alabama, in particular, is at the bottom of the list for enforcement for storm water regulations. And I know this because these are the two I work on the most.

Each of these states must be required to have leadership at the table on these issues. The final point I will say, I have heard it a lot but I want to say it clearly, economics and environment go hand in hand. If you have a strong economy, it's because you have a strong environment, a strong, good clean environment. Thank you.

[Applause]

>> CHAIR SUTLEY: If you were listed and you filled out a card, raise your hand if you didn't get called on.

[No response]

I think they got to everyone. The Task Force has been very hospitable but you have too. Everyone has been very gracious. Thank you for your warm hospitality on behalf of the Gulf Coast.

*[Proceedings recessed at approximately 8:00 p.m. CST]*