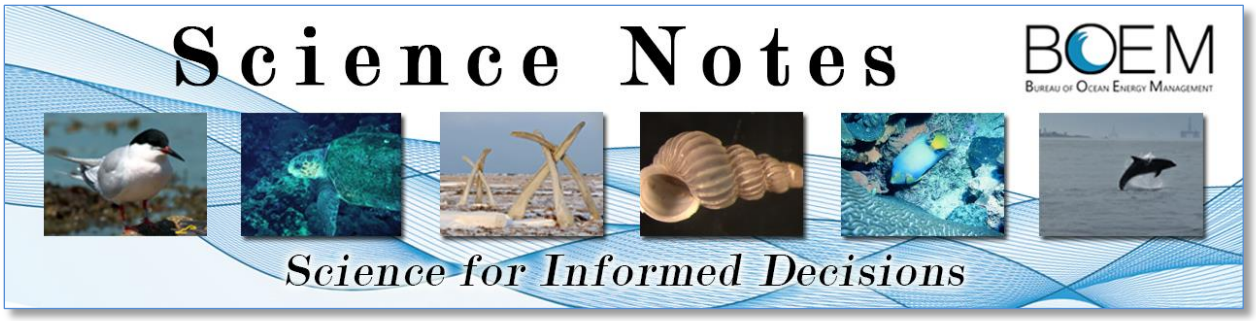

July 12, 2017

Dear Reader,

In March, it was our pleasure to participate in the Gulf of Mexico Workshop on International Research in Houston. BOEM's Environmental Studies Program played an important role in co-organizing and co-sponsoring the event along with the Harte Research Institute at Texas A&M University, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, and the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine. Our bureau has worked for years to engage in international collaborations with other countries to responsibly manage offshore energy and mineral resources. As a semi-enclosed ocean basin bordered by the U.S., Mexico, and Cuba, the Gulf of Mexico is a perfect example of the crucial role that international coordination can play in approaching the marine environment as one large marine ecosystem – One Gulf. This month's Science Note is devoted to BOEM's international science engagement in the Gulf of Mexico and pursuit of Gulf-wide partnerships. Please enjoy reading it, and feel free to send your comments to us at boempublicaffairs@boem.gov.

Sincerely,

Michael Celata
Director, Gulf of Mexico Region

William Y. Brown
Chief Environmental Officer

One Gulf - BOEM's Commitment to Strengthening International Science Partnerships in the Gulf of Mexico

International coordination on environmental science initiatives in the Gulf of Mexico is a high-priority for stakeholders as the scientific and regulatory communities work together to ensure the safe and responsible use of offshore resources. BOEM is committed to developing joint environmental science opportunities that transcend international boundaries and help ensure that decisions are informed by the best available science from an ecosystem-based, basin-wide perspective.

Photo by HRI.

A "One Gulf" perspective is essential to our understanding of ocean science and stewardship in the Gulf of Mexico. For example, the Gulf Large Marine Ecosystem plays a critical role in sustaining the long-distance transport of coral larvae, the migratory pathways of marine mammals, and energetic ocean currents such as the Loop Current.

For over a decade, the BOEM Environmental Studies Program has engaged with Mexico primarily in the area of physical oceanography, given the recognized importance of large domain models for oil spill

modeling research. Joint studies have included the measurement of deepwater ocean currents, hosting a USA-Mexico oceanographic workshop, and Loop Current research in the Yucatán-Campeche area.

First Gulf of Mexico International Science Workshop

Dr. Rebecca Green, BOEM senior oceanographer, provides sponsor perspectives at the GOM-WIR.*Photo by HRI.*

Recognizing there is still much to learn about the Gulf of Mexico Large Marine Ecosystem, the Harte Research Institute (HRI), National Academies' Gulf Research Program (GRP), the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, and BOEM worked together to hold the Gulf of Mexico Workshop on International Research (GOM-WIR). The workshop was the first of its kind to bring together a diverse group of stakeholders from the three Gulf countries to identify knowledge gaps regarding marine ecosystem science, prioritize research needs across disciplines, and establish working relationships between international partners.

Nearly 160 attendees from government, industry, and academia from around the Gulf of Mexico attended the successful Houston workshop. On the first day, participants discussed the state of international science in the Gulf of Mexico in plenary sessions. Additionally, Michael Celata, BOEM's Gulf of Mexico Regional Director, and Alejandro Carabias, Head of the Regulations and Legal Standards Unit at Mexico's Agency for Safety, Energy and Environment (ASEA), participated in a lunch panel in which they discussed environmental coordination on offshore oil and gas activities. In October 2016, BOEM and ASEA signed a Letter of Intent to strengthen cooperation, coordination, and information sharing on environmental matters related to offshore hydrocarbon activities in the Gulf of Mexico. The second day of the workshop focused on further discussion of three themes: baseline measurements, fate and effects studies, and environmental monitoring. An important first exercise during the workshop was for participants to help identify research programs in the southern Gulf to develop a final inventory which will be delivered by August 2018 (www.gulfinventory.org).

From left to right: Mike Celata (BOEM), Alejandro Carabias (ASEA), and Tim McCune during GOM-WIR lunch panel. *Photo by BOEM, Rebecca Green.*

Path Forwards for Expanded International Partnerships

BOEM and its partners seek to foster opportunities for the international science and regulatory communities to work together as stewards of the Gulf of Mexico Large Marine Ecosystem. The GOM-WIR workshop was a tremendous stride forwards for bringing marine scientists from around the Gulf together for this conversation. BOEM and HRI plan to publish the final proceedings including the inventory of southern Gulf science programs to help inform future joint research programs.

The Kemp's Ridley sea turtle, found throughout the GOM, is an endangered species. *Photo by Kim Bassos-Hull, Sarasota Dolphin Research Program.*

As a responsible ocean steward, BOEM is committed to pursuing the "One Gulf" concept to ensure a healthy, resilient ecosystem for all countries and inhabitants of the Gulf of Mexico. Looking towards the horizon, this conversation may eventually include growing interest in offshore renewable energy as a component of energy security, diversification, and resiliency in the region.

To learn more about BOEM's other regional and multi-disciplinary research activities, visit BOEM's Environmental Studies Program, which develops, funds, and manages rigorous scientific research to inform policy decisions regarding the development of energy and mineral resources on the Outer Continental Shelf.

- BOEM -