

Examination of the Relationship Between Tourism and OCS Oil and Gas Activities in the Gulf of Mexico

Lou Nadeau,¹ Mark Jensen,² Melanie Sands,¹ Charles Goodhue,¹ Maureen Kaplan,¹ and Amy Stillings³

¹Eastern Research Group, Inc. (ERG), Lexington MA; ²BOEM, New Orleans, LA, ³BOEM, Sterling, VA (with ERG at the time of the study)

September 2014

The Deepwater Horizon (DWH) oil spill on April 20, 2010 had major implications for the travel, tourism, and recreation industries in the Gulf. Under this project, the Bureau of Ocean and Energy Management (BOEM) and Eastern Research Group, Inc. (ERG) developed data and methods for assessing the impact of the DWH spill on the travel, tourism, and recreation industries in the Gulf. The presentation will summarize the data, methods, and findings associated with a number of key project activities, including (1) an analysis of data collected by the Gulf Coast Claims Facility (GCCF); (2) summary of relevant articles about tourism impacts published in the Gulf-area press; (3) estimating county-level measures of travel, tourism, and recreation in the Gulf using data created under the project based on federal sources; and (4) field interviews conducted with local tourism officials, trade associations, and business in the Gulf. The results of our data analyses found that (1) the DWH oil spill had significant negative impacts on travel and tourism business establishments and levels of employment in the Gulf, (2) the spill had economic impacts over a wide geographic range, including areas well beyond the counties directly impacted by oil, (3) the spill had significant impacts on hotels and restaurants in the Gulf, and (4) perception is an important economic driver when it comes to tourism and disasters.