

External Affairs Report – July 2010 – By Mike Fogarty, Chairman

AAPG

DPA

[June 2010 Correlator](#)

[Officer Candidates](#)

Election results are in.



The [Joint Committee on Reserves Evaluator Training](#) has launched a [Web site](#) providing contact information and FAQs about JCRET. Training materials and instructions for creating training materials are also featured.



[State and Federal Legislative Activity](#)

Follow the legislative activity in your state or on the federal level. Learn what the various states are passing or proposing within their legislatures. See what could impact registration and licensing for geoscientists. Hundreds of house and senate bills and resolutions may be monitored. Simply click on a topic and then the highlighted state or look at all legislature to read the bill, follow its status and find out who the sponsor is.

[Ethics Course Online](#)

The first in a series of the ethics courses and examinations is now online! **“The Ethics Storybooks with Tales from the Oil Patch’ by John Gibson** is a video that takes about an hour to complete along with questions that follow. Watch the video as many times as you like. Successfully completing the questions qualifies each person **for one (1) Professional Development Hour (PDH)**.

Washington Watch

Gulf Tragedy Spawns Multiple Probes

By DAVID CURTISS, GEO-DC Director

The tragic loss of life aboard the Deepwater Horizon on April 20 and resulting environmental disaster has shocked the nation. Images of the drill ship ablaze and gripping accounts of crew members leaping from the crippled vessel hoping to save themselves lead to a critical question:

How did this happen?

Since the blast there has been a flurry of activity to provide an answer.

The investigation began immediately with authorities taking statements from survivors of the Deepwater Horizon. The following week it formally became a joint investigation between the Department of Interior and the Department of Homeland Security.

According to the Outer Continental Shelf Lands Act, the Interior department's Minerals Management Service (MMS) has responsibility for investigating all incidents on the outer continental shelf (OCS) involving hydrocarbon exploration and production. Similarly, the U.S. Coast Guard (USCG), part of the Department of Homeland Security, is responsible for investigations related to death, injuries, property loss and environmental damage on the OCS.

Co-chaired by David Dykes, the chief of the MMS Office of Safety Management Field Operations for the Gulf of Mexico (GoM), and USCG Capt. Hung Nguyen, the purpose of the joint investigation is to determine the cause of the accident. In order to accomplish this objective the team has the power to summon witnesses, issue subpoenas and take testimony under oath.

The team was given nine months to complete and deliver its report.

Interior Secretary Ken Salazar also established the OCS Safety Oversight Board within the Interior department. The board's tasks are to assist the MMS with its responsibilities in the joint investigation, keep the secretary and his deputy apprised of the investigation's progress, recommend measures to increase OCS safety and to improve the department's management and regulation of the OCS. The board is chaired by the assistant secretary – Land and Minerals Management and also includes the assistant secretary – Policy, Management and Budget, and the department's inspector general.

In late April President Obama ordered the Interior department to conduct a 30-day review to determine “what, if any, additional precautions and technologies should be required to improve the safety of oil and gas exploration and production operations on the outer continental shelf.”

Delivered on May 27, the 38-page report suggested a series of near-term measures (such as inspection of blowout preventers and safety equipment) as well as longer-term reviews of well

control and safety procedures. The report, which was peer-reviewed by individuals selected by the National Academy of Engineering (NAE), also recommended a six-month halt of drilling on 33 permitted wells in the Gulf.

Salazar also asked NAE to conduct an independent assessment “to determine the root causes of the Deepwater Horizon disaster so that corrective steps can be taken to address the mechanical failures underlying the accident.”

Studies by the National Academies, including NAE, the National Academy of Science and organized by the National Research Council, are greatly valued by policy makers and regulators. The work will be conducted by volunteer experts, including members of the NAE, academia and industry.

In the past, such studies have delivered analysis and suggestions that, according to a statement by Salazar, “often lead to results and findings that have had enormous impact on future policy decisions.”

As the oil spill continued unchecked, the White House announced on May 22 that the president had issued an executive order forming the Bipartisan National Commission on the BP Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill and Offshore Drilling.

He named retired Sen. Bob Graham of Florida and former Environmental Protection Agency administrator (during President George H.W. Bush’s administration) William Reilly as co-chairs of a seven-person commission, “tasked with providing recommendations on how we can prevent – and mitigate the impact of – any future spills that result from offshore drilling.”


In his remarks introducing the commission, the president said, “[I]f the laws on our books are inadequate to prevent such an oil spill, or if we didn’t enforce those laws – I want to know it. I want to know what worked and didn’t work in our response to the disaster, and where oversight of the oil and gas industry broke down.

“The purpose of this commission is to consider both the root causes of the disaster and offer options on what safety and environmental precautions we need to take to prevent a similar disaster from happening again.”

The commission has six months to deliver its recommendations.

And there are yet more investigations under way: Congressional committees began conducting hearings in mid-May about the events leading to the explosion and the environmental and economic impact of the oil spill. And on June 1, Attorney General Eric Holder announced the Justice Department was launching a criminal probe, saying “we have what we think is a sufficient basis for us to have begun a criminal investigation.”

But with all the efforts under way to determine what happened, the principals must avoid the rush to judgment and political finger-pointing endemic to Washington.

The true cost of this disaster – 11 people dead, the livelihoods (tourism, fishing, oil and gas production, and more) of entire Gulf Coast communities threatened and as-yet-undetermined ecological and environmental damage – provides a grim reminder not to politicize the process. 

Geo-DC

Recent Events

- AAPG President John Lorenz submits [comments to Bureau of Ocean Energy](#) on proposed EIS for 2012-2017 OCS 5-year program (June 2010)
- AAPG President John Lorenz submits [comments to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service](#) on their comprehensive conservation plan for the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge (June 2010)
- AAPG President John Lorenz submits [written testimony to Senate energy and water appropriations](#) subcommittee in

Governmental Affairs Committee

Issue Advisory: [Research and Development Needs of the U.S. Independent Oil and Gas Producer](#)

This paper identifies five technical areas essential to enabling the nation's independent oil and natural gas producers to deliver the petroleum resources that U.S. consumers require for everyday living. It was prepared as a reference document for the use of the [AAPG Geoscience & Energy Office](#) in Washington, D.C. as it communicates with policy makers.

[Oil and gas related tax issues](#) in President Obama's FY2010 budget

A voice in both industry and government affairs through the established committees within the DPA such as the Governmental Affairs Committee. In addition, the GAC prepares official Statements, which are then approved by the DPA President, and the AAPG Executive Committee.

SEG



News & Announcements

- [GEOPHYSICS' 2009 impact factor sets record](#)
- [Lawsuit seeks to hold administration accountable for harm to mammals due to seismic surveys](#)
- [The 2010 US Department of Energy Ultra-Deepwater and Unconventional Natural Gas Plan](#)
- [Face-to-face at SEP Russia](#)

- [SEAM workshop presentations](#)

SPE

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SPE's Response on Gulf oil spill

SPE will help address technical issues resulting from the Macondo Well blowout, and facilitate the sharing of best practices that will emerge from the ongoing investigations. Read about SPE's response to the oil spill from [2010 SPE President Behrooz Fattahi](#). [View FAQs about Deepwater Drilling and the Gulf spill](#).

2010 International Award recipients to receive awards at ATCE

The SPE Board of Directors is pleased to announce the 2010 [SPE International Award](#) recipients. SPE President Behrooz Fattahi will present the SPE International Awards during the SPE Annual Technical Conference and Exhibition in Florence, Italy. [View the list of recipients](#) and join us at ATCE to congratulate them.

ATCE 2010 coming soon; offers more events for members

Join us at [SPE's Annual Technical Conference and Exhibition](#) in Florence, Italy to share technical knowledge, network with colleagues from around the world, and celebrate key successes in the E&P industry. There are numerous events being held in conjunction with ATCE, [find out more](#).