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Office of the Governor
Oil Spill Coordinator's Office

Public Meetings Louisiana Regional Restoration Planning

Federal and State natural resource trustees (National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA); United States Department of the Interior; Louisiana Oil Spill Coordinator's Office; Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality; Louisiana Department of Natural Resources; and Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries) are requesting comments on the Louisiana Regional Restoration Planning Program/Draft Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement, May 2003 (DPEIS).

Notice of the availability of this DPEIS was published in the Federal Register on May 9, 2003, and the comment period ends on July 9, 2003. The purpose of the Louisiana Regional Restoration Planning Program is to develop an institutional framework and procedures that will enable the trustees to restore natural resources injured by oil spills in an expedited and cost effective manner.

PUBLIC MEETINGS: Two public meetings to receive public comments on the Louisiana Regional Restoration Planning Program/Draft Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement, May 2003, will be held on Monday, June 23, 2003. The daytime meeting is scheduled at 2 p.m. and the evening meeting is scheduled at 6:30 p.m. Both meetings will be held at the following location:

Conservation and Mineral Board Resources
Hearing Room
1st Floor, LaBelle Room
Louisiana Department of Natural Resources
LaSalle Office Building
617 N. 3rd Street
Baton Rouge, LA 70802

For further information contact William Conner at [301] 713-3038, ext. 190, or William.Conner@noaa.gov; or visit www.darp.noaa.gov.

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Oil Spill Coordinator

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Office of the Governor
Oil Spill Coordinator's Office

Restoration Planning Plaquemines Parish
North Pass Oil Spill

Purpose

The Louisiana Oil Spill Coordinator's Office (LOSCO), as the Trustee coordinator for the State of Louisiana, in consultation and agreement with the state natural resource trustees, namely the Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality (LDEQ), the Louisiana Department of Natural Resources (LDNR), the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries (LDWF); and the federal natural resource trustees, namely the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), and the U.S. Department of the Interior (DOI), represented by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), have determined that the impacts of the September 22, 2002 discharge of crude oil by Ocean Energy, Incorporated, over which such Trustees have jurisdiction, warrants conducting a natural resource damage assessment that will include restoration planning.

Site and Release Information

On September 22, 2002, an above ground storage tank, owned and operated by Ocean Energy, Incorporated, discharged an undetermined amount of crude oil into the coastal waters of North Pass, Plaquemines Parish, Louisiana. An accurate determination of the released volume is difficult to determine. An original spill volume estimate of 297 barrels was reported based on engineering calculations of throughput and production data. However, on-scene responders visually estimated that the release could have been as much as 700 barrels. An undetermined amount of marsh, other habitats, and fauna inhabiting this area may have been exposed to crude oil as a result of this discharge. Ocean Energy has been designated as the statutory Responsible Party (RP) for this incident pursuant to the Oil Pollution Act of 1990 ("OPA"), 33 U.S.C. §2701 et seq.

North Pass and the adjacent areas are part of the modern Mississippi River delta complex, which is characterized by soft organic sediment. Tidal amplitude is small and often driven primarily by wind. North Pass is bordered by an extensive acreage of freshwater marsh, which is critical nursery habitat for numerous species and provides many other ecological services. The North Pass area also includes bayous, channels, and small islands. Aquatic organisms present include, but are not limited to, finfish, crustaceans, and shellfish. Wildlife species that may be present in the North Pass area include, but are not limited to, resident and migratory birds, furbearers, aquatic mammals, and turtles. Some of the species that may be present have threatened or endangered status.

Authorities

The Trustees are designated pursuant to 33 U.S.C. §2706(b), Executive Order 12777, and the National Contingency Plan, 40 C.F.R, §§300.600 and 300.605. Pursuant to R.S. 30:2460, the State of Louisiana Oil Spill Contingency Plan, September 1995, describes state trust resources, including the following: vegetated wetlands, surface waters, ground waters, air, soil, wildlife, aquatic life, and the appropriate habitats on which they depend. The DOI, through the involvement of the USFWS, is Trustee for natural resources described within the National Contingency Plan, 40 C.F.R. §300.600(b)(2) and (3), which include the following and their supporting ecosystems: migratory birds, anadromous fish, endangered species and marine mammals, federally owned minerals, certain federally managed water