

Marine Mammal Monitoring for Geological and Geophysical Activities in the Gulf of Mexico

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Programmatic EIS for Gulf G&G Activities



- ▶ BOEM (lead agency), BSEE & NMFS (cooperating agencies) are preparing a Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement that considers the environmental effects of all Geological & Geophysical survey activities in the Gulf of Mexico.
- ▶ The PEIS will identify and analyze appropriate mitigation measures.
- ▶ The Draft PEIS is expected to be published in March 2016 and the Final PEIS in April 2017.
- ▶ The PEIS will help BOEM support ongoing G&G permit applications in the Gulf, as well as its petition to NMFS for a rulemaking under the MMPA.



Petition for MMPA Rulemaking

- ▶ BOEM is applying on behalf of the oil & gas industry for rulemaking under section 101(a)(5)(A) of the MMPA.
- ▶ Operators would apply for individual Letters of Authorization under the Final Rule.
- ▶ NMFS is a cooperating agency on the PEIS so that NMFS may use the PEIS in their MMPA decision-making process.
- ▶ This monitoring plan is a component of the petition for rulemaking.



Monitoring Plan Requirements

- ▶ Improve understanding of things such as distribution and abundance of marine mammal species in the GOM
- ▶ Improve understanding of how stressors may impact individuals or populations
- ▶ Evaluation of effectiveness of the mitigation or monitoring that is conducted
- ▶ Provide a better understanding of the relationships among G&G activities and the existing environment (e.g., source characterization, sound propagation, ambient sound levels)



Stakeholder Input



- ▶ Nature, scope, or context of likely marine mammal exposure to potential stressors/impacts.
- ▶ Interrelationships between G&G activities and existing environment
- ▶ Ongoing or upcoming research efforts that may be appropriate to coordinate with or leverage
- ▶ Major data gaps in the Gulf related to marine mammals
- ▶ Metrics for successful monitoring
- ▶ Advice on creating an adaptive, responsive monitoring structure
- ▶ Major impediments to monitoring programs

Monitoring Plan Development

- ▶ Draft monitoring plan will be submitted to NMFS later this year
- ▶ The plan will be based on hypothesis driven research
- ▶ It will leverage existing efforts
- ▶ We will use a phased structure at the outset as we design and implement monitoring goals
- ▶ The monitoring plan will include periodic, external review and input
- ▶ The plan will go out for public review as a part of the draft MMPA petition



Questions?



Next Steps

