

STUDY TITLE: University Research Initiative on the Effects of Offshore Petroleum Development in the Gulf of Mexico

REPORT TITLE: Offshore Petroleum Development and the Comprehensive Planning Process

CONTRACT NUMBER: 14-35-001-30470

SPONSORING OCS REGION: Gulf of Mexico

APPLICABLE PLANNING AREA: Central Gulf of Mexico

FISCAL YEAR OF PROJECT FUNDING: 1990

COMPLETION DATE OF REPORT: November 1992

COST: FY 90: \$20,000

CUMULATIVE PROJECT COST: \$20,000

PROJECT MANAGER: Paul Sammarco

AFFILIATION: Louisiana Universities Marine Consortium (LUMCON)

ADDRESS: 8124 Hwy. 56, Chauvin, LA 70344

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR*: Rodney E. Emmer

KEY WORDS: Planning, Onshore impacts, Gulf of Mexico, Louisiana, Parish, Municipality, Coastal zone, Offshore petroleum development

BACKGROUND: Federal waters in the Gulf of Mexico south of the Louisiana coast are the most active offshore areas for hydrocarbon production in the United States. Development of Outer Continental Shelf (OCS) oil and gas caused hasty expansion of the industrial, commercial, and residential landuses in coastal Louisiana. Platform fabrication yards, boat building facilities, heliports, and subdivisions and malls were located as close to the Gulf as practical. Populations in these parishes grew as "Cajuns" stayed to service the oil industry and as other workers immigrated to jobs. As a consequence of intensive economic pressure and the availability of support from federal programs, formally rural parishes (counties) and small to medium size municipalities quickly organized planning efforts.

OBJECTIVES: The objective of the study was to determine the effect of planning on decision making and growth of the parishes and municipalities that were most affected by OCS support facilities and population expansion. The hypothesis of the study was: Planning for OCS dependent parishes and municipalities was in reality a reactionary

process that owed its direction and achievements to federal and state guidelines promulgated for environmental conservation, flood damage reduction, and protection of the public health and safety. Beyond these basic federal and state requirements little coordinated planning was actually accomplished and most communities still lack comprehensive plans and the ability to formulate them.

DESCRIPTION: Parishes and municipalities could plan from the 1920's. Federal planning assistance to the state began in the 1930's when state governments were encouraged to develop plans in accordance with present and future needs and resources. Statewide projects were undertaken in cooperation with and heavily dependent on the Works Progress Administration, the National Park Service, and the U.S. Department of Agriculture. In 1946 the Louisiana legislature authorized parishes and municipalities to create planning commissions and comprehensive plans. Federal 701 planning studies, begun in 1954, allowed most local governments to develop plans. Rather than practice direct land use controls Federal programs attached standards for receiving assistance or permits. Examples of these programs include National Flood Insurance, Section 404 of the Clean Water Act, and protection of threatened and endangered species.

SIGNIFICANT CONCLUSIONS: Parishes and municipalities did not practice comprehensive planning as populations and industries grew in response to OCS development even though the authority existed. Planning is not considered to be a priority item in most parishes and municipalities. Low budgets and assignment of many activities not related to planning leave little time for either preparing or updating comprehensive plans. If adverse impacts resulted from OCS onshore development, only the parish and municipal governments can be held accountable because they did not exercise their opportunity to plan, that is, control their own destiny.

STUDY RESULTS: The hypothesis appears valid for the medium and small communities in the study area. Planning is reactionary rather than anticipatory. Those federal and state programs that are mandatory (flood insurance, coastal zone management, wetlands conservation) have a better chance of being integrated into the decision making process than comprehensive planning even though planning is mandatory when planning commissions exist.

STUDY PRODUCT: Emmer, Rod E., Anne Rheams, and F. Wagner. 1992 Offshore Petroleum Development and the Comprehensive Planning Process. Final Report submitted to Minerals Management Service, New Orleans, LA. Contract No. 14-35-0001-30470. OCS Study 92-0064 76 pp.

* P.I.'s affiliation may be different than that of the Program Manager.