

STUDY TITLE: Examination of the Relationship between Tourism and OCS Oil and Gas Activities in the Gulf of Mexico

REPORT TITLE: Measuring County-Level Tourism and Recreation in the Gulf of Mexico Region: Data, Methods, and Estimates

CONTRACT NUMBER: M11PD00256

SPONSORING OCS REGION: Gulf of Mexico

APPLICABLE PLANNING AREA: Gulfwide

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BACKGROUND: The Outer Continental Shelf Lands Act (OCSLA) and the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) set requirements for the assessing the impacts of leasing offshore areas for oil and gas exploration and development in the Gulf of Mexico. Oil and gas facilities operating the in the Gulf of Mexico produced 3.7 billion barrels of oil and 18.6 billion cubic feet of natural gas between 2005 and October 3, 2012. The Gulf of Mexico region is also a significant tourist destination in the U.S. Thus, having a means of assessing the impacts of Outer Continental Shelf (OCS) leasing activities on tourism is important for understanding the full impacts of OCS activities under OSCLA.

OBJECTIVES: For this project, the Bureau of Ocean and Energy Management (BOEM) contracted with Eastern Research Group, Inc. (ERG) to develop data and methods for assessing the impacts of offshore leasing on the travel, tourism, and recreation industries in the Gulf region. The goal of these data and methods is to develop a set of data that can assess changes in travel and tourism sectors using publicly available data. This involves adjusting data from federal sources (e.g., Census or Bureau of Labor Statistics) for the proportion of the sector that is derived from travel and tourism.

DESCRIPTION: The report summarizes the methods and data ERG used to develop these data and documents the spreadsheet that was developed that contains the data

and that can be used to review the data. The data used was taken from the Bureau of Labor Statistics' Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages (QCEW), which is a near-census of establishments in the U.S. The QCEW data provide both quarterly and annual data. The QCEW data were supplemented by (1) Census' Nonemployer data to cover self-employed individuals and (2) data in national parks within the coastal region since the parks are not covered by QCEW or nonemployer data.

ERG developed a methodology to determine which sectors are part of the travel and tourism sector and which sectors are part of the recreation sector. ERG then developed a percentage adjustment for each travel and tourism sector to reflect the percent of the sector that is derived from travel and tourism sources. ERG then developed a method to determine the percentage of travel and tourism that would be sensitive to OCS activities.

Finally, ERG discussed the structure and contents of the database we developed that contains the data and how to use the database.

SIGNIFICANT CONCLUSIONS: The report focused on data and method development and thus has few conclusions. Nevertheless, we can conclude that it is possible to develop county-level data on tourism from public sources. The report presents data for 2009 using the methods described in the report.

STUDY RESULTS: The result is a set of methods that can be used to develop data for measuring the scales of both tourism and recreation in certain counties in the Gulf of Mexico, with the potential to be applied to other regions. The study also identified which data are useful for measuring within-year changes to the travel and tourism sector and how to measure the contribution of national parks to travel and tourism.

STUDY PRODUCT: Eastern Research Group, Inc., 2014. Measuring county-level tourism and recreation in the Gulf of Mexico region: Data, methods, and estimates. U.S. Dept. of the Interior, Bureau of Ocean and Energy Management, Gulf of Mexico OCS Region, New Orleans, LA. OCS Study BOEM 2014-660. pp 58.