GULF OF MEXICO-SEA FLOOR OBSERVATORY UPDATE

The Gulf of Mexico-Hydrate Research Consortium (GOM-HRC), administered by the Center for Marine Resources and Environmental Technology (CMRET), the marine branch of the MMRI, is in its fourth year of developing a Gulf of Mexico-Sea Floor Observatory (GOM-SFO). The GOM-SFO is planned to be a multi-sensor station that provides more-or-less continuous monitoring of the near-seabed hydrocarbon system, within the hydrate stability zone of the northern Gulf of Mexico. It is anticipated that this station and studies conducted therein will provide a better understanding of this complex hydrocarbon system, particularly with regard to hydrate formation/dissociation, fluid venting to the water column, and associated microbial/chemosynthetic communities. More specifically, it is hoped that models can be developed from these studies that can provide a better understanding of gas hydrates and associated free gas as: 1) a geo-hazard to conventional deep oil and gas activities; 2) a future energy resource of considerable significance; and 3) a source of hydrocarbon gasses, venting to the water column and eventually the atmosphere with global climate implications.

The current GOM-HRC project, now in its fourth year, received FY1998 funding from the Department of Interior Minerals Management Service. Funding from the Department of Energy National Energy Technology Laboratory began in FY2000 and from the Department of Commerce National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration National Undersea Research Program (DOC NOAA_NURP) in 2002. Some ten industries and seventeen universities are involved at various levels. A variety of mission-oriented projects includes a range of physical, chemical, and biological observations and/or investigations.

NORM INDUSTRY AND PUBLIC BRIEFINGS HELD IN JACKSON, MISSISSIPPI

This project is funded by the U.S. Department of Energy and is in the early
Our research indicates that NORM can be of concern in some areas of the State, as indicated in the picture above, but in other areas the concern is significantly less.

The project has obtained 329 samples, 275 being brine samples representing the entire state and derived from 37 reservoirs. The NORM Project reached a milestone on May 22, 2003, with an Industry Briefing held in Jackson, Mississippi. The Industry Briefing marked the point where the project's focus changed from research to formulating conclusions, information transfer and initial preparations for the final report. The briefing was attended by representatives from the oil and gas industry, Mr. John Ford, U.S. Department of Energy; representatives from U.S. Senator Lott and U.S. Senator Cochran’s office; representatives of the Mississippi State Board of Registered Professional Geologists; Dr. Joel Kuszmaul, Department of Geology and Geological Engineering and Mr. Charles Swann, MMRI. The final report to the U.S. Department of Energy is due by December 31, 2003. After the end of the year, copies of the report may be obtained by contacting Mr. John Ford, U.S. Department of Energy, National Petroleum Technology Office, One West Third St, Ste.1400, Tulsa, OK., 74103. A digital copy of the PowerPoint slide presentations from the Industry Briefing is available from MMRI, free upon request.

**MMRI AND CCEP HELP SITE NEW SEISMIC STATION IN MISSISSIPPI**

The MMRI and the Center for Community Earthquake Preparedness (CCEP) are assisting the Center For Earthquake Research and Information (CERI), the U.S. Geological Survey and the Mississippi Emergency Management Agency (MEMA).
in siting a new seismic station in the Vicksburg, Mississippi, area. This new seismic station will become an integral part of the national seismic network. The only other Mississippi seismic station in the national network is located just north of Oxford in the Holly Springs National Forest, so the proposed Vicksburg station will greatly improve the seismic coverage of the State. The MMRI, MEMA and CCEP are all supportive of a new Mississippi-based station as it should markedly improve the abilities to detect Mississippi earthquakes. Increased detection of earthquakes and better locational accuracy of earthquakes will hopefully translate into improved preparedness in Mississippi when the next significant earthquake occurs.

The proposed location for the new seismic station will be in or near Vicksburg, Mississippi. Presently, three preliminary sites are being investigated, one on the Vicksburg campus of Hinds Community College, and two sites on the Brown Loam Experimental Farm owned by Mississippi State University, near Raymond, Mississippi. At present, the background noise is being studied at all sites in an effort to determine the best site for the station. Once a site has been selected, the CCEP will work with the Memphis-based Center for Earthquake Research and Information to prepare the proposal for seismic station construction monies.

There are a number of other organizations working in support of the project. These organizations include the Mississippi Office of Geology, Millsaps College, Mississippi State University, University of Southern Mississippi and the Central United States Earthquake Consortium.

**ROAD CONSTRUCTION IN PONTOTOC COUNTY EXPOSES LIMESTONES**

New road construction just north of Pontotoc, Pontotoc County, Mississippi, has offered the opportunity to describe fresh exposures of the limestones contained in the Chiwapa Sandstone Member of the Ripley Formation. The Chiwapa is fossiliferous and the new road cuts have provided an abundance of fossil material for local collectors as well as geologists. These limestones and a thin bentonite deposit associated with the limestones were described in 1943 in Bulletin 54 (Pontotoc County Mineral Resources, by R.R. Priddy and T.E. McCutcheon), published by the Mississippi Office of Geology. The new exposures corroborate the 1943 work and allows the
1943 descriptions of the Chiwapa stratigraphy to be compared to fresh exposures.

The MMRI visited these exposures in July, 2003, and measured approximately 40 feet of section. The MMRI wishes to thank the Mississippi Department of Transportation for alerting us to the exposures and allowing us to work the exposures prior to grading and grassing operations.

CHEVRON/TEXACO SETTLES LONG-TERM OIL FIELD LAWSUIT

According to an article in Brookhaven's Daily Leader, Chevron has reached a settlement with over 800 plaintiffs in a lawsuit that has been going on for almost 10 years. The lawsuit alleged that Chevron's operation of Brookhaven Field had led to excess chemical and radiological contamination which has affected the health of surrounding residents and lowered property values. Chevron's settlement amounted to approximately 5.5 million dollars.

Chevron has an on-going cleanup operation, but has stated it has nothing to do with the lawsuit. Chevron continues to state that there are no health risks associated with the production operations at Brookhaven and no significant medical evidence was offered during the legal maneuvering to support the degraded health allegation.

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