

FTS-DOC CONFERENCING

**Moderator: Laurel Bryant
May 5, 2010
12:30 pm CT**

Coordinator: ...listen only mode until the question and answer session. Today's conference is being recorded. If you have any objections you may disconnect at this time. With that it is my pleasure to turn over today's call to Mr. (Andy) Winer. You may begin.

Andrew Winer: Good afternoon everybody. And I guess for some of you it's good morning because I see people from all over the country including Hawaii so some of you are up fairly early. And we want to welcome you to this stakeholder call. I'm the Director of External Affairs for NOAA's Office of Communications and External Affairs.

And with me on the phone today we're very, very pleased to have Dr. Jane Lubchenco, that Assistant Administrator for NOAA as well as Eric Schwaab the Assistant Administrators for Fisheries.

And on the phone today we have over 100 representatives and individuals from across NOAA's fisheries national constituency including commercial fishermen and recreational fishermen, state NGOs and we want to thank all of you for taking the time for making this call and listening in.

At this time before I turn the call over to Dr. Lubchenco, we want to take a moment to recognize and acknowledge the unprecedented events that we were all involved with and the on-the-job improvisations that many of us are having to exercise to ensure that we keep each other and our stakeholders involved and informed. And so we appreciate you signing in today. And at this time I'd like to introduce Dr. Lubchenco for a few words.

Jane Lubchenco: Thank you (Andy) and my welcome to everyone as well. We are delighted to have an opportunity to bring you up to speed. I want to just make a few opening remarks.

NOAA stands shoulder-to-shoulder with Gulf Coast residents during this very challenging time. Our concerns are very much with fishermen and their families and with all in the region who care about the magnificent habitats and species in the Gulf Coast.

You should know that within hours of the explosion on the deep water horizon NOAA was participating very actively in the federal response. We are intimately engaged in the region and have mobilized resources throughout the country.

All of NOAA's line offices are involved providing scientific information that is guiding the entire federal family. This includes weather forecasts. We have oil spill trajectories, models that are enabling everyone else to see sort of what's happening and what is expected in the next couple of days.

We have planes and satellites in the air and ships and buoys on the water and experts mobilized throughout the region to help provide information.

The President has made it clear in each of the briefings that we have provided to him that this is the country's number one priority. And again NOAA is intimately involved with the rest of the federal family in the suite of activities designed to stop the flow of oil and contain the damage that might be done by the oil that has been released.

I personally have already met with states and local leaders and fishermen for example in Plaquemines Parish and will be returning to the Gulf Coast tomorrow and look forward to interacting with other folks in the region. I will be in not only Louisiana but Alabama and Mississippi over the next few days.

I also had an opportunity on Monday to visit NOAA's war oil room in Seattle. That's our facility that coordinates on a 24/7 basis the oil spill modeling and responses that we are providing to the public and to the rest of the federal family.

So I want to do a shout out to all of the folks at NOAA who have mobilized resources, gone down to the region and are working very, very diligently to provide what is needed.

One of the things that we are committed to doing is providing information to the public about what's happening and that is very much the intent of this call to do that.

And we want to do that on an ongoing basis and provide access to web sites where you can get updates and information.

But this is an opportunity for you to hear first hand some of what's happening and have some of your questions answered to the extent that we can provide answers.

So thanks to all of you for joining us, thank you (Andy) for organizing this.

And I'll turn it back to you (Andy).

Andrew Winer: Thank you very much Dr. Lubchenco. And we appreciate you taking time out and we know that you'll be down in the gulf the next couple of days and hopefully will have a chance to interact with some of the people that are on this phone call.

Now before I turn the call over to Eric Schwaab I did want to talk a little bit about how we're going to proceed as far as the questions and answers at the end. And we are going to take this call up through 2:30 Eastern Daylight Time.

And so once Eric is done with his remarks we'll ask you to click the feature that puts you on line.

We will then do our best to answer as many questions as we can. If for some reason we're not able to get to you today because we have a lot of people on the call we'll give you contact information if you want to send us questions so that we could follow-up with you by email.

And then the other thing that we would ask you to do is that if you're looking for information about what's going on within NOAA as it relates to the deep water horizon spill we have a web site that is set up at noaa.gov and we would invite you there. It is updated frequently. And we will continue to provide as much information to all of you as we can.

So at this time I'd like to turn the call over to NOAA's Head of Fisheries, our Assistant Administrator Eric Schwaab.

Eric Schwaab: Thanks (Andy). Hello everyone and thanks for joining with us.

In addition to the overview comments that Dr. Lubchenco just provided we wanted to take this opportunity to update you particularly on the fishery closure issue and our ongoing efforts to communicate with you regarding what is obviously an evolving situation in the gulf region.

And I want to emphasize in particular that element of this. This is a situation that is still developing in scope and magnitude and it is something that obviously will require continued collaboration not only across agencies and governments but with all of the citizens in the region and across the country that have an interest in what's taking place in the gulf.

So on Sunday afternoon NOAA issued an emergency closure of all fisheries in federal waters in the Gulf of Mexico being affected by the oil spill. We issued at that time a map of the closure area and that closure - that map is posted at the NOAA web page, noaa.gov.

We understand how difficult a situation this is for local fishermen particularly in this region who have faced significant hardship in recent years. We also understand that this is an issue from a fishery perspective that spans important commercial fisheries, important recreational fisheries and the charter community as well and all of the local communities that depend upon not only the commercial side of this challenge but the local recreational and tourism aspects of it as well.

This was obviously a difficult decision. But first and foremost we felt it was critical to ensure public safety but also to reassure the public and maintain confidence that seafood harvested from other areas not affected directly by the oil as well as fishing trips to other areas of the gulf not affected by the spill are still safe and available in the region.

This is an action that we have taken in close consultation with states of Louisiana, Mississippi and Alabama. We're also in communication with Florida and our other sister agencies across the federal government.

And I can tell you that on Wednesday morning I was with the Gulf States Commission down in New Orleans and that includes representatives from the gulf states and we were focused a good bit of that discussion on this situation that it was at that time very much an evolving situation.

This initial action, this closure action was set to be effective for a period of ten days with the expectation that we would continue to evaluate and possibly modify the extent of the closure based on both new oil trajectories that we get on a daily basis as well as further analysis of biological samples taken from around the oil spill.

So that reevaluation process is the process that continues to be ongoing. I want to also note that we are - we have received disaster requests from the states of Louisiana and Mississippi and are in communication with the governors of those states and other representatives of those states regarding the potential for a federal fisheries disaster declaration as it can assist the fishermen in those areas.

This is of course an issue that the economic impacts are issues that are also a primary responsibility to BP. And so they have additional mechanisms of

communication for claims as well as for participation in assisting with cleanup efforts in the area.

Again I just wanted to emphasize that we are in the initial stages here of dealing with what has the potential to be an unprecedented environmental event. Our staff in NOAA fisheries is fully engaged not only in the region but as you heard from Dr. Lubchenco from across the country.

I will be heading back to the area this evening and will be down in the gulf region for the next couple of days.

We will continue to provide additional guidance and information related to not only the closure but other events through our web site and we continue to invite your input in a variety of ways particularly today in how we can continue to communicate effectively with you as we move through this event and response that it necessitates.

So with that I'm going to turn the discussion back over to (Andy). But I will be here to handle follow-up questions or comments. Thank you.

Andrew Winer: Thank you Eric. And at this time if anybody is interested in asking a question...

Woman: Ask the operator to -- operator could you give the instructions to the callers on how they can enter into the queue?

Coordinator: Sure. To ask a question please press star 1 and please be sure to unmute your phone and clearly record your name. Again that's star 1 to ask a question.

Woman: (Unintelligible) available (unintelligible).

Andrew Winer: Yes. Well then disconnect it then.

Coordinator: Please standby.

Andrew Winer: Okay, our first question comes from I think it's Shana Miller.

Woman: From Tag-A-Giant Foundation.

Andrew Winer: From Tag-A-Giant Foundation.

Hello?

Coordinator: Just one moment please.

Andrew Miller: Thank you.

Coordinator: Your line is open.

Shana Miller: Yes, I'm interested in whether there have been any changes made to the Observer Program in the gulf, if any additional biological samples are going to be collected or if the tissues are going to be tested to see whether the oil is affecting the flesh.

Eric Schwaab: Yes, absolutely. We are testing both for seafood quality in and around the spill. There was baseline data and continues to be baseline data gathered from fish and other living resources outside of the, you know, outside of the immediately affected area.

And we also, you know, are collecting, you know, a variety of sort of, you know, continuing to monitor through extensive fishery independent sampling in and around the region.

The last thing that I would mention is that we're going back and looking at, you know, historical data as it relates to distribution of adults as well as larval and juvenile stages of a number of the important fishery resources in the region so that we can not only have a baseline against which to measure the impacts but continue to predict potential impacts going forward.

Andrew Winer: Thank you. Our next question will be from Bill Kelly of the Florida Keys Commercial Fishermen's Association.

Bill Kelly: Yes, and Mr. Winer.

Andrew Winer: Yes it is and...

Bill Kelly: Right. Here in the Florida Keys our commercial fishermen are poised to respond as rapidly as we can. We have been working on a couple of issues with the state through the conference calls with FWC on Crab Removal Programs that generally speaking kick in after our traditional stone crab season ends on May 15th.

The state of course is being - is able to operate a little bit faster I think in giving some leeway to begin this retrieval program early on. We are trying to work our way through the chain of command with Billy Causey up through NOAA to get a jumpstart on the federal program under a FEMA grant that's scheduled to start perhaps on May 19th maybe a little bit later. The contractor handling it is DRC in Mobile, Alabama.

Our concerns are numerous but boil down to this. If we can get a jump on this program and get these crabs out of the water, these derelict crabs before they become fouled it makes the retrieval process much cleaner, much less hazardous and of course much faster.

If these crabs become fouled they then become hazardous material and require a whole different approach to things.

I know that Dr. Lubchenco was just down in the Keys and she may be familiar with this. We're trying to get clearance to open up clean dump sites for these crabs if we are to retrieve them early on. We've been using these sites for 17 years. Florida Fish and Wildlife Commission is out taking pictures of them now to document that they are clean sites for us.

And we are going to need NOAA's and of course Billy Causey's okay on this to activate these sites under an emergency order from the governor.

Is that possible or how could we fast track this?

Eric Schwaab: Thanks Bill. This is Eric. I don't know the details of the circumstance you described. But I think the best way for us to approach that is if you would send just a quick email to laurel.bryant@noaa.gov, just provide for her contact information so that she can get back to you. We will look into this through the regional office and get back to you with an answer to your question.

Bill Kelly: Great. Thank you. That's exactly the direction we needed.

Eric Schwaab: Thank you.

Andrew Winer: All right, our next question is from Richard Ruias and I hope I did not mangle your last name Richard. It's from the Blue Water Fishermen's Association.

Richard Ruias: Yes, you did and thank you very much. And thank you Dr. Lubchenco and Eric for your personal attention to this enormous catastrophe.

And I have two quick questions. One, it looks like by looking at the closed area that the Dulac-Houma longline fleet can, if they hug the coastline can still get to the western part of the gulf that appears to be currently still unaffected by the spill and continue fishing.

But it's always possible that they might run through a slick. And I have some confusing information about if they do get contaminated by passing through the slick that they have to return to a site for a decontamination of the vessel before they can return to port.

So I'm hoping that NOAA can put out some information on where these sites are that they can go in to get the vessels decontaminated so they can return to port or to return to some port, maybe not Dulac if the slick runs ashore by that time.

So that's my first question. The second one is we're very concerned about the slick entering the loop current and then making its way outside of the gulf obviously and potentially extending all the way up the east coast following the gulf stream or being transited by the gulf stream and potentially affecting any place from Florida to New England.

And I'm wondering if there's - if NOAA's anticipating - if there's any possible way of stopping the oil from either reaching the loop or if it gets in

the loop then preventing it from moving through the Florida straits and into the gulf stream and coming out into the Atlantic.

Thank you.

Eric Schwaab: Well thanks (Rich). So regarding your first question it is true that there are significant areas still open and available to fishing. And as anybody who's looked at that closure map would realize.

The issue of boats traveling through not the closed area but it would - that might encounter, fishing boats that might encounter oil outside of the closed area and the need for decontamination is really a coast guard issue. I don't know that we have right here a link to where those decontamination sites are.

But let us look for it and we might be able to come up with it before the end of the call. And if not we can certainly, again anybody that's looking for that information can drop an email to laurel.bryant@noaa.gov and we can get back.

But I think we can maybe come up with that link before the end of the call.

Regarding the second question, the loop current, obviously that's something that is of, you know, concern to a lot of people. It's something that is being looked at very carefully. It is not something that we have any indication of at this point that is, you know, occurring or, you know, eminently in danger of occurring.

If in fact that were to come to pass, you know, (Rich) that will be something that, you know, frankly people other than (Andy) or I will be trying to address

from a, you know, from a management perspective and frankly anything I can offer in addition to that at this point would just be pure speculation.

Andrew Winer: Okay. Our next question is from Scott Burns of the Walton Family Foundation.

Scott Burns: Yes Eric, thanks for this update. I'm getting some question regarding what resources and systems are being put in place to help fishermen and their communities effectively participate in the various public and private cleanup and assistance programs that will be established in the gulf?

Andrew Winer: Scott this is (Andy) Winer. That's actually an area that we're working on currently. We are in the process now of compiling a list of interested entities that want to send resources down. If you have resources that you want to volunteer and you want us to be aware it then you can send me an email. I'm at andrew.winer@noaa.gov.

And then one of the other things that we are looking into at this point is trying to figure out on the ground and the gulf where we might be able to match up those offers from groups that are not in the gulf with groups that are in the gulf. So that's an ongoing effort that we're looking at right now.

Scott Burns: Thanks Andrew.

Andrew Winer: Okay. Our next call is from Les Hodgson from the Texas Shrimp Association.

Les Hodgson: Yes (Andy), thank you very much. With regard to the chemical or chemicals being used to diffuse the oil, can you tell me what are the immediate and also the long range effects on shrimp or what they're feeding on or their habitat?

Eric Schwaab: So I would just say that the issues of dispersants really kind of fall into two categories. One is analysis of the, you know, potential implications of the chemicals that are in the dispersants themselves. Second is the question of moving, you know, or suppressing oil down in the water column as opposed to having it concentrating on the surface. Both of those are issues that are being looked at very closely.

But I don't think either one is an issue that we have definitive, you know, that we could offer definitive response to with respect to impact. Obviously, you know, we're concerned about both, you know, both oil as well as the, you know, the dispersant chemicals affecting the quality of the adult shrimp as well as impacting, you know, larval development or early life stages, you know, when these, you know, these resources are, you know, incredibly vulnerable.

And it's something that a lot of folks are looking at very carefully as it relates to, you know, both of those, you know, potential implications.

Jane Lubchenco: (Andy) this is Jane. Let me add to that just briefly. I think it's fairly well determined that the impacts of the dispersants in terms of their toxicity are significantly less than those of the oil, number one.

Number two, one of the benefits of the dispersants is that they break the oil up into smaller droplets and therefore there is faster natural degradation of the oil through the microbial processes that happen in the water and so the oil is broken down much more rapidly if there are many smaller droplets than if the oil is coalesced with other oil droplets and remained in a form where there's less surface area for the microbes to be working on them.

Andrew Winer: Okay. Our next question is from Glen Brooks of the Gulf Fishermen's Association.

Glen Brooks: Yes, hello (Andy). Can you hear me?

Andrew Winer: We got you Glen.

Glen Brooks: Okay. Hey thank you for this phone call here.

I had two questions. One of them was on the dispersants but most of that got answered. I guess what most I was going to mention was the dispersants was that oil is dropping to the ocean floor and collecting on the ocean floor.

But my next question was about reopening fisheries ahead of the oil spill. Our main concern is, you know, we're based out of the Tampa-St. Pete area. And we're wondering about getting a longline fishery reopened a little ahead of schedule. I believe we're scheduled to open on the 26th of this month.

So what would the chances be of getting the fishery reopened sooner for these guys to make some money in case that oil does come down our way and we do have it down?

Eric Schwaab: Yes thanks Glen. That is something that we are looking at, you know, across all the fisheries there with respect to, you know, our authorities either directly or in - jointly with the council.

And we don't have a definite answer in any of those circumstance - in the case of the longline fishery at this point. But I do know that we're looking at those options where circumstances permit.

Glen Brooks: Okay, thank you.

Andrew Winer: Okay, our next question is going to be from (Ben Ferry) from the Charter Boat Necessity.

Jane Lubchenco: And (Andy) and Eric and everyone, my apologies. I need to jump off and get on another call. Thank you all very much.

Andrew Winer: Dr. Lubchenco thank you for joining us today. We really appreciate it.

(Ben Ferry): Hello Eric and (Andy) and if Dr. Lubchenco's still listening, sure wanted - appreciate all you're doing.

And Eric I understand you're coming down. I would definitely invite you to come by Orange Beach Marina so we can all have a discussion with you.

One of my questions was already answered. The other one is about the baseline that I understand (Andy) was just talking about. Is there a possibility that we can maybe ask BP about some additional funding so we at a later time can have some more independent fishery data studies to see what kind of damage we have and incurred especially on our red snapper fishery that we had worked so hard to rebuild?

Eric Schwaab: I'm sorry. (Ben) so just to be clear, you're asking about reaching out to BP to fund some additional baseline studies?

(Ben Ferry): And some follow-up studies...

Eric Schwaab: Oh.

(Ben Ferry): ...so, yes, I want to make sure we get a baseline. But I want a follow-up study also.

Eric Schwaab: Oh.

(Ben Ferry): You know because we have really taken our lumps on rebuilding this fishery and we've worked so hard. And, you know, if we're damaged we need to know.

Eric Schwaab: No, absolutely. So, you know, we are and I suspect that, you know, there, well, you know, I know that there are others beyond NOAA that are doing extensive baseline work and impact work during this event.

And that I am certain that it will include significant post-event sampling as well so that we can very, you know, as accurately and as completely as possible tell the story of the impact of this oil spill and, you know, that is something that, you know, that we have a lot of scientists focusing on right now. And they will continue to focus in that way going forward.

(Ben Ferry): Well I really appreciate it. And I hope to see you when you're down here.

Eric Schwaab: Okay. So now where exactly are you (Ben)?

(Ben Ferry): Orange Beach, Alabama and I'm docked at Orange Beach Marina.

Eric Schwaab: Okay, thank you.

(Ben Ferry): Thank you sir.

Andrew Winer: Okay, our next question is Holly Binns from the Pew Environment Group.

Holly Binns: Thanks. And just want to say how much we appreciate the opportunity to hear what you're all doing and to ask some questions.

Actually let someone else take a turn now because (Ben) actually asked the question that I wanted to ask which was about what's going to be done to assess how this is impacting key marine species like red snapper and (gag) and others especially ones that we're more concerned about the status of the population right now.

Andrew Winer: Okay thank you Holly. Our next question will be from Scott Robson who's the President of the Destin Charter Boat Association.

Scott Robson: Hello Eric?

Eric Schwaab: Yes.

Scott Robson: Yes, I had a couple questions too here. For one, we were and I heard it brought up a little bit from the guy in Tampa so one of our concerns are whether you guys were looking into and I'm understanding that you are from (Russell) into opening up, you know, starting an early snapper season opening to kind of get it on its way before, you know, if we are closed off for future fishing in June or July which we don't know yet but what the, you know what the chances of that happening.

And also in this dispersant and the talk of the dispersant, the chemical dispersant there has been some historical data on it. And I'm just going to name one.

And back in 1967 the Torrey Canyon which where actually the dispersant chemicals actually did more damage than the oil did.

And so I was wondering if there was a shutoff zone for BP as we're concerned about our reefs here in this area and as it gets closer to the beach, is there a shutoff zone where we're not going to spray dispersant. We go ahead and let it wash up on the beach and deal with the damages then where versus the chemical damages that it could be more lethal on our reef system here into the fish species (unintelligible)?

((Crosstalk))

Eric Schwaab: Okay Scott. First of all on red snapper I know there are some discussion right now down there in the gulf, our Roy Crabtree is involved as is the, you know, the council in that discussion regarding the potential for an early opening.

We are open to that concept. I think the trick is to do it in a way that is equitable to, you know, across the region down there which, you know, remains to be seen whether we can achieve the kind of consensus that we would need to achieve because obviously a fishing effort was sustained during that time period an earlier opening might also lead to an early closure.

Now the second part of that response is, you know, obviously if and one of the things we're doing right now is putting into place a mechanism to more effectively manage or monitor the fishing effort on the charter and recreational side with respect to red snapper.

So that if in fact even if we don't open early if fishing effort is depressed through a significant part of the season I think we as well as the council would be very willing to discuss delaying the closure date that has been published.

So there's, you know, a couple different components to that red snapper question in particular. And we're working closely with the council to explore that from a couple of different angles.

You know I say, I mean I think that Dr. Lubchenco addressed this disbursement question much more effectively than I did as far as, you know, the current understanding of the, you know, the cost benefit equation.

I would only say this that, you know, all of those cost benefit analyses as it relates to a shutoff zone, you know, all of those calculations will factor into regular decisions about when, where and how dispersants might be applied and that is something that the, you know, the management, the spill management folks continue to look to the scientists to help inform.

Andrew Winer: All right, our...

Scott Robson: Right. Okay, thank you (Andy) for all your efforts.

Andrew Winer: Okay, thank you.

Scott Robson: And Eric.

Andrew Winer: Our next question is from Charlie Levine from Marlin Magazine.

Charlie Levine: I just had a quick question. I know a lot of Billfish Tournaments and charter boat guys on the open side of the gulf, you know, in Texas and even over there already experiencing, you know, cancellations or not quite sure what to do.

And if you guys have any more hope to get some word out so people are still fishing over there while they can, if there's any sort of program or way to get the word out.

Eric Schwaab: Yes I - thanks Charlie. I think that's one of the things that we're very interested in continuing, you know, to do as well as to enhance our communication capabilities in that regard. We're working on that right now. It's something that we think frankly the definition of the boundary of the closure area should help to, you know, inform and, you know, and instill public confidence that these other areas, you know, still have, you know, good fishing or open to fishing and, you know, and people should continue to take advantage of that.

And to the extent that we can continue to put out press notices or update web sites to help facilitate those kind of decisions that, you know, tournament operators or participants are looking at, we're exploring every opportunity we can to help facilitate, you know, that conversation.

Charlie Levine: Okay. If I can help too, you know, our magazine gets out there so I'll...

Eric Schwaab: Okay thank you Charlie.

Charlie Levine: ...stay (unintelligible).

((Crosstalk))

Andrew Winer: Thank you very much. Our next question is from (Rodney Bath).

(Rodney Bath): Eric?

Eric Schwaab: Yes.

(Rodney Bath): Hi. This is (Rodney Bath). Thanks for taking my call. I have a question. We've got a green fuel spill product, biodegradable product that works to clean up the fuel spill in a green way.

Who is the contact for submitting green technologies to clean it up versus the toxic approach?

Eric Schwaab: Okay, there is a hotline for that. And let me see if we can find the number.

Andrew Winer: (Rodney) we'll see if we can find out before we go offline. And while we're doing that we actually do have the earlier - (Rich) Ruias asked the question about the cleanup of vessels. And we have the U.S. Coast Guard number for that which is 1-866-448-5816 and let me repeat that. It's 1-866-448-5816.

(Rodney Bath): Okay, I got that. Thank you.

Andrew Winer: Okay, the next question is from Glenn Delaney from Southern Shrimp Alliance.

Glenn Delaney: Hey Eric, it's Glenn. How are you doing?

Eric Schwaab: Hi Glenn.

Glenn Delaney: I'm sure your eyeballs are spinning; thank you so much for what you and Dr. Lubchenco and everyone at NOAA is doing, extraordinary effort under the circumstances.

I don't want to belabor the issue but one of the key issues we wanted to raise with you is the use of - the massive use of dispersants. I think in most recent report was 170,000 gallons or close to it have been used.

And, you know, I appreciate Dr. Lubchenco's explanation of how dispersants, I mean the very purpose of using them is to breakdown the oil into bits.

But, you know, we're hoping that the toxicity to eggs and larvae of shrimp and blue fin tuna in the gulf and countless other organisms isn't going to occur before that bacterial degradation occurs.

And by using dispersants both at the surface but also they're pumping it, injecting it right in at the source of the leak in 5,000 feet of water on the sea floor. You're basically turning an environmental problem that occurs on the surface of the ocean into one that is occurring in 5,000 foot of water column.

And then someone mentioned also on the bottom as well a certain portion of the oil sinks to the bottom as a result of the use of the dispersants.

And as you may know if you look for example at the movement pattern of the dead zone off the mouth of the Mississippi River and Louisiana on the bottom the flow tends to be more westward along the coast of Louisiana and into Eastern Texas.

So I guess our concern is that from both a toxicity issue as well as the dispersing oil throughout the water column and for potentially along a vast area of the bottom, the sea floor of the Gulf of Mexico, are we creating a much more difficult to monitor and much more difficult to clean up environmental hazard than one that's on the surface, you know, and where we have the more classic responses?

And just as a heads up we're - if we haven't already, Southern Shrimp Alliance is sending a letter to Dr. Lubchenco and Administrator Jackson over at the EPA requesting some feedback on that and raising those concerns.

And the second issue I wanted to raise was I know you're traveling around a lot. But we'd love to work with you, the Southern Shrimp Alliance, maybe and get in touch with John Williams and you guys can talk about how to get a message out as much as possible about your work to ensure that seafood entering the market is safe. We have an awful lot of shrimp and other products that are being produced in many areas along the gulf that are not impacted and may never be impacted.

And we want to make sure that consumers understand that the industry and the government are working closely together to make sure that their - the consumers are protected and that seafood from the gulf is indeed safe and that contaminating seafood is just simply not going to get on the - into the marketplace because of the management of the fisheries and also the industry effort.

So let's work together on that one. Thanks.

Eric Schwaab: Thanks Glenn.

Andrew Winer: Okay, next question is from, excuse me, (Nicholas Johnson) who's a charter boat operator and owner.

(Nicholas Johnson): Yes. I appreciate you guys letting us be on this thing today. I wanted to ask, is there any or are we - or what lessons were learned from the Valdez spill or the Santa Barbara spill of '69 that we can look to to prepare for longer

term effects of what might happen in our region especially for the fishery - fish sportsman? I mean snapper or the snapper population being such fragile state right now, we want to know is there anything that we can look to that - for guidance or information of what potentially might happen with the fisher - the (grounder) right now.

Eric Schwaab: So I would just say that the resounding lesson that was - that came into play very early for us was the need to get good baseline data that we've talked about already. And I think that was something that carried very clearly forward from the people who were involved in the Prince Williams Sound, Exxon Valdez Event.

(Nicholas Johnson): And do we know, I mean do we know what kind of fish kill will occur with the Valdez spill or the Santa Barbara spill that might be similar to what could occur here?

Eric Schwaab: You know I don't know that there's a quantification component. And so I don't know if there's any kind of, you know, an analogous sort of quantification to some of those impacts.

But I think from our perspective the ability to get pre-event and post-event sampling is going to be, you know, not only critical in measuring impacts but also in, you know, assigning some value to the event.

Andrew Winer: Thank you (Nicholas). Let me move onto our next questioner, Greg Abrams from Greg Abrams Seafood.

Greg Abrams: Yes, one question. And thank you all for listening today. Was on the longline opening and people need to understand it's only open for five days and then it closes for three months for turtles.

And the other question is on HMS on the lower block, and we've called (Marco) and trying to see if we could possibly get that block that was illegally closed to start with and see if we could work on a process and getting it opened because we're here in Panama City, Florida and it's going to be a tough situation for us is the question I need to ask.

Eric Schwaab: So Greg you've already spoken to (Marco) about this?

Greg Abrams: I called yesterday. Several of us called yesterday. And they were trying to find out through the channels of what can be done, what can't be done.

And we were starting this year going to try to do the campaign to open it anyway because we just - with the rigs to the west and to the survey boats we just left it. We don't have the place to fish anymore.

Eric Schwaab: Okay, well let us just follow-up with (Marco).

Greg Abrams: Okay.

Eric Schwaab: Laurel will follow-up with (Marco) and at least ensure you get some feedback.

Greg Abrams: Okay, thank you.

Eric Schwaab: Thank you.

Andrew Winer: Okay, thank you Greg. Our next question is from (Randy Cape) from (Capes) International. And Randy I hope you're out in Hawaii enjoying the nice weather out there.

(Randy Cape): I am. And thank you for having me. I called in today really as a member of MAFAC to try and listen and hear what's going on and I'm sure in the future we'll be making some recommendations on all this.

I actually have a recommendation for Eric and you Andy and that is when we were down in New Orleans Larry Simpson gave us a presentation on lessons learned from Katrina.

And I've heard a lot of talk this morning about the need for collecting data. I would recommend that I think the area around New Orleans is that they probably - the individual fisherman probably has a better handle on what they need to do on a personal level and on a business level on documenting the impact but maybe the other areas around may not have that experience.

And I would recommend National Marine Fisheries to take a look at the presentation that Larry gave and educate the fishermen on what they need to do to document and start gathering the data on a personal level so that in the future if they go for some kind of recovery they have the proper data and it's done in a fair and balanced way.

And that was one thing that was really - I learned out of that presentation is how critical that information is.

So I would look at it more as a role for National Marine Fisheries on an educational purpose starting right now and not six months and not a year from now because people's memories will be faded by then.

Eric Schwaab: Yes, thanks (Randy). That's a great suggestion. Larry may already be doing something like that but we will follow-up with him and see how we can add to that.

Andrew Winer: Okay. Thank you (Randy). Before we take our next question we were asked earlier about where to submit proposals for alternative technologies for cleanup.

And the web site to look at is at www.deepwaterhorizonresponse.com. The phone number is area code 281-366-5511, again 281-366-5511.

And our next question is going to be from Mickey Johnson, Vice President of the Southern Shrimp Alliance.

Mickey Johnson: Yes, good morning Eric. I was with you in Washington last week.

Do we expect any additional closures west of the Mississippi Rivers? What we're trying to do is get many of our vessels in that direction.

But we also know that we're facing 200 mile Texas closure within a week or two here and we're just afraid of getting boxed in down in that area.

Eric Schwaab: Yes, we're monitoring the three day trajectories on the oil and that will be the basis around which we will continue to or at least one of the key factors that we will continue to use as we modify closures.

And you could get at those trajectories and see them off of the NOAA web site. I do believe that there is in the most recent forecast a little bit of, you know, western movement around that the tip of the delta. So but beyond that it's really hard to say beyond what we can project from those three day models that are really based predominantly on the weather forecast.

Andrew Winer: Okay, thank you Mickey. Our next question is from Mary Jane Williamson from the American Sportfishing Association.

Mary Jane Williamson: Good afternoon Eric and (Andy). I want to thank you for having this. This has been very informative.

I have two questions. What's measure does NOAA have in place to gather data on the recreational fishing industry impact and what measures are in place for compensation?

And then the other one is if closures are occurring in the Gulf of Mexico how would these closures affect other closures that may occur this summer on the East Coast and how that, you know, as you know that would have a significant impact on the recreational fishing industry if both the Gulf of Mexico and the Atlantic Coast were closed to rec. fishing?

Eric Schwaab: Yes, so obviously first and foremost as I said in my introductory comments we understand that this is an important economic event not only for the commercial fisheries but for the businesses and individuals that depend upon the recreational fisheries in the area.

I know I've seen significant amount of the data that you guys have already put out. You know, we have some economic data. But I know that you have data that I've already seen on, you know, the number of tackle shops that are, you know, potentially impacted, etcetera, etcetera, and those will all be I think, you know, important considerations not only in our evaluation of, you know, the impact of this event but also, you know, as those businessmen and women interact with, you know, BP related to, you know, the potential for damages.

And I think perhaps, you know, in the same way that (Randy) suggested that, you know, the commercial fishermen start early to, you know, document some impact, you know, perhaps and maybe you guys are already doing this at ASA, reaching out to, you know, those fishing related businesses and remind them of the need to document might also be useful.

And to the extent that we can help you in that regard we're happy to do that.

Now as you know the disaster declaration issue has become a little more - the fisheries disaster declaration and funding that may derive from that and this is outside of, you know, anything that might come directly from BP, has always been a bit of a challenge for us with respect to the recreational impacts because of the way the law is constructed.

But there have been, you know, at least in some disaster declarations some specific or some disaster appropriation, some specific provisions for, you know, recreational impacts. And we would certainly be open to, you know, discussing and helping to facilitate that.

Mary Jane Williamson: Okay.

Eric Schwaab: You know as it relates to, you know, other closures on the East Coast, I mean, you know, or other places around the country, you know, that's a tough balancing act for us. You know I think, you know, we have some long term requirements under the Magnuson Act to end over fishing. We're looking very specifically at as is the council over there in the South Atlantic right now mechanisms that we can employ to minimize, you know, some of the economic impacts.

But I think one of the things we really want to be careful about is that, you know, we don't overreach here and compound impacts and either economically in the short term or, you know, perhaps economically in the long term by, you know, undercutting important rebuilding efforts.

So it's a balancing act. Something we're going to have to be attuned to particularly to the extent that expands, you know, individuals or businesses that might be in both markets.

Mary Jane Williamson: Thank you.

Andrew Winer: Okay, thank you. Okay, we have time for one more question and then we're going to have close this out.

The last question is going to come from Lee Crockett from the Pew Environmental Group.

Lee Crockett: Thanks (Andy) and Eric for holding this call and taking - giving me the last word. I appreciate that.

I wanted to get back to the dispersant issue and I thought Glenn Delaney did a really nice job of sort of articulating some of the concerns that I have about this and the widespread use of this.

And I was involved a little bit in a previous life in the Exxon Valdez spill. And one of the lessons I took from that was that the response can be worse than the spill itself.

And one of the things they did up there that turned out to be not such a great idea was they essentially power washed the beach with high pressure warm

water. And I believe subsequent studies proves that that did more damage than good and drove a lot of the oil way down into the soil and gravel there.

And so I guess I was a little concerned that Dr. Lubchenco was so definitive about these things not being toxic and less toxic than oil.

And I'd encourage you to really take a close look at the use of dispersants and where you're using them and how much you're using them and this whole notion of injecting them deep down into the ocean in huge amounts is I believe unprecedented.

And so, you know, I guess my encouraging - what I would encourage you guys to do is you're the folks that we're counting on to sort of be looking at potential impacts of the spill response on the gulf environment, the fisheries there and larval fish and eggs and all that sort of stuff that's really vulnerable to this.

And, you know, my hope is that you continue to sort of take a hard look at what they're proposing to do and, you know, maybe it isn't the right thing to be doing and maybe it's better to have it on the surface and be booming it and skimming it even if it isn't as efficient and it - you know that sort of thing, so that's, you know, my two cents.

Eric Schwaab: Yes. Thanks Lee. I would just offer just two follow-up comments probably, you know, also applicable to Glenn's comment and that is that one of the advantages of the deep injection is that for a lot less chemical you get more, you know, oil dispersant.

And so that is also a factor in this calculation. And let me just emphasize that, you know, there - this continues to be something. This is not something that's

being undertaken without continued careful analysis both in the where's and the when's and the how (muches).

And so, you know, we appreciate your comments. It's something that, you know, we're very tuned into sort of the cost benefit equation here and continuing to do our best to evaluate that.

Lee Crockett: Thanks.

Andrew Winer: Thank you Lee. And we want to thank everybody for being on this call today. For those of you who didn't have a chance to ask a question and we apologize if you were in the line and we couldn't call you, please feel free to email laurel.bryant@noaa.gov and we will make every effort to answer your question.

The other thing that we'd ask also is that if you did not receive an email directly from Laurel about this call please send her an email so we can put you on our list. These calls are something that we hope to repeat somewhat regularly as things unfold with these events and we found this to be a fairly useful way to get the word out pretty efficiently. So we'd ask you to do that.

So once again we want to thank you. We have recorded this call. We will be putting it up on the NOAA web site. And please look for future invitations for events like this. And thank you all very much. And we will be in touch with you later. Good-bye.

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