OIL SPILL
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BILOXI, MS

Disclaimer: This transcript begins with the first mention of the topic and introductions. The remarks regarding microphones, one-way mirror, and invitation to refreshments have not been included.

PRAYER IS NOT ON THE TRANSCRIPTS

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LADON: My name is LaDon Swann, along with you I would like to offer deepest condolences to the family of 11 workers who died on the Deepwater Horizon. I'm the Mississippi-Alabama Sea Grant Consortium. Sea Grant has worked in Coastal Alabama for 36 years. We're here to help coastal communities for applied research, education, extension and outreach. Two weeks ago we hosted a small team of Alaskans who shared their first hand experiences with the Valdez spill with groups of coastal constituents in Mississippi and Alabama. Today's forum builds off those meetings. It drives in the knowledge and experiences of professionals from over 20 federal state agencies, research universities, private sector and nonprofit organizations. Plans are all ready underway for the next phase of public outreach programs and we welcome your input. Before hearing from a few federal agencies that are on the frontline of the Deepwater Horizon oil spill I would like to share a few of my concerns that many of you may also have. I worry that our coastal heritage we've enjoyed for so long will be changed forever. I worry that the damage to our coastal and marine environment with which our lives are intertwined may not be repaired in our lifetime. A response to this technological disaster as individuals and organizations will be the true test of our character. Today's forum is certainly calm in the deep, visceral emotions that we all feel. What we do promise is compassion, honesty and respect. We know each of you; we treat the professionals here today the same way. Before moving to the five stations prepared for you, I want to thank everyone involved in organizing these forums. The experts will try to do their best to answer your questions. The facilitators are responsible for ensuring this meeting is conducted in a professional manner and my Sea Grant who have never refused to whatever it takes to serve. With that said, I would like to introduce Buck Sutter with NOAA who is going to introduce Dr. Larry Robinson of the Department of Commerce.

BUCK: Thank you, LaDon, I appreciate that very much. Sea Grant and NOAA are in a very close partnership. This will be the second of a series of meetings that we've had following on from the meetings. We're dealing folks from Alaska. The oil spill still isn't capped yet.

I was in Ocean Springs almost a month ago it seems like. Probably a lot of you folk were at that same meeting. We we're hopeful by this time it would be capped. Obviously we're still here. It is important to note that the federal agencies with the coast and EPA and NOAA and certainly the state agencies that we work so closely with are going to be here until the last drop of oil is cleaned up off the beach. However long that takes, we're going to do what it takes. To show how important this is, Dr. Larry Robison who now is the new instant undersecretary for NOAA, he's the number two person to Dr. Lubchenco; he has been onboard for the whole three weeks. Out of those three weeks he and I have spent a lot of time together. I got to know him pretty well. I have a tremendous amount of respect for him, his wisdom, his calm demeanor. We're really fortunate to have someone who's leading NOAA in a time like this. Both he and Dr. Lubchenco are professional scientist. Right now we have hundreds of assets here, scientist, oceanographers; we have several vessels out there that I'm sure Dr. Robinson will mention. Please help me welcome Dr. Robinson here this morning. Thank you sir.

LARRY: Good morning everyone. Thanks, Buck for that introduction and everyone who have come in. My colleagues at Sea Grant for organizing these series of meetings to keep the public informed about the things that we are doing. I'm not new to Sea Grant. I served as a campus Sea Grant coordinator at Florida A&M University since 1997. My tenure was only disrupted when I was sworn in as the assistant secretary a few weeks ago. I really understand Sea Grant and I really understand the importance of the extension and outreach work that it does primarily based upon my personal experiences in Florida over the past 13 years or so. The Sea Grant is one of those prime examples of a State Federal partnership that soon will be emanated by others in federal sector. It really sends home a point and that is we don't have and we can't get to all of the answers without the involvement of the broader scientific community and in fact the general public as well. That's why we are here. That's I'm here to listen and hear from the citizens who have been impacted by this unprecedented event in the history of this nation with regard to environmental catastrophes. I also would like to let the families of the loving persons who lost their lives in the explosion. Know that we think of them every day. The 12,800 employees of NOAA working in the Gulf of Mexico and those around the country, we all send our deepest condolences. NOAA is the scientific resource of the unified command and is responsible for coordinated and scientific weather and biological responses. NOAA's experts have been assisting with the response

from the very beginning of the spill. Within two and a half hours we issued our first forecast of the trajectory of the oil. We've been involved from the beginning. Offices throughout the agency have mobilized and hundreds of NOAA personnel are dedicating themselves to assist. Over the past few weeks NOAA has provided twenty four seven scientific support to the United States Coastguard in its role as the federal on-scene coordinator. Both on-scene and throughout our Seattle operation center. The NOAA-wide effort include daily trajectories of spilled oil, information management, over flight observation and mapping weather and river flow forecast, shoreline and risk assessment and oceanographic modeling support. I'm not entirely new to this region and some of you might know, I have spent the last 10 years directing NOAA's Environmental Cooperative Science Center that has looked at science ecological issues in Northwest Florida as well as right here in this region, the Mississippi at the Grand Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve. I have a special sensitivity to the types of systems you have here and the vulnerability to the threats of the oil and the byproducts thereof. I want to give you a few updates of some items that NOAA is doing that give us a broader view of what we do at the agency. Some of these I'm pretty sure you talk about more in these breakout sessions. As I said we are primarily the sore for the oil spill trajectories showing the predicted trajectory of the oil slick. Where it is now, we're trying to anticipate where it's going. You all heard a lot about part of the oil slick being entrained in loop current. We still continue to track oil that may have been there. Some of you know that Northern has broken off but we're still monitoring that situation in the event that it re-establishes itself. One of the major concerns about this oil slick is the flow rate, how much oil has been released since the beginning of this incident. One of our scientist lead, he commands one of the two groups of the National Incident Command Flow Rate Technical Group to try to get a more realistic number of how much oil has been released in the Gulf. Those numbers as you heard were revised up last week primarily due to the work of that group. On May the 24th, Secretary of Commerce, Gary Locke declared a fishery disaster in the Gulf of Mexico due to the economic impact on commercial and recreational fishing from the ongoing Deepwater Horizon spill. The affected areas include the State of Louisiana, Mississippi and Alabama. Determination was made under the provision of the Magnuson-Stevens Act. In particular with regard to requests from Louisiana and Mississippi based upon the loss of access of many commercial fishermen to their normal livelihood. We also are responsible or the fisheries closure and seafood safety in particular seafood safety in

conjunction with our partners at EPA. We are constantly monitoring visual signs of the slick as well as trajectories of where the slick will go. We have just recently updated the fishery closure are. Right now it comprises about 24% of the Gulf of Mexico's exclusive economic zone. One of the major things that we do is the coordination of a natural resource damage assessment. That is a major element of what we do, what the Department of Interior as a federal co-trustee as well as co-trustees in five states and representative from the responsible part of BP. The focus apparently is to assemble existing data on resources in that habitat and collect baseline and pre-spill impact data. Data on all resource and habitat are also being collected. This effort as Buck talked about to clean up these impacted areas is going to be a critical part of this damage assessment. I want to point out as many of you here, many of you all ready know, this is a legal process and there are some claims we have to pay pretty close attention to. One of the most important things is having these baseline data, knowing what the system look like prior to impact. Last but not the least, that's one of the reason we are here is the socioeconomic and environmental impact. The impact on the ecosystem is certainly tremendous but the impact on the lives of people is just as significant. NOAA is working aggressively with other agencies and nonfederal scientist to understand where oil is on the surface and below the surface and to evaluate the environmental impact of both the spill and on any mitigation efforts that might be implemented. To close as Buck said I want to ensure you that we not relent in our efforts to protect the livelihoods of Gulf Coast residents and to mitigate the environmental impact of the spill. Thank you for allowing me to give a few words this morning. I'm going to be around for the rest of this workshop and hopefully I have a chance to interact with many of you during that timeframe. Thank you very much.

(0:15:07.4)
LADON: Next I would like to introduce Commander Bob Brady with the United States Coastguard. Dr. Brady is in Mobile with the Incident Command and would like to give you an opportunity… Commander Brady.

BOB: Thank you sir. Captain Dreiling couldn't be here today. He has some competing demands so I'm going to take his place. I'm a Mobile resident. I've lived there for 17 years. I'm feeling as bad as you all are. I want to give you an idea of the overview of the command structure. I'll give you an idea of our response objectives and strategies we're employee and the tactics that we're using to

reach those objectives. The overall command structure is the National Incident Commander Admiral Thad Allen. You've probably seen him on TV a number of times. He probably wishes he had but on May 25th he was supposed to retire. He is no longer the commandant of the coastguard but he has stayed on as the incident commander. Then new have the area command Admiral Landry. She's the area commander, the overall for this area and then we're broken down into three unified commands. There's Houston, that's where they doing the subsea dispersants and source control. Houma, Louisiana primarily responsible for Louisiana and the offshore skimming response operations. There is unified command in Mobile. The unified commands are made up of federal state and the responsible party, BP. Some of the federal presence there, the Coastguard, Department of Interior, Environmental Protection Agency; the states, we have contingence from Mississippi, Alabama and Florida. We also have a number of nongovernmental organizations, BP and national guards there. The Incident Command post in Mobile has about 1600 people working there roughly 14 hours a day. Of course our response objective is to allow no oil to make it to the shoreline. I shouldn't have said, that's real military. What we have is the area contingency plan. We're following the area contingency plan and putting boom up primarily to protect the inland areas, the beaches, of course the environmentally sensitive areas. The strategy is primarily to fight it off shore with the off shore skimming. You've probably seen the burns of the oil on the surface. As best we can, we're trying to fight it out away from the shoreline. The next thing we want to do is keep if off the shoreline. We've set up booming operations. After that the boom is setup in a way to protect the most environmentally sensitive areas. The next fallback would be to keep it out of the bays. Once the oil does arrive, is to quickly get in there are and clean it up. The tactics we're using, we have roughly a million feet of boom. Probably 990,000 or so is deployed in any one time with probably about 100,000 back for repair. Conducting over flights, there are a number of agencies conducting them. In Mississippi it's the National Guard, Air National Guard, there's the Coastguard, NOAA and the Civil Air Patrol. We're using different tactics. Primarily we're over flying the boom to ensure that there are any rips, tears, any damage to it, anything that is sinking. We're also doing aerial surveillance off the coast to track the oil. Trying to get the skimmers in the best position to fight that. You may have heard about some of the boom being transferred to different areas. It does move around from time to time to try to put it where we need it the most. Right now again, we're trying to fight it off shore as best we can. Once it does arrive, we have what we call the SCAA team, the

shore cleanup and assessment team, when the oil does actually arrive on the beaches we deploy the SCAA team and they get out there and clean that up. I hope that gives you an overall idea of what our objectives are and what we're trying to do.

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LADON: Next Stan Meiburg who is the acting director for region four EPA out of Atlanta. After that I'm going to turn it over a good Ann Weaver with NOAA's Gulf Coast Service Center. She will then explain the process for the rest of the morning. I appreciate your attention.

STAN: LaDon thank you very much for the chance to be here this morning. Thanks to all of you for being here this morning as well. What I want to do this morning is to talk a little about EPA's role in the response for the BP oil spill together with our federal state and local government partners. To satisfy one element of bureaucratic clarity, EPA is divided up into regions. Region four which I'm the acting regional administrator covers the states of Mississippi, Alabama and Florida in addition to five other states to the north. The states of Louisiana and Texas are covered by EPA region six. We coordinate very closely with EPA region six in having a common one EPA approach to the cleanup in response to the spill. What I want to do today is to provide an overview of EPAs activities here in the affective Gulf Coast region and summarize some of our primary environmental objective. I want to join with the other members of the panels first though in extending our heartfelt and deep condolences to the families of those who lost their lives and those who were injured in the explosion of the Deepwater Horizon. Of all the tragedies that this event occurs those are felt most keenly, we're very aware of that. I also want to extend our concern to all of the citizens of the Gulf Coast whose lives have been adversely affected by this terrible spill. We recognize that these are effects that may last for a very a long time. They're going to require the best efforts of all of us in the government as well as those in the private sector. I do also want to acknowledge all the work by our fellow federal state and local partners. I want to thank them for their ongoing efforts especially the Coastguard who is the lead federal agency in this response and the National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration, both of whom are strong partners with EPA. I would also note that I want to acknowledge the work of the Gulf of Mexico Program whose director Bryon Griffith is here in the audience today who may be known to many of you who work in these circle. Bryon's group has been very helpful to EPA across the Gulf Coast as well

as other agencies in providing information and support. I do think it's fair to say that the BP oil spill is one of the greatest environmental challenges of our time. More than 24,000 federal responders including hundreds of EPA staff are focused on this crisis. EPA has integrated its staff into the Unified Area Command that Commander Brady talked about as well as the Incident Command post. Terry Stilman and Capt. Larry Cseh from Unified Command Mobile are here today and will be working in one of the breakout sessions to provide additional detailed information on our deployment as well as our air and water sampling. My purpose here this morning is to give a brief overview of our air and water sample activities and to discuss EPA's role and actions on oil disbursements which have been the subject of a lot of discussion. First, on in air quality monitor, we in the states of Mississippi, Alabama and Florida operate a network of fixed air quality monitoring stations in the Gulf Coast region. We've also especially deployed a fair amount of monitoring and sampling equipment in response to this crisis. We also have deployed a twin-engine aircraft we call the ASPECT aircraft which can help to detect in real-time chemical constituents associated with the oil spill as well as to monitor for a particular matter over in situ burns. We've also brought down two mobile vans. We call them the TAGA busses, Trace Atmospheric Gas Analyzer for those of you who are into acronyms. These buses are capable of doing real-time sampling and analysis and could detect a range of chemical constituents at very low levels. These have been operating across the Gulf. In fact one was operating between Stennis and Perdido Key yesterday. We're also having our responders monitor for particular matter, hydrogen sulfide and total volumes of organic compound associated with oil as well as the in situ burns. We're also monitoring for ozone levels and testing for specific volatile organic compounds including benzene, toluene, ethyl benzene, xylene and naphthalene. The good new that I have to report to you this morning is that to date our onshore air sampling has not identified levels of air pollutants above what we usually see in the Mississippi, Alabama, Florida Gulf Coast for this time of year. That's the good news. We are going to continue to monitor the situation and to investigate reports of odor or other unusual events. Turning down to the waterside, EPA teams have conducted near shore and estuarine water monitoring activities along the Gulf Coast for some time. About three or four weeks ago, we did baseline monitoring to establish baseline conditions for both the near shore and estuarine water quality and sediment sample. We're continuing to watch the situation especially in light of the reports yesterday for impacts along the Alabama and Mississippi Coast.

We are beginning today to do additional sampling and testing in near shore and estuarine waters to more fully assess water quality. We've been doing this in the Louisiana areas that were impacted first as well. We're extending this over the Mississippi and Alabama in light of the impacts reported yesterday. This sampling will enable us to analyze water and sediment samples to detect chemicals that may be found in oil as well as the dispersion that have been used in the oil spill response. Now turning to the dispersion themselves, this has been an interesting event. In responding to this spill, the government has had to make some very tough decisions including the use dispersant chemicals to help breakup the oil and speed its natural degradation. That is the objective. To enable the oil to be broken down and dispersed by bacteria that live in the Gulf. One of the advantages that we have in the Gulf as compared to Alaska is simply the temperature which enables this biological to occur more rapidly. When this crisis occurred, the Federal On-Scene Coordinator granted BP the authorization to use approved dispersants on the oil on the surface of the water in an effort to mitigate against shoreline and marsh impact of the oil spill on fisheries, nurseries, wet lands and other sensitive environment. These dispersants contain a mixture of chemicals that cause the oil to break up and to form an emulsion. I've heard some people compare it to salad dressing; I'm not sure about that. It does give you that same image that helps it break down and be decomposed more readily when it works properly. What this does is to form a cloud or a plume of oil droplets that area suspended in the water that can mix in the water column. Due to the unprecedented nature of this event, BP has used dispersants in ways that we have not seen before both in quantity and technique. One of the things that the government authorized BP to do was to test a new approach involve injecting some of the dispersants at the site of the plume 5000 below the surface. We've been very concerned about this because it is new. We've been analyzing information together with NOAA from each of these subsurface applications to determine whether this application should be continued. Since this began, the information we have is that dissolved oxygen levels in the biological test we've been doing have been within normal ranges which has been encouraging. It is clear that the use dispersants has environmental trade off. This is not like you have good answer or a bad answer, you have a number of solutions that are all not so good and you have to choose among them. We know that the surface use of dispersants in particular decreases the environment by the spill to shorelines but there has been a lot of concern about the volume that has been used in this incident. Normally the dispersions will breakdown over the course

of a couple of weeks but the long term effects on aquatic life are simple unknown which is why we and the coastguard are requiring BP to implement a sample and monitoring plan to detect any adverse environmental effect that may outweigh the benefits. We are sill very concerned about the things that we do not know. Because of this EPA and the coastguard have issues an order to BP to eliminate, if at all operationally possible, all surface dispersant applications. As of now our data show that some surface applications have not had an adverse ecological impact and that's good news. We are continuing to direct BP to find alternative, less toxic dispersant. BP has argued to date that one was not available. We have determined that that analysis was inadequate and have asked them to continue to push on that point. In addition EPA is performing its own scientific verification of the data that BP presented. We are conducting a separate independent scientific analysis to determine whether less toxic alternatives are available at the needed volumes. For the moment, EPA and the coastguard will continue to use under sea dispersant especially now during the operation where they're sawing off the vent. To use undersea dispersant at a maximum of 15,000 gallons per day provided that it is accompanied by the rigorous testing that I just described which they will be doing throughout the duration of the cap procedure they have underway today. The administrator of EPA, Lisa Jackson has made it clear that BP needs to continue to abide by this May 26 directive to keep surface spraying of dispersant to an absolute minimum. There was an uptake on this. We have told BP that should not be repeated. EPA continues to demand as well that further analysis be conducted on other options as EPA continues to apply its own science to this issue and EPA and the coastguard have reserved the right and reserve the authority to discontinue the use of underwater dispersants if we have any indication that this is causing adverse environmental effects. One of the areas I would note that EPA is pursuing future research and development on dispersants. Historically EPA has had a pretty modest oil spill research and development program. It's fair to say that events over the past several weeks have suggested that more is needed. The administration has requested supplemental funds for dispersant research associated with the Deepwater Horizon oil spill. If they are appropriated we plan to engage other institutions who have knowledge and expertise to assist us in this additional research. Let me close by returning to the overall theme that we recognize that this BP oil spill is a massive and potentially unprecedented environmental disaster. We are also aware that it has all ready affected many lives here in the Gulf Coast region. EPA is going to continue to work alongside the many federal and state agencies to

implement emergency oil spill response and to oversee BP's activities. We're now preparing for example for potential support role in shoreline assessment and cleanup operations and we will continue to do sample and analysis to prioritize sensitive resources and determine the needs for cleanup and recommend strategies and provide full support to the coastguard and the unified command in monitoring potential environmental and public health concerns. The final message I would simply say is to echo that of the other panelist which is we are here for the duration, we are here for the long term. We recognize the seriousness of this activity in this event and our own obligation to meet your need in responding. Thank you very much.

ANN: Good morning everyone. My name is Ann Weaver. I'm with the Gulf office of the NOAA Coastal Service Center. I also am a resident of this area and as concerned as many of you about the issues. I'm going to be the lead facilitator today for the breakout sessions and I'm going to give you the directions for how this is going to proceed. We are going to record each of the breakout sessions so that we will be able to make transcripts available to you for the questions that were asked and the questions that were answered during this forum. We are going to take a short after I finish. After that break we're going to have five breakout rooms that are around the hall. They're all labeled so you can tell what they are. One is fisheries and wildlife, another monitor data, one business and personal finance, one technological disaster and mental health and the last is legal perspectives. We will have experts in each of those rooms available to answer your questions. We will also have four facilitators in each room. They'll all be dressed in these lovely green vest like me. They will be coordinating the question and answer sessions in each of the rooms. The way that it will work is if you have a question you will let one of the facilitators know. We'll have microphone in the middle of the rooms like this and a panel of experts at the table. The facilitator will let you know when it's your turn to go to the microphone. You can approach the microphone. You will have two minutes to ask your question. The facilitator will warn when you only have 30 seconds left if you have not finished your question quite yet. You will get to ask one question. You can ask it to a specific panel member or you can let everyone at the panel address your answer. You will have the opportunity to ask one follow on question. You will be asked to sit down. If you are interested in asking another question to take your turn in the back of the line. We have several ground rules that we request you follow while in the breakout rooms. You are welcome to wander from any of the

breakout rooms; you can come and go as you are interested. The ground rules will be the same in each room. We have a lot of unknown. The panel members will tell you what they can and what they know. If they don't know please accept that as their answer that they don't know. You are welcome to write your question and your contact information on a card that your facilitators will have available and we will get back to you with the appropriate answer. We ask that you please silent all of your telephones when you're in the rooms and you respect your fellow participants and listen to what they have to say so there is only one person talking at a time. Please wait until your facilitators acknowledge you and tell you it's your turn before you shout a question out so only one person is speaking at a time. Those are our ground rules they are posted in each of the rooms. We're going to take a 15-minute break while all the panel members and facilitators gather in their rooms. You are welcome to go into each and every room or stay for the remaining time in the room that you are most interested in. there are signs outside the rooms to direct you to what the subject matter in each of the rooms are. You should each have a blue sheet that tells you who your facilitators are and who the speakers are in each of the rooms. With that, unless LaDon has anything else… We also have two more meetings that will have a similar format in Mobile. One is from 6:00 to 9:00 tonight at the Mobile Civic Center and another tomorrow morning at the same location from 9:00 to noon in Mobile. If you don't get an opportunity to ask all the questions you want to ask today please feel free to attend one of those meetings as well. With that we're going to take a 15-minute break. We will reconvene at 10:00 in the breakout rooms. Thank you.

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