



## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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### **INDUSTRY, ENVIRONMENTALISTS, STATE LEADERS DISCUSS IMPACTS AND RESPONSE TO GULF OIL SPILL:**

**America's Energy Coast Forum Paves Path Forward to Resiliency by Managing Risks, Vulnerabilities**

GALVESTON, TX – Leaders from the oil industry, national environmental organizations, government and citizens' groups meet in Galveston Wednesday to discuss the BP rig incident's impact on the Gulf and community resiliency in America's Energy Coast (AEC) states of Texas, Louisiana, Mississippi and Alabama.

The meeting of the America's Energy Coast is the first such meeting of industry, environmentalists and other Gulf Coast stakeholders since the April 20 oil spill. Originally called to discuss community resiliency on an eroding coast, the agenda was expanded to open with a discussion of the oil spill.

"We have hosted the nation's domestic offshore energy production for more than five decades and, until the nation no longer demands it, we will be expected to continue to do so for years to come," said R. King Milling, Chairman of the Board for the America's WETLAND Foundation. "A working coast requires a sound environment. An incident of this nature only adds to the urgency of restoring the deteriorating wetlands and coastal landscapes that have, for too long, left our communities vulnerable to both man-made and natural risks and vulnerabilities," Milling said.

The AEC states collectively provide 90% of our domestic offshore energy supply - almost a third of the nation's total oil and gas supply that connects to 50% of our refining capacity - along with 30% of the seafood landed in the lower 48 states. Ongoing damage to the region could have a significant economic and environmental impact that will be felt by all Americans.

The forum is hosted by the America's WETLAND Foundation, a non-profit, non-partisan NGO that is committed to a balanced approach to sustaining both the fragile coastal environment and economy in the Gulf of Mexico region.

"Already, the AEC has called for an end to conflicting federal regulations and agency missions that hinder the states, acceleration of the planned federal offshore oil revenues to be shared with the states that host that production, and a coordinated, regional approach to sustaining the internationally significant ecology of the region and the energy security of the nation," said Commissioner Jerry Patterson of the Texas General Land Office and member of the Steering Committee for America's Energy Coast.

The agenda of the Galveston meeting, to be held 9:00 a.m. – 3:30 p.m. Wednesday in the Music Hall of the Galvez Hotel in Galveston, TX was adjusted to consider the impacts of the oil rig explosion more than a month ago.



“So far, an area of land equal to the state of Delaware has disappeared into the waters off the coast of Louisiana, and the land loss continues at the rate of a football field every 50 minutes,” said Karen Gautreaux of The Nature Conservancy, an AEC Task Force Leader. “We have one of the most fragile coasts in the country and it’s one that is critical to the 90 percent of Gulf species that depend on this area for part of their life cycle. Even before the spill, this area was threatened and needed a national restoration effort,” Gautreaux said.

Gary Serio, Vice president of Entergy and Chair of the AEC Industry Council, noted its membership includes leaders of industry, the national environmental and conservation community, academia, government, and diverse coastal interests throughout the energy-producing region of Texas, Louisiana, Mississippi, and Alabama.

“The Gulf of Mexico oil spill tragedy serves as a reminder that we must understand what it means for energy and ecology to reside together along America’s Energy Coast and how we balance them,” Serio said.

The AEC, meeting in Washington, D.C. in November, issued a report, *Region at Risk: Preventing the Loss of Vital National Assets*, calling for a regional approach to coastal restoration, ending conflicting federal regulations and accelerating federal sharing of offshore oil revenues with impacted states.

“We’ve probably all been anxious during some of these discussions,” Serio said, noting the unique assembly of both environmental and industry interests. “We’re focusing on issues that, for the most part, have previously been avoided -- issues that have placed many of us on opposite sides of the fence for a very long time. However, we have all committed to work together to build a clear path forward for the resiliency of our economy, our environment and our communities.”

*America’s WETLAND Foundation ([www.americaswetland.org](http://www.americaswetland.org)) is a non-partisan, non-profit organization that has acted as a neutral arbiter for Louisiana’s coastal interests since its inception in 2002, elevating issues facing the Gulf Coast, specifically those of coastal land loss, to regional, national and international attention.*

*America’s Energy Coast (AEC) ([americasenergycoast.org](http://americasenergycoast.org)) is an initiative of the America’s WETLAND Foundation. AEC is a diverse group of major businesses and industries, national environmental and conservation organizations, scientists and researchers, and coastal interests from across the four energy-producing states of Texas, Louisiana, Mississippi and Alabama – collectively known as America’s Energy Coast.*

