

NOGS LOG



February 2008

Volume 48, Number 8

Upcoming Events and Activities

February 11 - NOGS Luncheon

*** At the Holiday Inn Downtown Superdome ***
Free validated parking in hotel garage

Ursula Hammes, Research Assistant for the Bureau of Economic Geology in Austin, will present "All Fill-No Spill: Slope-Fan Sand Bodies and Sequence Stratigraphy of Growth-Faulted Subbasins: Oligocene Frio Formation, South Texas Gulf Coast, USA".

(See Page 7 for Abstract and Biographies)

HOLIDAY INN DOWNTOWN SUPERDOME	ADMISSION:
Check with concierge or front desk for location	with reservation \$30.00 without reservation \$35.00
Lunch served at 11:30am	Student Member with reservation Free

February 20 - 2007 API Meritorious Service Awards Banquet

11:30 am at the Le Pavillon Hotel. This year's recipients are Duncan Goldthwaite and Mike Fein. Guest speaker will be George Wentz, a local attorney who will provide an update on the Horizon Initiative. See announcement on pages 16-17.

March 3 - NOGS Luncheon

Dr. Gary Kinsland, Pioneer Production Endowed Professor of Geology at the University of Louisiana, Lafayette, will present: "A Regional Subsurface Geological Investigation of Lower Wilcox Group Coalbed Natural Gas Potential in Northeastern Louisiana."

March 6-7 - 2nd Annual Louisiana Groudwater Symposium

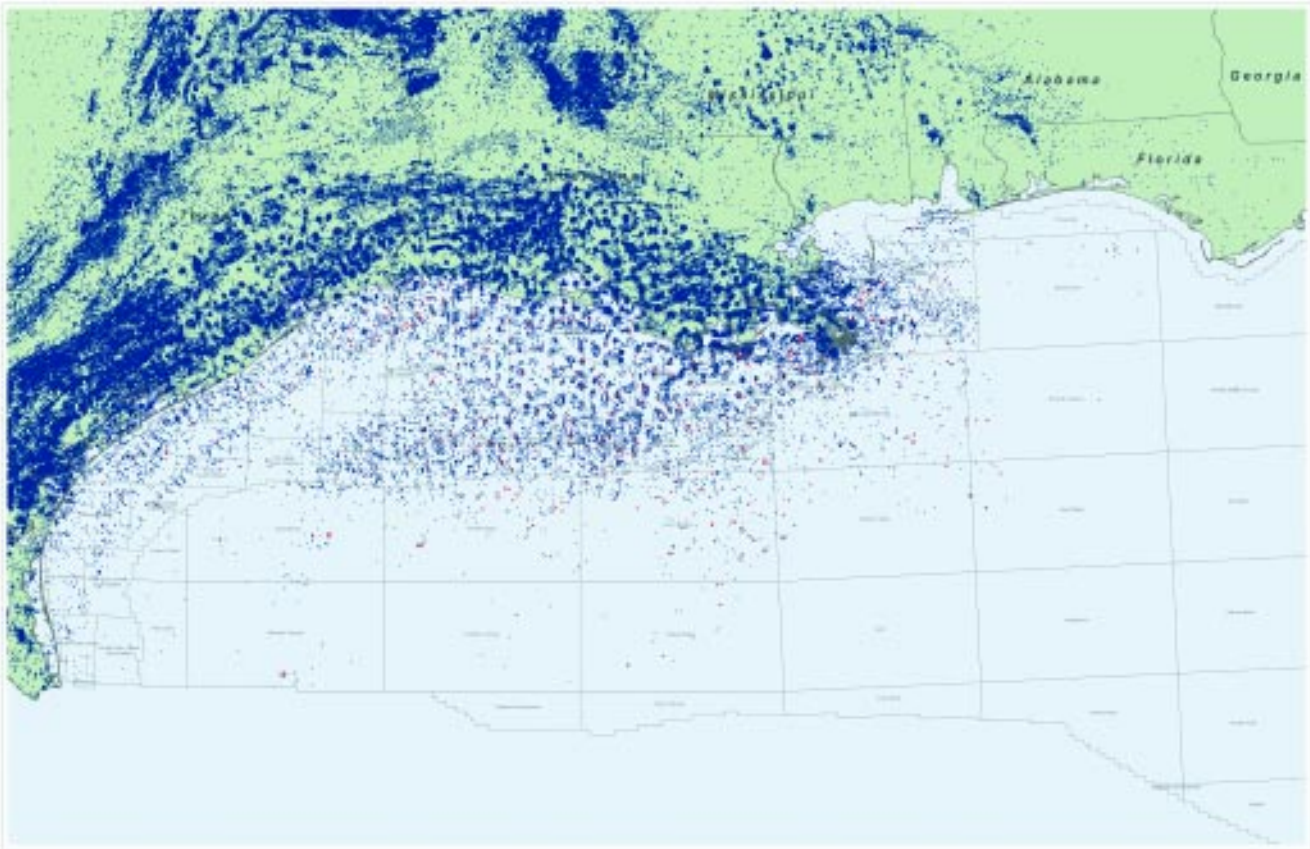
Hosted by the Baton Rouge Geological Society. Energy Coast & Environment Building, LSU Campus, Baton Rouge. See announcement on page 15.
For more information visit BRGS website <http://www.brgs-la.org>

April 5 - Super Science Saturday

11:00-3:00 at Louisiana Children's Museum.
For more information or to volunteer, contact Tom Bergeon - (504)832-3772,
tom.bergeon@centuryx.com

April 5-6 - NOGS Technical Field Seminar

Modern Transgressive Depositional Environments of the Abandoned Mississippi River Lafourche Delta Complex. See announcement on page 15.



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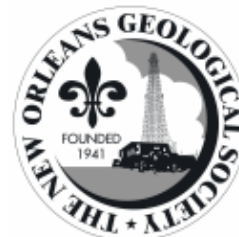
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 The office is located at Suite 300, 810 Union Street, New Orleans, LA 70112.
 Correspondence and all luncheon reservations should be sent to the above address.
 Sent to press on January 26, 2008.



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from the President

Have you visited a classroom lately?

Last summer I announced that our theme for the 2007-2008 year would be "Outreach", and I have been very pleased with the efforts of NOGS members to get involved in our community in many varied ways. One of the greatest needs in our community is for geologists to get involved in K-12 education and many NOGS members have invested their time in this effort. In most classes, geology is given, at best, a brief overview; and is not included at all in the curriculum in most grade levels. It is no wonder that most students have no thought of geology as a possible career when they graduate from high school.

Not wanting to merely talk about this issue, I have made a concerted personal effort to visit as many classrooms as possible this year. Since school started in August I have inflicted myself on seventeen classes (three kindergarten, two 4th grade, one 5th grade, and eleven high school). The fossils collections available from Tom Bergeon are always a big hit, and the "Tapestry of Time and Terrain" map is a great visual. We are leaving copies of the map at all of the schools we visit. The content of the talks I have given has varied according to the age level, with a greater stress on specific career opportunities with the older students (and less focus on dinosaurs).

NOGS is a active partner in "PIPE" (Petroleum Industry Promoting Education), a new organization formed to support science and engineering education in schools. PIPE played a leading role in the First LEGO League robotics competition in December that brought together several hundred middle school students, along with their teachers and parents. I was pleased to give the keynote address that day and am grateful for the technical support I received from Schlumberger, Shell, EPL, ORX and others. (I must also note that I was very ably assisted that day by Mike Fein.)

Our outreach to schools needs additional support - we could really use some decent hard copy seismic and log data to show in high school classes. But our main need is for additional volunteers willing to spend an hour or two with some students.

The schools I have visited reflect the great diversity of the New Orleans area, and have included locations ranging

from prosperous suburbs to the hard-pressed inner city. It is worth mentioning that I have been warmly welcomed in every school, and have found students truly excited about our chosen field.

Here are some letters I have received from 4th graders:

Dear Art Johnson,

Thank you for coming to my class and teaching us about fossils and rocks. I loved the part where you told us why Lake Pontchartrain was there. You were great!

Sincerely,

Alex

Dear Mr. Johnson,

Thank you for coming yesterday. My favorite part was when I got to touch the dinosaur poop. Thanks for skipping whatever you had to do to come to our school.

Sincerely,

Brian

Dear Mr. Johnson,

I really enjoyed hearing about geology. I was very interested in how there are many different ages of rocks. I have looked at the map you donated to our class many times.

Sincerely,

Andy

Dear Mr. Art Johnson,

Thank you very much for coming and teaching us about all that cool stuff. I learned a lot. I hope you can come back again.

Sincerely,

Caitlin

Dear Mr. Johnson,

Thank you for donating your time to teach us about dinosaurs. The poster you brought is interesting. I wish you could come every day.

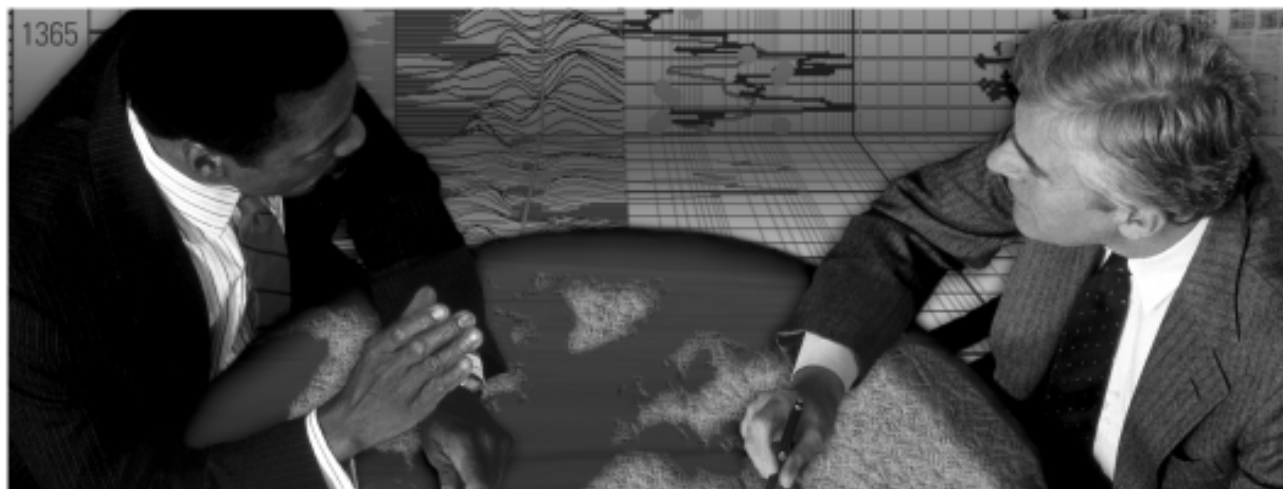
Your friend,

Ben

I'll ask you all again: Have you visited a classroom lately? Contact Tom Bergeon or me for more information.

Art Johnson

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February 11 Luncheon Presentation
*** at the Holiday Inn Downtown Superdome ***

**All Fill-No Spill: Slope-Fan Sand Bodies and Sequence
Stratigraphy of Growth-Faulted Subbasins: Oligocene Frio Formation,
South Texas Gulf Coast, USA**

presented by
Ursula Hammes, Bureau of Economic Geology

ABSTRACT

The Frio Formation along the southern and central Texas Gulf Coast is dominated by growth-faulted subbasins that originated from mobile mud deformation during sea-level lowstands when coarse clastic sedimentation shifted basinward and was deposited onto unconsolidated slope muds, which were mobilized into sediment ridges. Each sediment ridge composed the seaward edge of the growing subbasin, as well as the slope of the subsequent subbasin. As the prograding-wedge system prograded over the slope fans during late lowstand time, sediment-ridge and growth-fault movement ceased. Transgressive and highstand systems tracts completed the subbasin deposition sequence. A new sequence would begin with the next sea-level lowstand.

Historically, exploration has targeted on-shelf highstand and transgressive systems tracts and lowstand prograding-wedge systems tracts with great success. Oil companies have recently become interested in exploring for slope-fan sandstone reservoirs in lowstand growth-

faulted subbasins. However, the distribution, thickness, and pathways of these gravity-transported slope-fan sandstones are not well understood and are more complex than highstand transgressive systems tracts or lowstand prograding-wedge systems tracts. Slope fans are prolific reservoirs in the deep waters of the Gulf of Mexico and other types of continental margin settings. The typical slope and basin-floor-fan models in Pliocene and Pleistocene deep-water Gulf of Mexico basins are interpreted to exhibit a fill-and-spill sequence within one 3rd/4th-order minibasin.

In contrast, Frio slope fans in growth-faulted subbasins fill the present accommodation space but rarely spill into the next subbasin within a 3rd-order sequence because of an evolving sediment ridge. The growth-faulted Frio subbasin formation has resulted from early slope-fan sediments overloading a ductile substrate (basinal

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BIOGRAPHY

Ursula Hammes obtained her Diploma in Geology from the University of Erlangen in Germany in 1987 and her Ph.D. from the University of Colorado at Boulder in 1992. She spent 10 years working as a consultant, performing postdoctoral research at the Bureau of Economic Geology and as an

exploration geologist in industry. Dr. Hammes joined the Bureau of Economic Geology in 2001 as a Research Associate. Her main research focus is in clastic and carbonate sequence stratigraphy, depositional systems, and carbonate and clastic diagenesis.

THE LUNCHEON RESERVATION DEADLINE IS FEBRUARY 6, SO CALL THE NOGS OFFICE - TODAY!

“And Looking Ahead...”

The next NOGS luncheon will be March 3 at the Holiday Inn Downtown Superdome. Dr. Gary Kinsland, Pioneer Production Endowed Professor of Geology at the University of Louisiana, Lafayette, will present: "A Regional Subsurface Geological Investigation of Lower Wilcox Group Coalbed Natural Gas Potential in Northeastern Louisiana." Contact the NOGS office to make your reservation.

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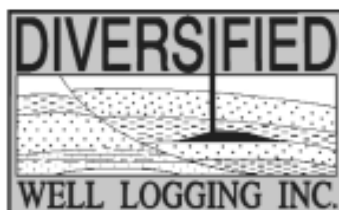


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Blast From NOGS Past

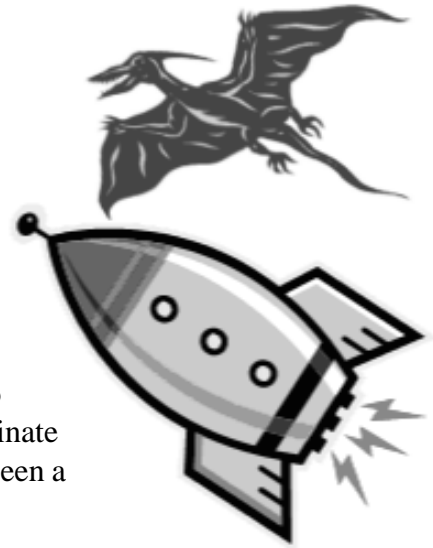
20 Years Ago (February 1988): Entertainment News brought another example of the variety NOGS has provided through the years.

"**Petroleum Day at the Racetrack II** is fast approaching. A seafood buffet will be served at Post Time which is 3:00 p.m."

25 Years Ago (February 1983): A Log Policy Change was announced. "To clarify and condense the NOGS Log Departments, we have decided to eliminate the NOGS executive board meeting notes." Detailed meeting minutes had been a regular feature in the Log until this time.

30 Years Ago (February 1978): In Rudolf Siegert's President's Letter, "total membership, as of January 13, 1978, is 1400." An editor's note stated that "the January meeting, addressed by Charles Stuart, attracted an audience of 258."

- *Tim Piwowar*



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For more information or to volunteer, contact:

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We are two months away from Super Science Saturday and need volunteers to man the various stations. We will have hands on displays of fossils, an oil finder game, and other interesting activities.

Please pass this along to other earth scientists in your organization who may not be NOGS members. We are looking for people to do 2 hour shifts 11 a.m. – 1 p.m. and 1 p.m. – 3 p.m. The stations are attention grabbing and easy to learn.

**New NOGS
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December 2007
and January 2008**

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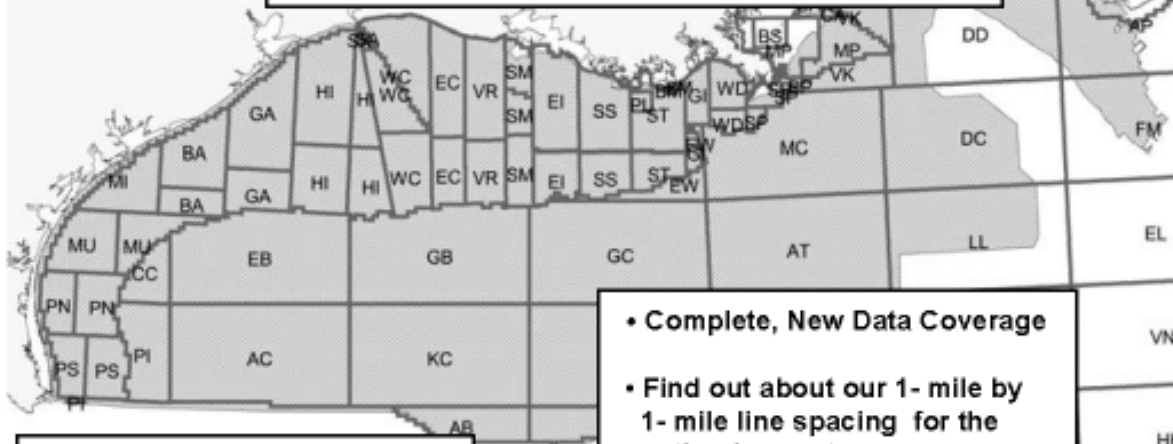
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New Orleans Geological Society

Technical Field Seminar

Modern Transgressive Depositional Environments of the Abandoned Mississippi River Lafourche Delta Complex

April 5-6, 2008

Leaders: Dr. Michael Miner and Dr. Mark Kulp, University of New Orleans

Limit: 18 persons (minimum 13)

Cost per attendee: \$295 (includes field guide, transportation, lodging, meals, and drinks)

Departure: From UNO Saturday April 5 at 7:00 am sharp

Return: To UNO Sunday April 6 at 3:00 pm

Description: Rapid relative sea level rise (~1 cm/yr) in the abandoned Bayou Lafourche delta complex of the Mississippi River Delta Plain (MRDP) drives transgressive processes on human timescales. Thus, the geomorphic evolution is captured on historical nautical charts, enabling a detailed stratigraphic framework to be directly linked to processes and the resulting geomorphology. A large database of historical and recent bathymetric surveys, shallow sediment cores, and high resolution shallow seismic reflection data collected over the past three decades have been applied to develop transgressive stratigraphic models for the region. Sediment cores and shallow seismic profiles will be presented on location in order to provide participants with a firsthand experience of transgressive depositional environments, facies associations, stratigraphic architecture, and bounding surfaces. We will travel from New Orleans to Port Fourchon, Louisiana in vans, then by boats to the Timbalier Islands transgressive barrier system and Terrebonne relict barrier chain. At the end of day 1 we will return to the Louisiana Universities Marine Consortium field camp in Port Fourchon for a seafood boil and a good night's sleep. Day 2 will consist of a trip by van to the Cheniere Caminada beach ridges, Grand Isle, and Barataria Pass tidal inlet. Stops along the way will focus on the modern coastal zone geomorphology, shallow and deep stratigraphy, and shallow and deep processes of the Louisiana Coastal Zone.

What to Wear: The weather for this time of year is quite unpredictable so participants should be prepared for heat and sun as well as the possibility of a cold boat ride. Participants should wear hats, sunglasses, and closed-toe, rubber sole shoes. Rain gear is a necessity.

What to bring: Plenty of drinks will be provided. A field notebook, camera (with protective case), photo scale, and hand lens will be useful.

Contact: NOGS office at (504)561-8980 or info@nogs.org

2007 API Meritorious Service Awards Banquet

NOGS Member Honorees: Duncan Goldthwaite and Mike Fein

Please join us in honoring the 2007 API Meritorious Service Award winners on Wednesday, February 20. This year's event will be held at the Le Pavillon Hotel on Poydras Street and starts at approximately 11:30 a.m. This year's recipients are Duncan Goldthwaite and Mike Fein, two local geologists who have been extremely active and involved in our local community for decades. Our guest speaker this year will be George Wentz, a local attorney who will update us on the Horizon Initiative.



Mr. Duncan Goldthwaite is a native of New York. Following his service in the U.S. Navy he received his BA in Geology from Oberlin College and his MA in Geology from Harvard. He began his professional career with Chevron in the Williston Basin and continued there for 33 years expanding his expertise into numerous other basins including the Gulf Coast. Duncan retired in 1985 and continued his career in various consulting opportunities. He recently taught Subsurface Mapping at the University of New Orleans. He is an Honorary Life Member of NOGS and his services to societies and associations are too numerous to mention.



Originally from New Jersey, **Michael Fein** received a BS in Geology in 1973 from the University of Cincinnati and a MS in Geology in 1975 from the University of Florida. He joined the Conservation Division of the USGS in Resource Evaluation in Metairie in 1975, CNG Producing Company in 1980, Century Offshore in 1995, and W&T Offshore, Inc., in 1996 where he is today. Mike is a member of NOGS, where he has held numerous committee positions, chairmanships, and officer positions. He was President of NOGS 2006-2007, and is currently Memorial Foundation Chairman, Office Operations Chairman, and for the last 25 years has been Awards Chairman. Mike is also a 30+ year member of AAPG, where he has served several terms in the House of Delegates as well as convention officer or committee chairman; a 30+ year member of GSA, where he has also worked conventions; and a member of SIPES, where he is currently technical program chairman for the May national convention.

The **Horizon Initiative** is a grass roots organization of business leaders, civic leaders and leaders of our universities, who are dedicated to a long term vision for the economic development of New Orleans. Co-founded by George Wentz, an attorney with Baldwin Haspel Burke & Mayer, and New Orleans businessman and philanthropist, Arthur Pulitzer, HI was modeled after the Miami Beacon Council, a public/private partnership organization which is that city's economic development entity. Formed in the early 80's when Miami was going through many of the problems that New Orleans now faces, they are largely credited for leading Miami out of decline and into the prosperous international city we know today. Soon after Katrina, George Wentz had the inspired idea to reach out to the Beacon Council so we might learn from the great success they had in their turnaround.

New Orleans can now join other successful, prosperous cities throughout the South that have applied best practices for economic development, and have reaped the benefits. We have so much to be hopeful for now. As we create this entity and continue working together to strengthen this economy, our tax base will increase. The concomitant benefits of an increased tax base include an exemplary public education system available to all; a

reliable infrastructure throughout our city; high paying jobs that spring from a vibrant, growing economy; and the best criminal justice system available, effectively eradicating violent crime.

The Horizon Initiative, in association with the ACG (Association for Corporate Growth) and New Orleans CityBusiness, is hosting a series of industry-specific business retention “YES! To Business” Forums. The purpose is to open a dialogue within select industries of the greatest importance to the New Orleans economy to discern the true challenges and opportunities faced in doing business in this city. Each industry sector can then determine its own 10-year vision for prosperity, with the City to facilitate where needed.

The first of these luncheon forums focused on the Oil & Gas industry and was held at the InterContinental Hotel on December 13th. Panelist speakers at the YES! To Business Oil & Gas Forum included, Frank A. Glaviano Sr., Vice President Production Americas, Shell Energy Resources Company; Chris John, President, Louisiana Mid-Continental Oil and Gas Association; Terry Hall, CEO and Chairman of the Board of Superior Energy Services; and Clint Coldren, President and CEO of Bayou Bend Oil and Gas and the event Chair. This forum was also in association with industry organizations API, NOGS, PLANO and SPE. The sold-out luncheon ended in a standing ovation, as the key stakeholders present were empowered to work together to keep the industry strong and in New Orleans.



George R. Wentz, Jr. was born in 1958 and raised in Severna Park, Maryland. He received his Bachelor of Sciences Degree, magna cum laude, from the University of Delaware, where he was also a member of Phi Beta Kappa. He received his Juris Doctorate Degree from Georgetown University Law Center, cum laude, in 1983. Mr. Wentz also served as the Administrative Editor of the Georgetown International Law Journal. In 1987, Mr. Wentz was appointed by President Reagan to the Federal Trade Commission’s Office of Policy Development where he conducted an extensive economic analysis of antitrust and trade laws and regulations, resulting in recommendations to the Commission designed to provide a regulatory enforcement strategy based upon sound economic principles.

Mr. Wentz currently serves as Of Counsel to Baldwin Haspal Burke & Mayer, New Orleans, Louisiana, where he specializes in complex commercial litigation, international litigation, subrogation, health law, and admiralty and maritime law. He is currently an active member of the Louisiana State, Federal, and American Bar Associations, as well as the Defense Research Institute, the Health Lawyers Association, and the Maritime Law Association.

Mr. Wentz is admitted to practice in the United States District Courts for the Eastern and Middle and Districts of Louisiana, the United States Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit, the United States Supreme Court, and all Louisiana State Courts. He has also practiced law in the United States District Court for the Southern District of Florida, and appeared pro hac vice in the state courts of Texas.

Mr. Wentz is co-Founder and Chairman of the Board of the Horizon Initiative, a non-profit organization dedicated to formulating and implementing a long-term economic development strategy for the City of New Orleans based on best practices nationwide.



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South Louisiana and Offshore Exploration and Production Activity

- On December 3, the Minerals Management Service (MMS) accepted high bids of \$287,081,023, awarding 274 leases to successful high bidders from the Western Gulf of Mexico Oil and Gas Lease Sale 204 held in New Orleans on August 22.

The leases were awarded following the completion of an extensive, two-phase bid evaluation process to ensure that the Federal government receives a fair monetary return for the public mineral resources it makes available.

A total of 282 tracts in the Western Gulf of Mexico received bids, with 47 companies submitting 358 bids with a total sum of high bids of \$289,953,066. Using the two-phase bid evaluation process, MMS rejected high bids totaling \$2,872,043 on 8 tracts as insufficient, based on their assessment of fair market value.

The top five companies with the highest number of accepted high bids for Sale 204:

Company	# High Bids Accepted	Sum High Bids Accepted (\$)
BP Exploration & Production Inc.	88	29,778,236
Statoil Gulf of Mexico LLC	35	138,581,408
Petrobras America Inc.	33	28,846,845
Devon Energy Production Company, L.P.	26	20,035,500
ConocoPhillips Company	24	12,341,000

The top five companies with the highest total bonus amount accepted for Sale 204:

Company	# High Bids Accepted	Sum High Bids Accepted (\$)
Statoil Gulf of Mexico LLC	35	138,581,408
BP Exploration & Production Inc.	88	29,778,236
Petrobras America Inc.	33	28,846,845
Devon Energy Production Company, L.P.	26	20,035,500
ConocoPhillips Company	24	12,341,000

- On December 4, **Anadarko Petroleum Corporation** announced an oil discovery at its West Tonga prospect, located on Green Canyon Block 726. The discovery well, located in ~4,700' of water, was drilled to 25,680' TD, and encountered over 350' of net oil pay in three high-quality subsalt Miocene sands. Partners are Anadarko (37.5% WI and operator), StatoilHydro (25% WI), Chevron (20.5% WI), and Shell (17% WI).

"The West Tonga discovery continues the success of our deepwater Gulf of Mexico exploration program and further illustrates the value of our extensive hub-and-spoke infrastructure," said Bob Daniels, Anadarko Sr. Vice President, Worldwide Exploration. "West Tonga is indicative of our exploration program in the deepwater Gulf, which focuses on prospects in the Miocene and Lower Tertiary plays that have estimated recoverable resources of more than 100 million barrels of oil equivalent. Coupled with the Caesar discovery (Anadarko 20%, Shell 62.5% and StatoilHydro 17.5%), West Tonga gives Anadarko and our partners two significant fields that potentially could be tied back to the Constitution spar.



"Through discoveries like West Tonga, we continue to accelerate value for our stakeholders from the deepwater Gulf of Mexico. Anadarko has an industry-leading deepwater rig position, proven exploration expertise, an extensive leasehold position, and more than 150 identified exploration opportunities in the deepwater Gulf," added Daniels.

- **BP** announced on December 18 that it completed commissioning of the Atlantis semi-submersible platform in the deepwater Gulf of Mexico and commenced the export of oil and gas from the deepest moored floating oil and gas production facility in the world, in 7,070' of water. The field, discovered in 1998, consists of five blocks; Green Canyon 699, 700, 742, 743 and 744, with water depths ranging from 4,400' to 7,100'.

Atlantis employs an integrated concept of a Production Quarters (PQ) semi-submersible platform supported by a separate dedicated semi-submersible Mobile Offshore Drilling Unit (MODU).

Coming on line two years later than forecast at higher than anticipated costs, production at the facility is anticipated to ramp up to plateau production, 200 MBOPD and 180 MMCFGDP, over the next 12 months. Oil from Atlantis is transported to markets onshore via the Caesar pipeline to the Ship Shoal 332B platform, where multiple pipeline connections facilitate the oil reaching major U.S. markets and pipeline interconnections. Natural gas from Atlantis is exported via the Cleopatra pipeline to the Ship Shoal 332A platform, where it connects with Manta Ray Gathering System, and from there to the Nautilus Gas Transportation System into Louisiana. Caesar and Cleopatra are parts of the Mardi Gras Transportation System, the highest capacity deepwater pipeline system ever built.

BP (56% WI) operates Atlantis with BHP Billiton having a 44% WI. BHP Billiton said its share of the cost to achieve plateau production at Atlantis was \$1.63 billion, suggesting a total cost of \$3.7 billion, with BP cost being in excess of \$2 billion.

In 2002, BP targeted Atlantis to begin in 2005, with their share of development costs exceeding \$1 billion.

New projects such as Atlantis are vital to BP in its effort to turn around nine-quarters of declining oil and gas production.

- **W&T Offshore, Inc.** announced on December 21, 2007 that it entered into an agreement with Apache Corporation to acquire Apache's interest in Ship Shoal 349 field, consisting of blocks SS 349 and 359 for \$116 million in cash, subject to customary purchase price adjustments. The transaction is expected to close on or before April 30, 2008, subject to customary closing conditions. The effective date of the sale is January 1, 2008. The acquisition will be financed from available cash on hand.

Tracy W. Krohn, Chairman and Chief Executive Officer, stated, "We are excited about acquiring Apache's interest in the Ship Shoal 349 field. The Ship Shoal 349 field, better known as Mahogany, was the first economic subsalt field drilled in the Gulf of Mexico. When consummated, W&T will own 100% working interest in the field."

- The U.S. GoM jackup market, an indicator of shelf activity and a proxy for shelf prospectivity, continues to lose rigs due to slack demand with a consequent loss of rigs to other markets, which are benefiting from access to the formerly idle GoM equipment.

With other regions picking up the slack from the GoM, worldwide rig fleet utilization has remained essentially constant for all of 2007, even while new rigs enter the global fleet. Taking into account jackups, semisubmersibles and drillships, worldwide offshore rig fleet utilization started the year at 93% with 556 of the 602 available rigs under contract. This month, 566 of the world's 615 jackups, semis and drillships are contracted, for a utilization rate of 92%.

--- continued on page 23 ---

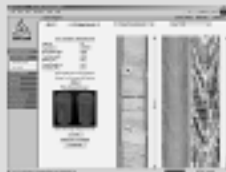
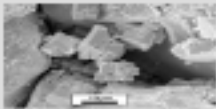
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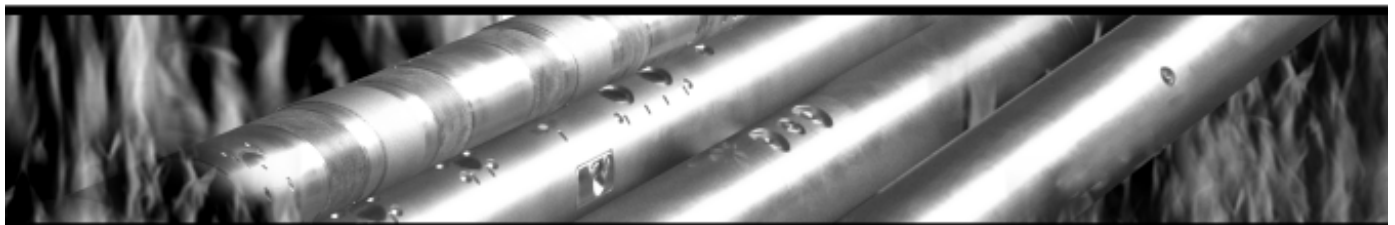
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While most rig markets seem to be improving, or at least staying nearly constant, the GoM rig fleet continues to decline. There are currently fewer rigs under contract than the region has seen in over a decade. From January to early December 2007, the total fleet has declined from 137 to 127, with the number of rigs under contract plummeting from 113 to 91. The bulk of the mobilizations out of the area have been jackups. Rig utilization in the region currently stands at 71%, the second lowest rate all year, barely ahead of the 70% rate seen in October.

The jackup market in the GoM is currently out of balance at the moment. The future for rig utilization may be better. As of early December, the jackup surplus consisted of ~30 rigs; however, that figure is expected to be reduced by nearly half over the next six months, partially by units leaving the GoM, and also by an increase in demand, according to data compiled by ODS-Petrodata. The U.S. Gulf semisubmersible and drillship fleets will remain near full utilization, with the floating rig fleet size varying as rigs move in and out of the area.

- On December 21, the MMS proposed changes to its regulations for deepwater royalty relief on the Outer Continental Shelf (OCS) to conform to the 2004 decision of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit in *Santa Fe Snyder Corp., et al. v. Norton*. That court decision found that certain provisions of the MMS regulations interpreting section 304 of the Deep Water Royalty Relief Act (DWRRA) of 1995 are contrary to the requirements of the statute.

The court found that MMS could not exclude a lease issued under section 304 from receiving royalty relief if it was part of a field that was already producing before the DWRRA became law; the court also found the Royalty Suspension Volumes (RSVs) prescribed in section 304 apply to each lease, not jointly to all leases in a particular field. MMS issued an Information to Lessees (ITL) on August 8, 2005, alerting affected lessees that MMS would respect the court decision and would revise its regulations accordingly.

This proposed rule would revise 30 CFR part 260, and 30 CFR part 203, to treat eligible leases issued under section 304 of the DWRRA in a manner consistent with the *Santa Fe Snyder* ruling.

The DWRRA was designed to encourage development of new supplies of energy. It included incentives to promote investment in oil and gas production in high-cost, high-risk deep waters of the Gulf of Mexico. Under the DWRRA, the Secretary of the Interior was required to suspend royalties for certain volumes of production on all leases in more than 656 feet (200 meters) of water in the Central and Western Gulf of Mexico issued in the first 5 years following enactment of the Act. These royalty suspension volumes (i.e., specified volumes of royalty-free production) ranged from 17.5 to 87.5 MMBOE, depending on water depth.

Detailed and specific revisions are contained in the proposed rule. MMS will accept comments on the proposed rule for 60 days.

- Paul Post

February 11 Luncheon Presentation Abstract, continued from page 7

shale or salt) above a detachment surface. This activity led to mobilization and fold development of a sediment ridge during one 3rd-order lowstand of sea level. Slope-fan systems with amalgamated channels and levees formed along the slope and terminated as lobe-shaped fan deposits.

Resultant downslope sediment ridges ponded the later deposited slope-fan sediments and kept them from spilling farther downslope onto the deeper basin floor. Consequently, after the sediment ridge formed, all gravity-flow sedimentation was contained within these subbasins. Overall, slope fans have limited lateral continuity because of avulsion of lobes in the slope-fan system. When correlation of more proximal subbasin slope-fan bodies to more distal slope-fan bodies is called for, time stratigraphic rather than lithostratigraphic (e.g., correlating first sands) correlations need to be performed. Productive slope fans are typically associated with a structural trap located more proximal to the growth fault.

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- **Paradigm Shift in Mudstone Science:** It is not often that research focusing on the transport and deposition of clays is highlighted in the journal *Science*, much less, *The New York Times*. However the recent article published in *Science* "Accretion of Mudstone Beds from Migration Floccule Ripples" by Juergen Schieber, John Southard, and Kevin Thaisen showed that clays can be deposited under more high-energy conditions than previously thought. Geologists widely assume that clays are deposited under quiet conditions and that parallel laminated mudstones represent continuous deposition. However, the authors show that during flume experiments floccules were deposited at flow velocities high enough to transport fine sand, forming widely spaced, very low-angle current ripples. As overburden thickness increases the ripples flatten, appearing to represent continued deposition under quiet conditions. Because mudstones make up the majority of the geologic record, there are far reaching implications for these findings, such as, a need to reevaluate previously interpreted mudstone depositional environments and assumed completeness of the muddy geologic record.

From Macquaker, J.H.S. and Bohacs, K.M., 2007, On the Accumulation of Mud, *Science*, v. 318 p. 1734-5.

Schieber, J., Southard, J. and Thaisen, K., 2007, Accretion of Mudstone Bess from Migrating Floccule Ripples, *Science*, v. 318, p. 1760-3.

For a review go to: <http://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2007/12/071213152603.htm>

- **Lake Peigneur, Louisiana,** has been making headlines again. This was the site of the unusual November 1980 disaster where while drilling along the flanks of a salt diapir, the bit accidentally penetrated the upper section of the underlying Jefferson Island salt mine. As the lake drained into the underground cavity, continued solution of the salt produced a large whirlpool powerful enough to swallow the drilling platform, eleven barges, and 70 acres of lakeside real estate. Remarkably there were no injuries or deaths. Since 1994 the salt dome underlying Lake Peigneur has been used as a storage and hub facility for pressurized natural gas. During the past year, residents in the area have been worried by the appearance of bubbles and a frothy film on the lake surface. The US Geological Survey tested the gas content of the bubbles and found that they contained approximately 70% methane, and an independent test conducted by AGL Resources, who manages the compressed gas storage and hub facility below the lake, showed similar results. No definitive source for the methane has been established, but methane content in the bubbles could be explained by natural seepage.

To read more about the interesting disaster see http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lake_Peigneur

View a short video clip at www.youtube.com/watch?v=dHol4ICeDoo

Also check out the grass roots group Save Lake Peigneur <http://savelakepeigneur.org/> and the AGL Resources website <http://www.lakepeigneurfacts.com/>

- **Google Earth 3D Visualization of Oil Consumption by Country:** A member of the Google Earth Community has posted some interesting charts that show graphs of oil consumption and oil consumption per capita on a 3D earth. The data are sourced from the CIA World Factbook. Singapore takes the lead in per capita use and USA comes in 9th.

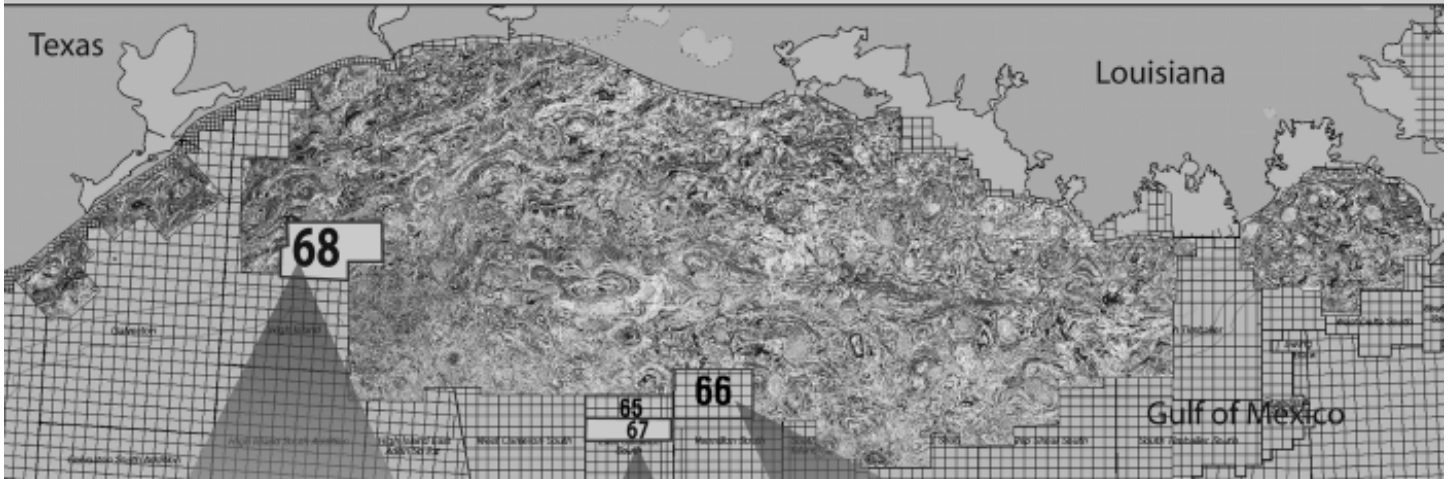
To get started with Google Earth for free go to: <http://earth.google.com/>

The oil consumption charts are located at: http://www.earthblog.com/blog/archives/2007/02/world_oil_consumptio.html

- **The Gravity Recovery and Interior Laboratory (GRAIL)** is a section of NASA's Discovery Program that was announced at December's American Geophysical Union annual meeting. The GRAIL mission is scheduled to launch in 2011 and will incorporate twin spacecraft flying in tandem orbits around the Earth's moon in order to measure its gravity field in detail. The gravity field data will also be applied to "X-ray" the moon in order to reveal the moon's subsurface structural features from which its thermal history will be interpreted.

More information at www.jpl.nasa.gov and <http://discovery.nasa.gov/>

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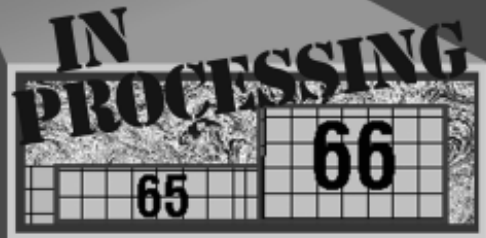
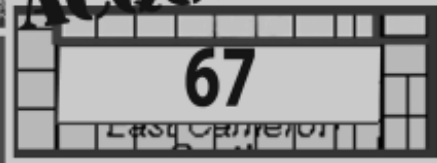


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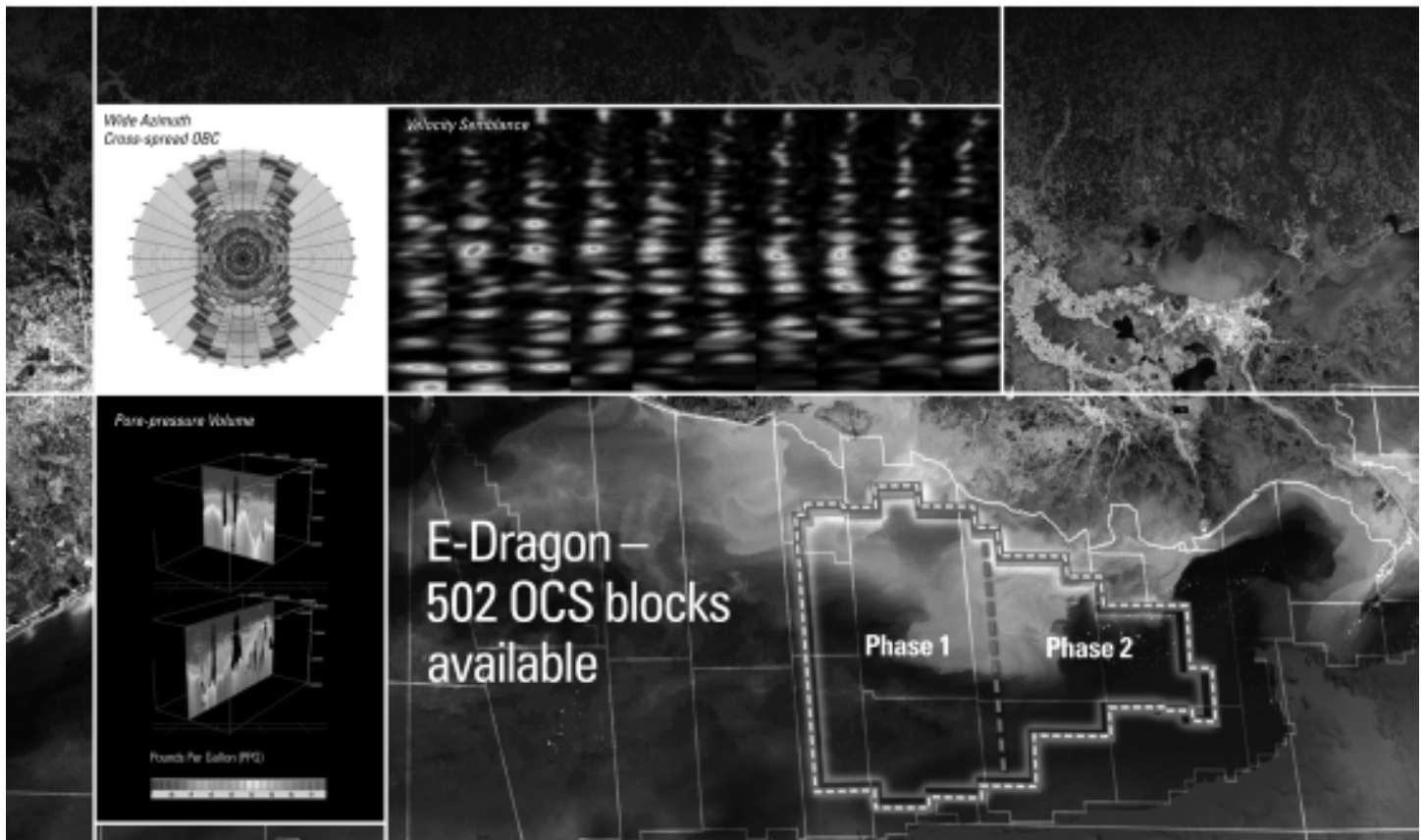
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