

2 PART II: THE GULF OF MEXICO WORKSHOP ON INTERNATIONAL RESEARCH INVENTORY and WORKING GROUP CONTRIBUTIONS

2.1 Introduction

The Gulf of Mexico Workshop on International Research (GOMWIR) focused on identifying data gaps and research needs in the southern Gulf of Mexico (SGOM) using the GOMWIR Inventory as a point of departure. The workshop and associated working groups also provided a venue to foster collegiality and collaboration among researchers in the countries that share the GOM: the United States, Mexico, and Cuba. This is especially important from the standpoint of managing ocean energy exploration and exploitation throughout the GOM LME since activities in one part of the Gulf can and do affect ecosystems and processes in other parts of the Gulf. As the focus of Mexican energy exploration, development, and exploitation shifts from the state-run oil company (PEMEX) to multinational corporations, collaboration and cooperation throughout the Gulf will become increasingly important.

The workshop, working groups, and inventory were organized around three thematic areas defined by BOEM:

- Baseline Studies generate data that describe existing conditions and define a starting point to monitor trends of potentially impacted resources and civil society.
- Fates and Effects Studies evaluate the physical-chemical and biological processes that affect or are affected by the impacts of oil and gas drilling and production discharges, spilled oil, and oil dispersants on biological communities and the societal impacts on potentially affected civil society.
- Environmental Monitoring Studies generate data to assess effects of industry activities and to determine effectiveness of mitigation measures contained within stipulations and conditions of permit approval for activities for offshore energy leases.

Scientists from the around the Gulf with knowledge and expertise in various disciplines within these thematic areas were brought together for the workshop, with 25–50 assigned to each thematic area (Appendix 1). Each participant had one or more of the following attributes:

- International research experience in Mexico and the GOM
- Experience or expertise in nearshore systems of the GOM
- Experience or expertise in deepwater systems of the GOM
- Experience or expertise in socioeconomic aspects of the GOM
- Particular knowledge of experience in one or more of the thematic areas

The plenary sessions were designed to provide all participants with a common, working knowledge of the inventory and research throughout the GOM (detailed in papers contributed by plenary speakers and participants in Part I). Once the plenary sessions concluded, participants joined their assigned working group. The objectives of the working groups were to:

- Contribute to the inventory
- Identify data gaps
- Identify research needs
- Prioritize research questions