

**Opening Statement  
of  
Dr. Donald F. Boesch, Commissioner  
National Commission on the BP Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill and Offshore Drilling  
New Orleans, LA  
July 12, 2010**

I am deeply honored to be appointed by the President to the Commission.

I am an ocean scientist, who has conducted scientific research and assessments of the impacts of oil spills and other long-term effects of offshore oil and gas development—off the Atlantic coast, California and Alaska, as well as here in the Gulf.

I have had a long career as an administrator of university programs in environmental science, here in Louisiana as the first Executive Director of the Louisiana Universities Marine Consortium and, for the last 20 years, as the President of the University of Maryland Center for Environmental Science.

Over the years I have become a scientific generalist and synthesizer. I often work to bring together diverse scientific information and interpret it in ways that effectively inform public policies. Although not an engineer, I served for six years on the National Research Council's Marine Board, which conducted numerous studies of maritime and offshore industry operations and safety. Presently, I chair the Ocean Studies Board of the National Research Council.

In the Gulf region, I have played a role in the interpretation and application of science related to two of the region's most significant environmental problems: stemming the loss and restoring Louisiana coastal wetlands and bringing life back to the Gulf of Mexico Dead Zone.

My remarks may be a bit more personal than those of my fellow Commissioners because I am a fifth-generation Louisianan, with many members of my extended family living in the region. I developed an abiding interest in this coast and its marine life over countless fishing trips with my father in the marshes around Delacroix Island. I have fond memories of family vacations at Waveland and Pass Christian, Mississippi, and I honeymooned with my wife at Destin, Florida. My brother has a home on Pensacola Beach and my sister-in-law on Orange Beach. To me, the tragedy that we now witness is a personal one.

My interest in science was inculcated by the Brothers at Holy Cross High School, here in New Orleans, and my professors at Tulane University.

I was most fortunate to be called back to Louisiana in 1980 to kick off the Louisiana Universities Marine Consortium. For a decade, my family and I lived in Houma,

Louisiana, a community whose economy is heavily dependent on the offshore oil and gas industry. We saw firsthand the effects of booms and busts of this industry not only on the economy, but also on the social fabric of our community. I see it also as my responsibility to bring the insights and understandings that I gained as a resident of this region to the deliberations of this Commission.

Along with Commissioner Ulmer, I returned to Houma on Saturday. We had a very informative tour of the Incident Command Center and had great discussions with elected officials and key leaders from the energy and fishing industries. We went down to Port Fourchon, perhaps the most important onshore base for the offshore industry, and then to Grand Isle where we met with people working on the front line of oil spill protection and visited the brown pelican rookery at Queen Bess Island. On Sunday, we travelled downriver to Plaquemines Parish, the land along the Mississippi the sticks out into the Gulf closest to the blowout site. There we had very informative discussions with the Parish President and many others. We saw firsthand the work being done to rehabilitate oiled wildlife and clean up the oil. The weekend trip was incredibly moving and informative.

As the two Commissioners who have lived and worked in states that produce much of our Nation's energy and include some of the Nation's environmental gems, I think that Fran Ulmer and I have the obligation to bring our seasoned perspectives into the deliberations of the Commission.

Let me close by saying how honored and confident I am to be working on the Commission under Chairmen Graham and Reilly. I have long admired their national leadership and statesmanship as a regular citizen and now have the privileged opportunity to be guided by their skills and wisdom very close up.