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U.S. House of Representatives
Committee on Natural Resources
Washington, DC 20515

Opening Statement of
Chairman Doc Hastings
Committee on Natural Resources
On Monday, April 18, 2011, at 9:00 a.m
Houma-Terrebonne Civic Center, Houma, Louisiana
Natural Resources Committee Field Hearing on:
"Gulf of Mexico: A Focus on Community Recovery and New Response Technology."

Thank you everyone for being here today. I'm Congressman Doc Hastings and I have the privilege to serve as Chairman of the House Natural Resources Committee. This Committee has broad jurisdiction over onshore and offshore energy production on public lands and policies impacting our oceans, fisheries and wildlife.

As we approach the one-year anniversary of the tragic Deepwater Horizon accident, we must take a moment to remember the 11 men who lost their lives in the explosion and those whose lives have been greatly affected by the subsequent oil spill.

My colleagues from the Gulf region have made sure that everyone in our Nation's Capitol knows about the real economic pain and hardship being felt here in the Gulf. They have been tireless advocates on your behalf and helped make this hearing today a reality. We've held numerous hearings on this topic back in D.C. but I'm pleased to be here in Houma to see and hear firsthand from those who have been directly impacted.

For the past year, offshore energy operations in the Gulf have been sidelined – leaving thousands of out of work. Rigs have left the Gulf for foreign countries but, with gasoline prices rising toward \$4 per gallon, the United States cannot afford to shutter American energy production.

We all know energy production should be done in a safe, responsible manner. There have been significant changes in the past year to improve offshore drilling and response. As more is learned, Congress, the Administration and industry will continue to respond appropriately.

I realize the spill has impacted more than just the offshore oil and natural gas industry. Fishermen, tourism, and of course wildlife have also suffered significant loss.

At today's hearing I hope to learn more about the status of community recovery efforts, on-going obstacles to getting people in all industries back to work, the environmental impacts and new technology to ensure that offshore drilling can move forward safely and responsibly.