

SEA President, Ann Hayward Walker, presents on Local Engagement and Oil Spill Communications at the 22nd Annual Clean Gulf Conference

Ann Hayward Walker presented a talk co-authored by Melinda McPeck of SEA Consulting and Tom Coolbaugh of Exxon Mobil and the Joint Industry Oil Spill Preparedness and Response Task Force (JITF) at the Annual Clean Gulf Conference in New Orleans, LA.

The presentation provides an overview of an evolving approach to address some of the learnings from the Deepwater Horizon incident with regard to local stakeholder perceptions about oil spill response in general, and the opportunities and limitations of offshore response options, e.g., dispersants. The USCG Incident-Specific Preparedness Review – BP Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill, January 2011 noted that “There is a need to engage national associations of State and local governments in order to educate and inform them of the NCP and find ways to integrate them into oil spill preparedness efforts and the response organization.” This approach for local stakeholder education, implemented as workshop and preparedness activity of the USCG FOSC-led Area Committee, is based on 2-way communications among oil spill response technical specialists and local stakeholders representing elected officials, fishermen, NGOs, health officials, county emergency managers among others. In addition, this approach incorporates surveys to gather data about stakeholder risk perceptions and oil spill response knowledge. The first workshop held on Wallops Island, Virginia was attended by over 100 participants. Survey and feedback results indicate that it represents a beneficial model for developing relationships with local stakeholders and substantively increasing their knowledge about marine oil spill response.