

# NOGS LOG



June 2012

Volume 52, Number 12



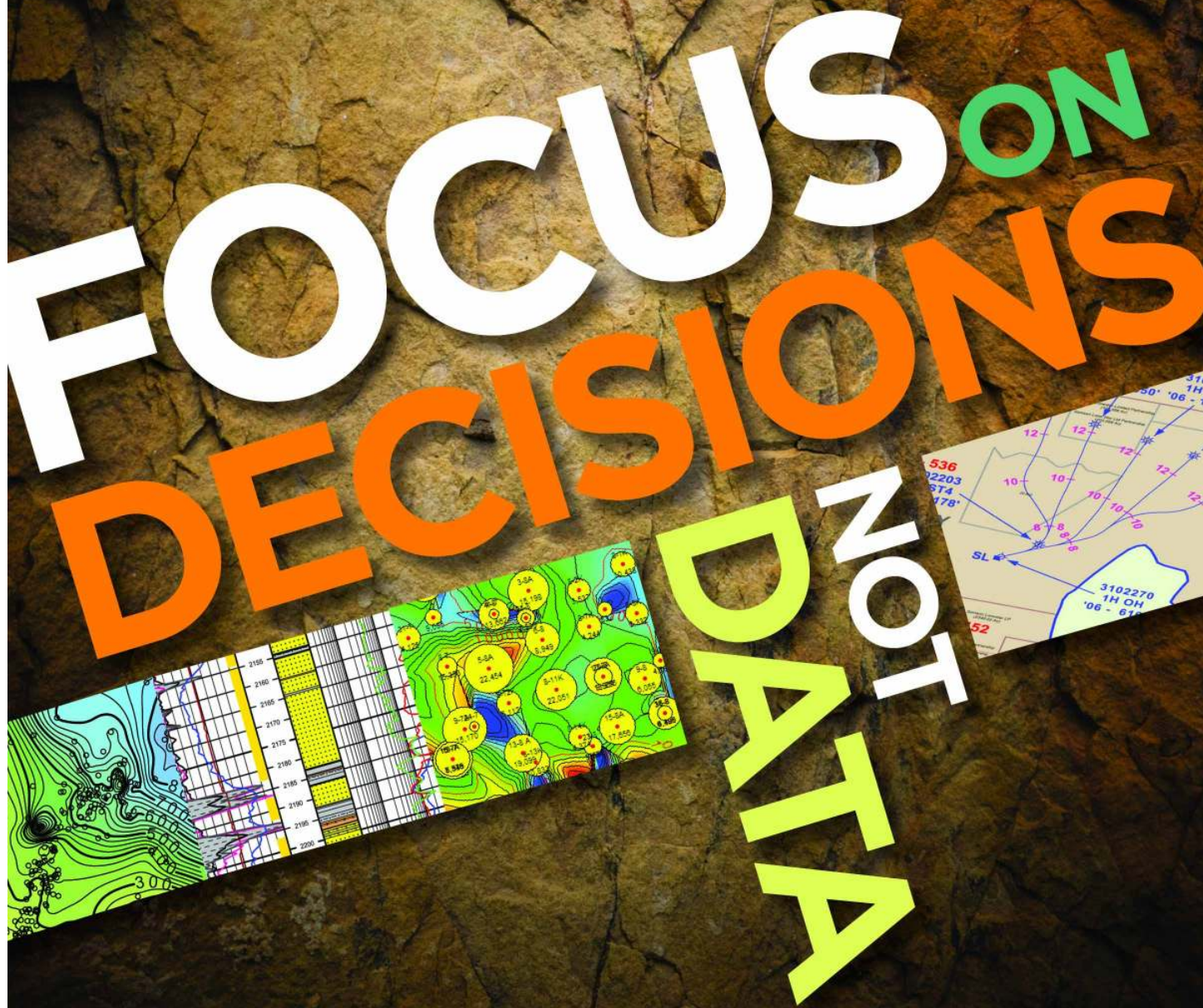
## June 4 - NOGS Luncheon

Presentation: Rejuvenation of Some Old Louisiana Wilcox Fields Using Modern Technology

Guest speaker: Bradley R. Broekstra, Midstates Petroleum Company LLC, Houston, Texas



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# NOGS LOG

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## ON THE COVER

**Cover Photo Author: Bradley R. Broekstra**

Originally drilled by Pan Am in 1949, the Schlicher-Thomas #8 drilled to 2,308', has by Louisiana records produced over 600 MBO. In reality, it has produced closer to 1 MMBO according to Mr. Bob McDaniel, one of Midstates' founders and a pumper for Pan Am-Amoco for 40 years. During the initial life of the well, states regulations would not allow any well less than 3000' to produce more than 100 BOPD. The Schlicher-Thomas #8 had the capacity to produce at much greater rates than that, so "overage" production was allotted to other shallow wells in the area not capable of the 100 BOPD maximum. To make matters more interesting, the #8 has been offset in each direction, North, South, East and West, and the Miocene productive sand was not encountered in any of the offset wells. One of the things I'm going to ask St. Peter if I make it to the Pearly gates is to take a look at God's Miocene "A" Map.

## FROM THE EDITOR

Hello again, NOGS Members. This will be my final *LOG* as acting editor. I hope everyone has enjoyed the improvements that we made to the monthly magazine, including a new cover with photos, adding a monthly calendar and reprinting industry articles to keep the society in tune with today's energy sector. Starting in July, the *LOG* will undergo more changes that everyone will enjoy. I wanted to recognize the *LOG* staff for their work and help: Ed Picou - Webmaster, Carlo Christina - Drill Bits, Jannette Sturm-Mexic - Layout, Al Baker - Drill Bits, Susie Baker - NOGA and Jordan Heltz - Editor Elect. Jordan will be taking over as your new editor effective July 1st.



Thanks, David Tatum - *NOGS LOG* Editor





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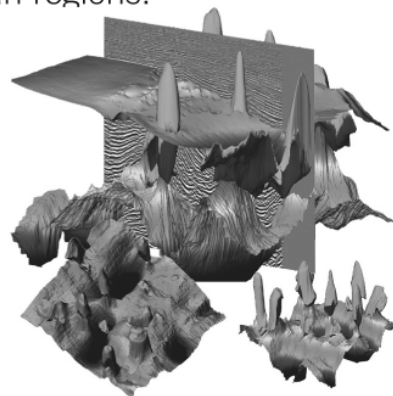
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*from the President*

The last year has been very exciting and busy for me. As you all know, I started the year out as the vice-president keeping myself busy last summer working on the presentation schedule. Sometime in August, the previous president Bob Hafner moved out of town for a new position. This left me acting as president "*pro tempore*" at the meetings. Shortly after Bob resigned, appointing me president for the rest of the year.

The kickoff party, organized by Will Jorgensen, held at the Deutsches Haus, was a great success with a large number of members and guests turning out. The Christmas party this year was a joint party with SPE-Delta, which I felt was a great success. It was nice to have live music and a variety of people with whom to mingle.

In January we held the first of two joint meetings with SGS. We hosted the first talk at the Holiday Inn and SGS hosted the second of the series at LaPavillon.

In the latter half of this year, I was appointed to serve on the Louisiana State Board of Registered Professional Geologist. The Chairman M. B. Kumar and I have had many phone conversations. We are looking forward to working together as the registration for environmental and engineering geologists begins in the future.

I am proud and honored to have served as president of NOGS this year. I look forward to many more years of active membership, as well as serving on the State Board of Registered Professional Geologists.

*Daisy*

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# Upcoming Events and Activities

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## June 4 - NOGS Luncheon

\*\*\* At the Holiday Inn Downtown Superdome \*\*\*  
\$2.00 validated parking in hotel garage

Presentation: Rejuvenation of Some Old Louisiana Wilcox Fields Using Modern Technology  
Guest speaker: Bradley R. Broekstra, Midstates Petroleum Company LLC, Houston, Texas

(See page 9 for Abstract and Biography)

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front desk for location  
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## July 9 - NOGS Luncheon

Holiday Inn Downtown Superdome

Presentation: The Lower Smackover Brown Dense Lime Trend: A View From 30,000 Feet  
Guest speaker: Steve Walkinshaw, President, Vision Exploration, Madison, Mississippi

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## August 15-16 - 16th Annual Gulf of Mexico Deepwater Technical Symposium

New Orleans Riverside Hilton Hotel, New Orleans.  
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## **June 4 NOGS Luncheon Presentation**

**\*\*\*At the Holiday Inn Downtown Superdome\*\*\***

### **Rejuvenation of Some Old Louisiana Wilcox Fields Using Modern Technology**

presented by

**Bradley R. Broekstra**

**Midstates Petroleum Company LLC in Houston, Texas**

#### **ABSTRACT**

Since 2006, Midstates Petroleum Company LLC has re-entered eight (8) South Central Louisiana Wilcox Fields in Beauregard and Evangeline Parishes and increased production using modern technology. These fields were generally discovered by major oil companies in the fifties, sixties and seventies using single and six-fold seismic data. They tend to be larger than 4,000 acres enclosures and have few wells that penetrate the entire Wilcox section. Upper, Middle and Lower Wilcox sands tend to have considerable clay and shale content and have been classified as "dirty" sands. These "dirty"

sands react very well to fracture stimulation and horizontal laterals.

Most of these large Wilcox structures were abandoned shortly after discovery because the low rate, un-stimulated completions could not compete for capital with much more attractive high rate fields being discovered in South Louisiana at the time. Therefore, the Louisiana Wilcox trend lay dormant for more than 30 years before Midstates began its rejuvenation program using Multi-stage fracking and horizontal laterals.

#### **BIOGRAPHY**

**Bradley R. Broekstra** is currently the Vice President of Exploration for Midstates Petroleum Company LLC in Houston, Texas. He has 34 years of experience primarily in the Tertiary Basins of Louisiana. His career started with Amoco Production Company

(New Orleans) in 1978. He has also worked for Davis Oil Company, Louisiana Land and Exploration Company, and Burlington Resources. He has been with Midstates since 2005. He is a member of AAPG, HGS, and NOGS.

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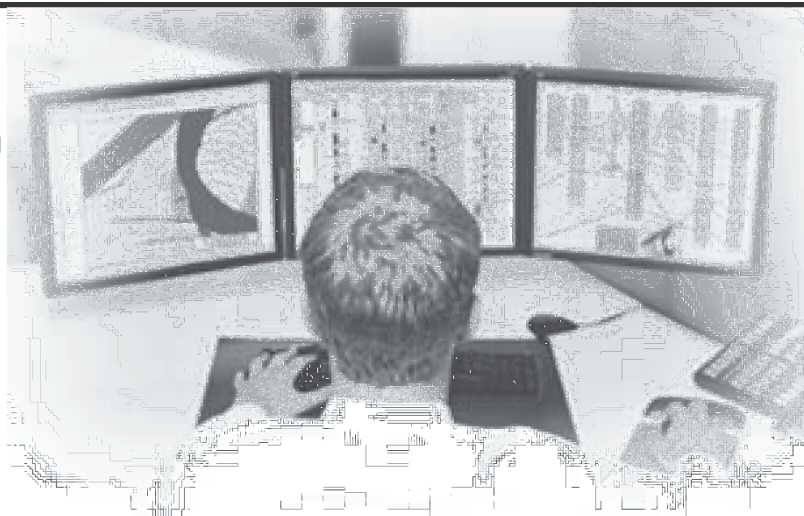
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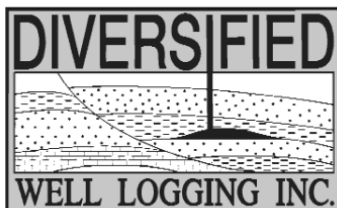
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June						
Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
					1	2
3	4 NOGS Luncheon Holiday Inn @ 11:30 A.M.	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14 Flag Day	15	16
17 Father's Day	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30

July						
Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
1	2	3	4 Independence Day	5	6	7
8	9 NOGS Luncheon Holiday Inn @ 11:30 A.M.	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30	31				



## University of Louisiana - Lafayette Wins First Place Imperial Barrel Award

Under the leadership and excellent teaching skills of Dr. Brian Lock, the University of Louisiana-Lafayette team won First Place in the Imperial Barrel Award. The final competition was held at the recent AAPG Convention in Long Beach where the award was presented. Capturing second place was the team from Khon Kaen University, Thailand, representing AAPG's Asia/Pacific Region, and third place went to the Colorado School of Mines' team. Teams from LSU and UNO also participated in the contest. NOGS congratulates the UL-L team on their outstanding success.



AAPG awards ceremony in Long Beach, CA. Left to right; Daniel Dudley (Kenner), Chris Bijan Hatamian (Kenner), Sarah Beth Maxwell (Mandeville), Joey Grimball (Team Leader, Lake Charles), Dr. Brian Lock (faculty advisor), Mike Lahey (Ann Arbor, Michigan). Not shown, Mary Broussard, (Plains E&P, industry mentor). - Photo courtesy of AAPG.

# NOGS Golf Outing Recap

"The NOGS Golf Outing was held on Monday, 4/16/2012 at the Tchefuncta Country Club. Despite weather uncertainty, 15 teams participated. This event provides income for the Bill Craig Memorial Foundation scholarship fund. Without sponsorship and wonderful volunteers, the golf tournament would have proven to be a difficult endeavor. Special thanks to Annette, Leslie, Larissa, Bill, Duncan, George, Weatherford, and Diversified for their assistance with the betting holes. Janine, Ricky and Jeff represented Diversified by catering both lunch and dinner for the event. NOGS raised more than \$5,000 this year as compared with \$4,700 in 2011. Everyone I spoke with had a great time and we look forward to your participation next year."

Will Jorgensen

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## NOGS FINDS WINNERS AT 2011 SCIENCE FAIR

On February 29th, NOGS members judged Junior and Senior Earth Science exhibits at the Region 9 Greater New Orleans Science and Engineering Fair. Judges for the Awards Committee included George Hasseltine (retired) Art Johnson (Hydrate Energy), Kimberly Maginnis (W&T), Bill Whiting (Consultant) and Fran Wiseman (retired). Thank you to my judges who provided their time, work and clients.

2012 was the best year in decades in terms of quality and quantity of projects. We had a number of spirited discussions about placing projects in each position. We gave out all six awards, three in each division.

Winners came from four Archdiocese schools, and two public schools. For the first time, a team project was our first place winner. The team was comprised of three male students from Holy Cross School, mentored by Dr. Warren Bernard. The project was "Hydroelectric Turbines in the Mississippi River," which physically modeled and accurately compared morphology of the river to the model relative to river velocity. Credit for this work goes to students Brandon Carrone, Kaelon Guillory and Christopher Hall. These students and their teacher attended the May NOGS luncheon.

The second place Senior Division winner was Michel Randall of Archbishop Shaw, taught by Julie Abreo. His project was "Effect of Storm Surge on Levees," which was different from standard levee projects by his maintenance of pressure on the levee itself. Third place went to a student from Thomas Jefferson Senior High, Kes-Lyn Joseph, for ""Does the Level of Turbidity Affect the Level of Dissolved Oxygen?" The teacher was Judy Schmollinger.

The Junior Division project first place award went to Siddesh Ponnappakkam, a student at Haynes Academy for Advanced Studies. His teacher was Sue Stephens, who has previously brought multiple winners to NOGS events. The project was "What are the Seasonal Effects on Water Quality in Local Bodies of Water?", which compared several chemical components of water in the summer versus winter season. Both Ms. Stephens and Siddesh attended the May NOGS luncheon.

The second place winner was by Grant Stephens of Christian Brothers, "Which Conditions Grow Largest Crystals?". His teacher was Brother Lawrence Konersman, who also has previously brought several first place winners to NOGS.

Third place Junior Division winner was Maddie Frught of St. Benilde, for "What Forms more Crystals?" Her teacher was Diane McCann.

I hope you attended the May luncheon and saw some of the finest geological science going on in our local schools. We are really having some effect.

Michael N. Fein  
Chairman, Awards Committee



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# New Orleans Geological Auxiliary News

With a saddened heart, on behalf of the Geological Auxiliary, we extend our sincere sympathies to Tom Klekamp and his family for the loss of his wife Amber. Amber has been a member of our organization for many years and has chaired several functions for NOGS and NOGA. Tom and Amber graciously offered their lovely Beau Chene home (along with their hospitality) for a memorable NOGS kick-off party a couple of years ago. Personally speaking, Jean Jones and I chaired this event with Amber and have to comment on how easy and enjoyable it was to work with her. Her presence will be greatly missed but not forgotten.

Our kudos to Pat Williamson on her reporting skills! Lots of juicy info Pat, how do you do it? Guessing if you are not a NOGA Member, you just wouldn't understand.... Just think Pat, *NOGA* today, *Times Picayune* tomorrow, "our in-house Nell Nolan." Thanks for writing the newsletter.

The Installation Luncheon has come and gone; thanks are in order for Mary Ellis Hasseltine, Peggy Rogers and Shirley Mosely. Ralph's on The Park is always well attended and a great venue for any luncheon or social. Congrats to our new President and Board Members. As Jean wishes Mary Walther all the good wishes that come along with the Madam President's position, she also wanted to bid a fond and farewell "adieu"!

Get well wishes are in order for three of our favorite ladies, Ruth Ingram, Ruth Grimes and Carol Andrews. We are praying for a speedy recovery for you. Our Board meetings are just not the same without you.

Next month's "words of wisdom" will be provided by our President Mary Walther. We are all looking forward to the 2012-2013 calendar of events to see what our incoming Board Members have prepared for us!

Have a happy, safe and healthy summer.

Till we meet again,

Susie Baker and Jean Jones

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# South Louisiana and Offshore Gulf of Mexico

## Exploration and Production Activities

### LAFAYETTE DISTRICT, ONSHORE AREA

By Carlo C. Christina

During the month of April, the Office of Conservation has issued 69 permits for the drilling of new wells in the Lafayette District. Once again, deep Wilcox tests in shallow old fields and deep field extensions are the primary objectives in ---

### NEW LOCATIONS

In Beauregard Parish, El Paso will drill a deep Wilcox test in **Righthand Creek Field**, (A), in Sec. 35, 5S-8W. The #1 McPherson will be drilled to 15,000 feet at a location 2 miles southwest of Upper Wilcox production at 11,500 feet. (244678)

El Paso will drill the #1 Olympia in **South Bear Head Creek Field**, (B), in SEC. 23, 6S-12W, Beauregard Parish. It will be drilled to 15,000 feet. The well is located 1 mile southwest of shallow Cockfield production and 1 mile northeast of Upper Wilcox production at 12,500 feet. (244679)

El Paso continues its aggressive exploration of deep Wilcox sands in Beauregard Parish with the drilling of the #1 PWK located in Sec. 8, 6S-9W in **Cowpen Creek Field**, (C). The well is permitted to 15,000 feet, and is located 2 miles east of shallow Frio sands and 3 miles west of Upper Wilcox production. El Paso has permits for 4 deep Wilcox wells within this 6 mile area. (244699)

In Calcasieu Parish, Samson Exploration will drill the #1 Laughlin in Sec. 10, 9S-12W to a depth of 14,954 feet. The well is permitted in **Edgerly Field**, (D), although located mid-way between Starks Field and Edgerly Field. It is also located 1 mile south of Samson's #1 Labokay which has been drilled to 12,458 feet and is presently waiting on cement after controlling a gas kick. (244755)

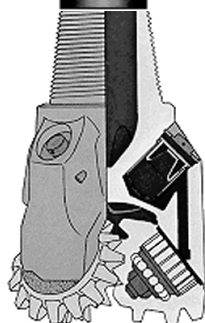
Manti Exploration will drill the #1 Crosby on the southwest flank of **Cut Off Field**, (E), Lafourche Parish, to a depth of 15,936 feet. The well is located in Sec. 3, 18S-21E, 2 miles southeast of Manti's excellent gas well which was completed flowing 14,800 MCFG and 72 BCPD through perforations 14,906 to 15,052 in the UVIG LIR zone. It was completed on 10/29/2009 and continues to produce more than 13,000 MCFG per day.

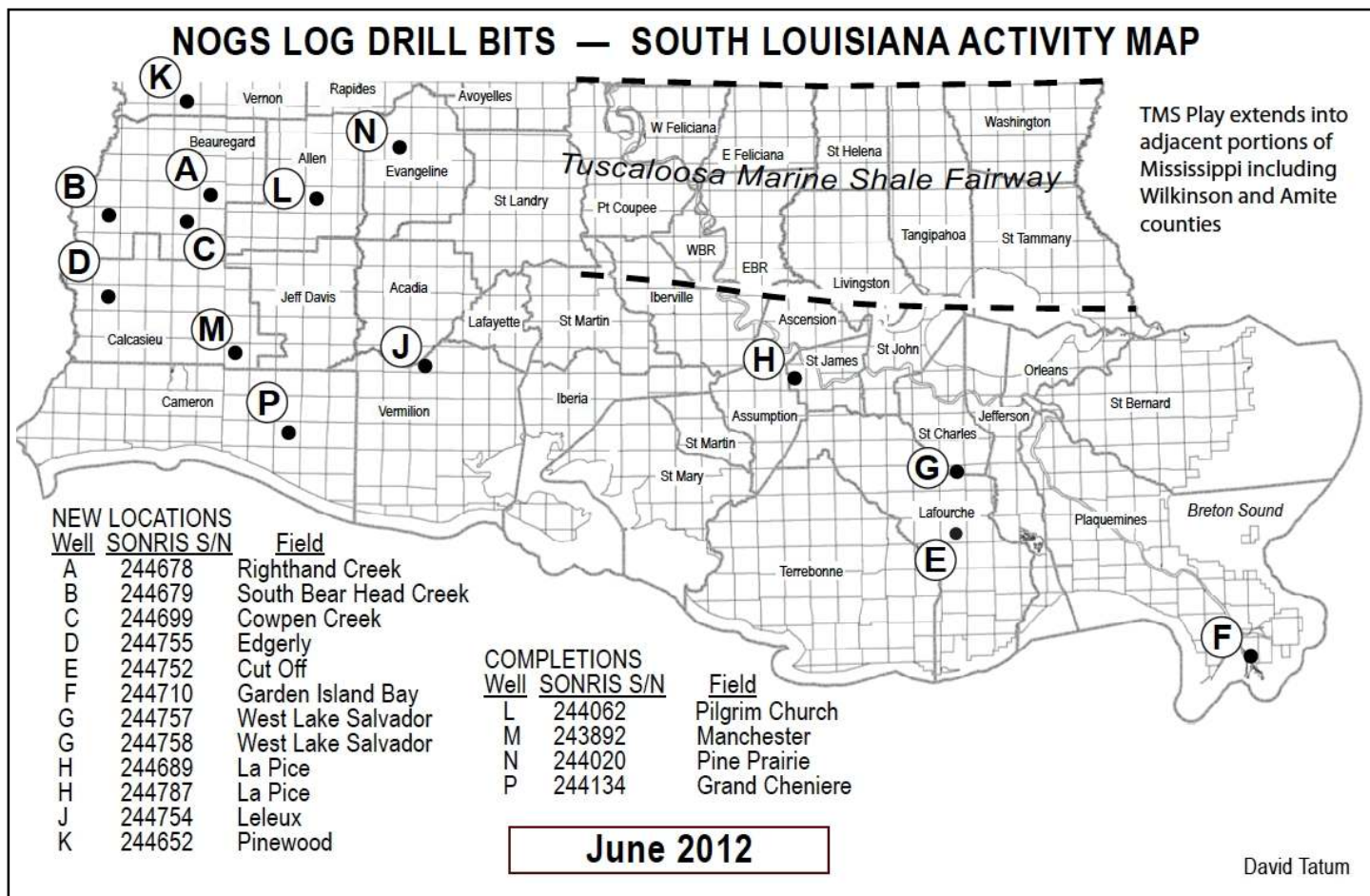
In addition to the main objective UVIG LIR sand at 15,000 feet, production has been established at 13,300 feet in the Tex W sand, located 1 mile to the north of the permitted well. This well, the Intrepid Drilling #1 Pierce, was completed flowing 3300 MCFG and 500 BCPD on 7/14/2011, and continues to produce favorably. (244752)

In Plaquemines Parish, **Garden Island Bay Field**, (F), Forest Oil will drill the #2 SL 19742 to a proposed depth of 13,600 feet in Sec. 1, 23S-32E. This well is an offset to the #1 SL 19742, which was completed flowing 852 BOPD through perforations 12,914 to 12,948 feet. (244710)

Square Mile Energy will drill 2 wells in **West Lake Salvador Field**, (G), in the Lake, 16S-21E in St. Charles Parish. The #1 SL 20627 is permitted to a depth of 12,975 feet and the #1 SL 20645 is projected to a depth of 14,698 feet to test deeper sands in the area. These

DRILL BITS





wells are located 1 mile south of Cib op production at 12,600 feet and 2 miles southwest of UL-10 and Cib op production. (244757 & 244758)

In St. James Parish Layline Petroleum will drill 2 wells on the northeast flank of **La Pice Field**, (H), in Sec. 38, 12S-15E. The #1 Schexnayder will be drilled 10,700 feet and the #2 is permitted to 10,300 feet. (244689 & 244787)

Square Mile Energy will drill in **Leleux Field**, (J), Vermilion Parish. The #1 Zaunbrecher will be drilled to 16,748 feet in Sec. 12, 11S-1E. The well is located 11/2 miles southwest of Square Mile's prolific Marg tex producer, flowing 13,000 MCF and 500 BCPD, through perforations 15,537 to 15,656 feet. (244754)

In Vernon Parish, Anadarko will drill the #1 Fortestar in **Pinewood Field**, (K), located in Sec. 18, 1S-9W. The well will be drilled to test the Austin Chalk at a depth of 21,507 feet in a 6000 foot horizontal leg. The bottom hole location will be 2 miles southwest of a depleted Chalk completion and 5 miles east of the nearest Chalk production in South Burr Ferry Field. (244652)

### COMPLETIONS

In Allen Parish, Midstates Petroleum has completed the #1 Bel Minerals in **Pilgrim Church Field**, (L), in Sec. 18, 5S-4W. This is a significant completion because it is the first deep Wilcox completion in the field which has been off production since 1992. The well was completed as an oil well in the Lower Wilcox flowing 278 BOPD and 1363 MCFG through perforations 14,342 to 14,687. We can anticipate additional drilling activity in this field. (244062)

--- continued on next page ---

## **Drill Bits** (continued from previous page)

Brammer Engineering has completed the #1 Spears Webb in **Manchester Field**, (M), Calcasieu Parish, as a gas well flowing 378 MCFG and 166 BCPD. The well was completed through perforations 12,882 to 12,887. The well was drilled in Sec.8, 10S-7W, and is the only producer within a 2 mile radius. (243892)

In **Pine Prairie Field**, (N), Evangeline Parish, Midstates has completed a significant oil well in Sec. 35, 3S-1W. The #4 Johnson flowed 1006 BOPD and 2397 MCFG in the Upper Wilcox through perforations 9204 to 10,383. (244020)

Brammer Engineering has extended production in **Grand Cheniere Field**, (P) Cameron Parish, with the completion of the #1 Sturlese in Sec. 35, 14S-5W. The well was completed flowing 2775 MCFG and 432 BCPD through perforations 15,456 to 15,462. (244134)

## **OFFSHORE GULF OF MEXICO SHELF AND DEEPWATER ACTIVITIES**

By Al Baker

Between April 1st and April 30th, the BOEM approved 47 drilling permits, of which 14 were for Gulf of Mexico shelf wells and 33 were for Gulf of Mexico deep water wells. Only one of the above permits is for a new deep water well situated in Green Canyon Block 867 where Apache Deepwater plans to drill their #1 exploratory well. There were no permits issued for new wells on the shelf. However, there were 6 revised new well permits issued on the shelf, and 24 revised new well permits awarded in deep water.

According to IHS-Petrodata, as of April 27th, there were 74 mobile offshore drilling rigs under contract out of 114 rigs available in the Gulf of Mexico, which represents a 64.9% fleet utilization rate. In addition, there were 22 platform rigs under contract out of the 51 total in the fleet for a fleet utilization rate of 43.1%. The current total mobile offshore rigs and platform rigs under contract in the GOM are the same as reported last month.

On April 27th, the BakerHughes Rig Counts indicated that there were 45 active mobile offshore rigs in the Gulf, which represents 60.8% of the total mobile rigs under contract. The majority of the drilling (+90%) is occurring in offshore Louisiana. The current active rig count compares to 29 active rigs during the same period last year. This represents a 55.2% increase in the active rig fleet on a year-to-year basis. Additionally, of the 22 platform rigs that are under contract, 14 (or 63.6 %) are currently working.

As anticipated, the slower Gulf of Mexico permitting process has begun having a negative effect on production. In an April 20th Rigzone news article, the Energy Information Administration (EIA) and the Bureau of Safety and Environmental Enforcement (BSEE) have both observed that the changed GOM regulatory environment is having an adverse impact on oil production in federal waters. During 2011, oil production averaged 1.3 million barrels per day, which is a 15% decline in comparison to 2010 production levels. Prior to the Macondo spill, the MMS was averaging 26 days to approve a new well on the shelf and 16 days for a new well on deep water. Today, the BOEM/BSEE takes 67 days to approve a shelf well and 70 days for approval of deep water well. The complete Rigzone article can be found at URL: [http://www.rigzone.com/news/article.asp?a\\_id=116998](http://www.rigzone.com/news/article.asp?a_id=116998).

On April 9th, McMoRan Exploration Co. updated its activity involving the completion attempt on their Davy Jones # 1 discovery well in South Marsh Island Block 230. McMoran reported that a technical completion has been achieved and that work is continuing to establish commercial production from the well during the 2nd quarter of 2012. McMoRan has commenced operations to pull the production tubing, clear the well bore of residual completion fluids and remove the hydraulic perforating guns set across the Wilcox "F" Sand. These operations should provide access to all of the Wilcox reservoirs ("A" through "F") in the wellbore. McMoRan further plans to use electric wireline casing guns to re-perforate the wellbore in order to enable a measurable flow rate from the well, followed by commercial production shortly thereafter.





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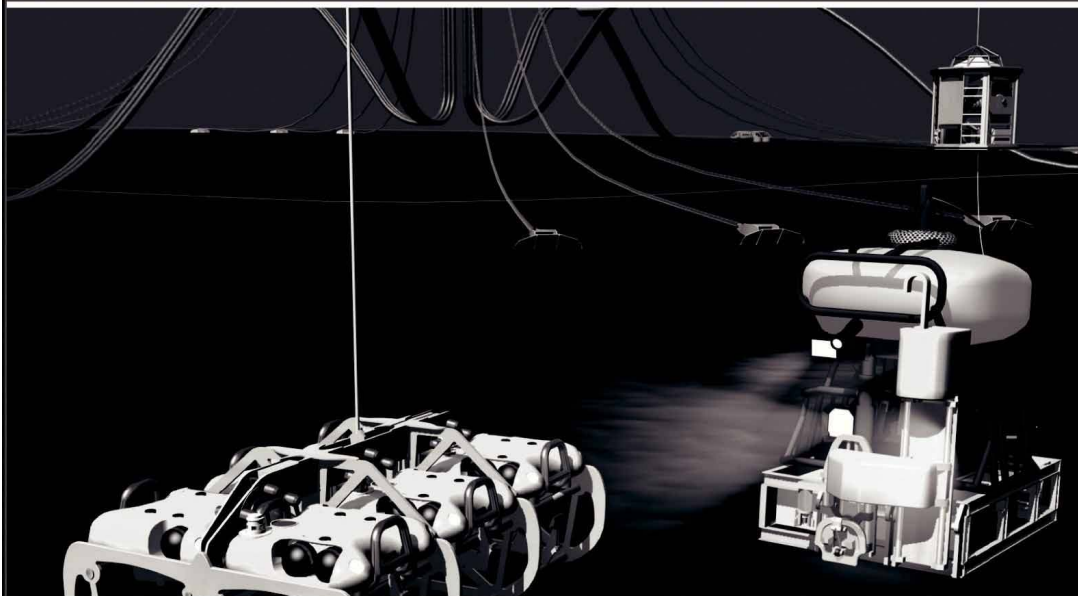
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## A Bittersweet Farewell ...

Due to losing a lot of stored files to the flood waters of Hurricane Katrina, I'm not sure which was the first *LOG* issue I put together for NOGS. I can recall that it must be close to 150 issues I have completed, with this issue being my last.

My original association with NOGS began about twenty years ago, when I was the owner of a computer training and software support vendor for Texaco and other corporations in the New Orleans area. NOGS hired me to teach and support Annette with performing various tasks on her desktop computer. With a background in oil and gas production, I enjoyed working with NOGS and meeting people on the exploration side of the industry.

Seven or eight years later, Annette and I had a conversation about how to possibly cut production costs including by having me layout the *LOG* electronically. Ed Picou was the *LOG* Editor at that time and shortly thereafter together we created my first *LOG*. Just as over the preceding years I had become friends with Annette, Ed and I became friends as we worked through the transition of computerizing the *LOG* layout process.

Though I continued to provide technical support to NOGS and layout the *LOG* every month, in 2000 I made the decision to scale back my business and return to graduate school for a new career. Annette played an important part in my decision to seek a masters in counseling; it was her comments about how I "would make a great counselor" that had me look into this field. Producing the *LOG* through my graduate student years was a wonderful creative "escape" from schoolwork, extensive clinical work, and completing that little doctoral paper called a dissertation.

Upon graduation with my Ph.D. in August 2005, Annette asked when I would stop working on the *LOG*, and I told her I would continue as long as needed. Then came Katrina, and I found myself again stepping in to help NOGS with creating a website that included online PDF versions of the *LOG*.

These past twenty years seem to have flown by, though lately finding time to work on the *LOG* was difficult as I balance the demands of being a full-time tenure-track counselor educator, maintaining a small private practice/clinical organization, supervising counseling interns working towards licensure as Professional Counselors or Marriage & Family Therapists, and raising a family. Along the way, I have enjoyed working closely with Annette, Ed, and many *LOG* Editors, watching NOGS become a more technology savvy organization.

It is only fitting that my tenure with the *LOG* ends the same way it began, with NOGS finding a cost-reducing option to produce the *LOG* that will not involve my layout services. I know, however, that my association with NOGS will not end with this issue, trusting that the friendships I have at NOGS will remain in the future as close as they are now.

To the NOGS members and officers, thanks for all of these years together and your trust in me! I have certainly enjoyed being part of the NOGS family.



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jannette'.

Jannette Sturm-Mexic, Ph.D.

Clinical Director, CARE Institute

LPC-Supervisor and LMFT-Supervisor, State of Louisiana

Registered Play Therapist-Supervisor

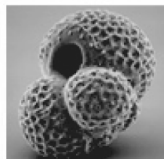
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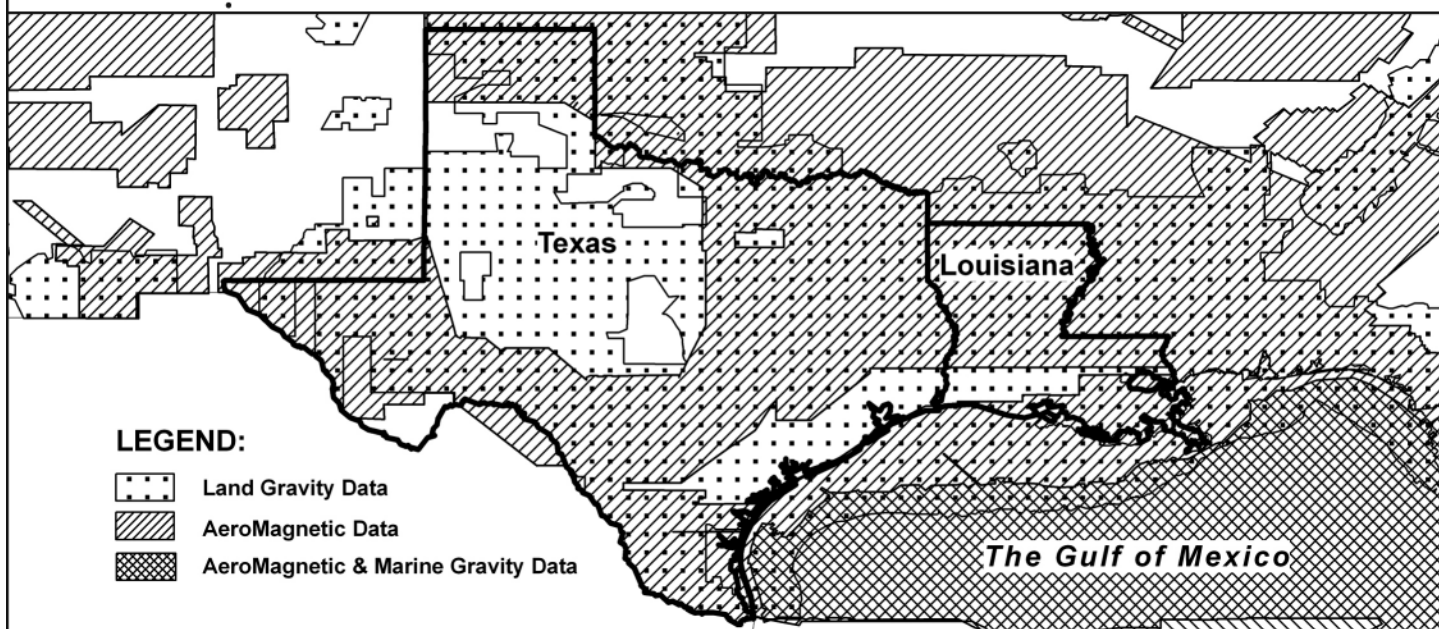
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*Rigzone.com by Jonathan Fahey, Associated Press - "Natural Gas Glut Means Drilling Boom Must Slow" April 9th 2012 [http://www.rigzone.com/news/article.asp?a\\_id=116742](http://www.rigzone.com/news/article.asp?a_id=116742)*

*The U.S. natural gas market is bursting at the seams. So much natural gas is being produced that soon there may be nowhere left to put the country's swelling surplus. After years of explosive growth, natural gas producers are retrenching.*

*The underground salt caverns, depleted oil fields and aquifers that store natural gas are rapidly filling up after a balmy winter depressed demand for home heating.*

*The glut has benefited businesses and homeowners that use natural gas. But with natural gas prices at a 10-year low -- and falling -- companies that produce the fuel are becoming victims of their drilling successes. Their stock prices are falling in anticipation of declining profits and scaled-back growth plans.*

*Some of the nation's biggest natural gas producers, including Chesapeake Energy, ConocoPhillips and Encana Corp., have announced plans to slow down.*

*"They've gotten way ahead of themselves, and winter got way ahead of them too," says Jen Snyder, head of North American gas for the research firm Wood Mackenzie. "There hasn't been enough demand to use up all the supply being pushed into the market."*

*So far, efforts to limit production have barely made a dent. Unless the pace of production declines sharply or demand picks up significantly this summer, analysts say the nation's storage facilities could reach their limits by fall.*

*That would cause the price of natural gas, which has been halved over the past year, to nosedive. Citigroup commodities analyst Anthony Yuen says the price of natural gas -- now \$2.08 per 1,000 cubic feet -- could briefly fall below \$1.*

*"There would be no floor," he says.*

*Since October, the number of drilling rigs exploring for natural gas has fallen by 30 percent to 658, according to the energy services company Baker Hughes. Some of the sharpest drop-offs have been in the Haynesville Shale in Northwestern Louisiana and East Texas and the Fayetteville Shale in Central Arkansas. But natural gas production is still growing, the result of a five-year drilling boom that has peppered the country with wells.*

*The workers and rigs aren't just being sent home. They are instead being put to work drilling for oil, whose price has averaged more than \$100 a barrel for months. The oil rig count in the U.S is at a 25-year high. This activity is adding to the natural gas glut because natural gas is almost always a byproduct of oil drilling.*

*Analysts say that before long companies could have to start slowing the gas flow from existing wells or even take the rare and expensive step of capping off some wells completely.*

*"Something is going to have to give," says Maria Sanchez, manager of energy analysis at Bentek Energy, a research firm.*

*U.S. natural gas production has boomed in recent years as a result of new drilling techniques that allow companies to unlock fuel trapped in shale formations. Last year, the U.S. produced*

*an average of 63 billion cubic feet of natural gas per day, a 24 percent increase from 2006. But over that period consumption has grown half as fast.*

*The nation's storage facilities could easily handle this extra supply until recently because cold winters pushed up demand for heating and hot summers led to higher demand for air conditioning. Just over half the nation's homes are heated with natural gas, and one-quarter of its electricity is produced by gas-fired power plants.*

*But this past winter was the fourth warmest in the last 117 years, according to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. It was the warmest March since 1950.*

*Between November and March, daily natural gas demand fell 5 percent, on average, from a year earlier, according to Bentek Energy. Yet production grew 8 percent over the same period.*

*"We haven't ever seen a situation like this before," says Chris McGill, Vice President for Policy Analysis at the American Gas Association, an industry group.*

*At the end of winter, there is usually about 1.5 trillion cubic feet of gas in storage. Today there is 2.5 trillion cubic feet because utilities withdrew far less than usual this past winter.*

*There is 4.4 trillion cubic feet of natural gas storage capacity in the U.S. If full, that would be enough fuel to supply the country for about 2 months.*

*If current production and consumption trends were to continue, Bentek estimates that storage facilities would be full on October 10.*

*Storage capacity, which has grown by 15 percent over the past decade, cannot be built fast enough to address the rapidly expanding glut. And analysts note there is little financial incentive to build more anyway.*

*The low price brought on by the glut has increased demand for natural gas among industrial users and utilities.*

*Makers of chemicals, plastics and fertilizers that use natural gas as a feedstock are expanding. Garbage trucks, buses and delivery vehicles are using more natural gas. Electric power producers are switching from coal to natural gas whenever possible.*

*This won't add up to enough new demand quickly enough to relieve the pressure on storage facilities this summer.*

*Scorching temperatures this summer would do the trick, but Mother Nature is not expected to cooperate.*

*Temperatures this summer are forecast to be about normal, and much cooler than the last two summers, says David Streit, a meteorologist at Commodity Weather Group expects.*

*Sultry winters, he said, do not usually develop into sultry summers.*



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