

## **TRANSCRIPT, BOEMRE SCIENCE ADVISOR DR. ALAN THORNHILL**

Prior to working at the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management, Regulation and Enforcement – or BOEMRE – I spent nearly 20 years working in areas of conservation science. I worked in academics, at The Nature Conservancy, and led the largest professional society of conservation scientists in the world for nearly a decade. It might seem an odd choice for me to go to work for the government bureau charged with regulating offshore oil and gas, but that pushes aside the very important work done in this agency, including but beyond regulating oil and gas.

This bureau is responsible for managing over 1.7 billion acres of the Outer Continental Shelf around the United States. It's an enormous area, close to the total of all terrestrial land in the lower 48 states! As a result, the decisions that this agency is responsible for have the potential to affect large areas of the ocean environment for long periods of time. This is precisely the place we want scientists to be, helping to understand the possible consequences of those decisions, providing meaningful input to the decision making process, and helping to ensure science has a voice at the decision making table.

Our environmental science program funds nearly 30 million dollars annually in environmental research in the Gulf of Mexico, the Atlantic, the Pacific, and the Arctic. We also have a core team of personnel who review NEPA and environmental compliance at both the pre-lease and post-lease stages.

We currently employ more than 125 environmental science subject matter experts, many of whom hold PhDs and actively participate in professional societies, publish academic papers and books, attend and present at conferences and play leadership roles in their disciplines. But beyond the academic types of opportunities that government scientists are encouraged to participate in, we are often asked to engage with colleagues from across the federal government through interagency working groups. These are groups that advise White House and administration leadership on important policy matters that shape the decisions made a wide range of environmental issues.

Our environmental science subject matter experts are involved in more than 100 different government working groups on topics that range from effects of sound on marine mammals, to protection of cultural resources, to conservation of migratory birds, to emerging technology focused on unmanned submersibles. I am personally involved in more than a half dozen such groups, including the Global Change Research Program, the National Climate Assessment, the Interagency Arctic Research Policy Committee, the Gulf Coast Restoration Task Force, the Climate Change Adaptation Task Force, and the National Ocean Policy. These groups might not be familiar to you, many were unknown to me before starting this job, but these and other working groups play important roles in conservation and management efforts across the federal government. These are amazing opportunities to have a role in how our country approaches natural resources, global change, and a host of other topics – it is intellectually challenging and hugely satisfying to make such contributions.

If you have not yet watched BOEMRE Director Michael Bromwich's message, I encourage you to. In it, he discusses all of the new and expanded opportunities in store for environmental

scientists as the agency undergoes an aggressive re-organization that puts science and the environment front and center. From environmental studies, to NEPA review, to environmental compliance, we plan to add significant capacity in several parts of the operations. These are jobs that will require environmental scientists trained by the leading environmental programs. We need added capacity in a wide range of disciplines include marine archeology, social sciences; economics; benthic, fishery, avian, marine mammal and protected species biology; meteorology; and physical, biological and chemical oceanography. Further, we are going to need water-quality and pollution specialists, as well as environmental policy and marine spatial planning specialists.

This is an unprecedented opportunity for environmental scientists looking to make a difference. As a scientist in these new bureaus, you would be making important contributions to managing resources and protecting the environment in the United States. Give it serious consideration, and send your applications in as soon as you see the job opportunities. Watch our website for the announcements!