MIAMI – (July 12, 2013) -- A new report entitled: 'An Ecosystem Services Approach to Assessing the Impacts of the Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill in the Gulf of Mexico' was released by the National Research Council earlier this week. The 350-page document, supported by the National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), focuses not only on the natural resources, but also the intangible goods and services these resources supply to people. Dubbed an “ecosystem services’ view, this approach can be used to complement and/or supplement traditional government tools like the Natural Resource Damage Assessment (NRDA) to create a more comprehensive framework in which assessment and restoration decisions can be made.

The report includes several case studies to illustrate workable models of how these assessments might be performed. University of Miami (UM) Research Associate Professor and Associate Director of the Cooperative Institute for Marine & Atmospheric Studies (CIMAS) David Die was the lead author of the fisheries case study included in the report. He was selected because of his expertise in global fisheries assessment, ecosystem modeling and the Gulf of Mexico fisheries. Additionally, he served as co-author of the marine mammal case study in the report, and contributed to other sections of the report.

“The critical finding of the report is that the impacts of the Deep Water Horizon oil spill, and other potential ecological hazards, need to be evaluated in a broader context to the one mandated by the NRDA,” said Die, a faculty member in UM’s division of Marine Biology & Fisheries. “We need to take an ecosystem services approach, which albeit challenging, provides a more accurate framework in which to perform such critical evaluations.”

Die has strong links to the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council and was the founding director of the Center of Independent Experts, a central part of the peer review process for the National Marine Fisheries Service. He is the current Rapporteur for bigeye tuna within the Tropical Tuna Working Group of the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tuna and has recently been asked to serve on the international panel synthesizing the conservation status of tuna and billfish for the International Union for the Conservation of Nature.

“Our goal for the report is to add value and create a framework that will help policymakers make the most informed decisions that are not only science-based, but also economically and culturally sensitive” Die added.

CIMAS is a research institute based at the University of Miami, within the Rosenstiel School of Marine & Atmospheric Science. It serves as a mechanism to bring together the research resources of nine major public and private research universities in Florida and the U.S. Caribbean with those of NOAA in order to develop a Center of Excellence that is relevant to understanding the Earth’s oceans and atmosphere within the context of NOAA’s mission. For more information, please visit http://cimas.rsmas.miami.edu/

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