

THE PARISH OF PLAQUEMINES

NUMBER: 60-990

DIVISION: B

VERSUS

25<sup>TH</sup> JUDICIAL DISTRICT COURT

HELIS OIL & GAS COMPANY, LLC AND  
CHEVRON U.S.A. INC.

PARISH OF PLAQUEMINES

STATE OF LOUISIANA

**FILED**

APR 07 2016

/s/ JUDY S. HODNETT

BY CLERK

PETITION IN INTERVENTION OF THE STATE OF LOUISIANA,  
THROUGH THE DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES,  
OFFICE OF COASTAL MANAGEMENT

NOW INTO COURT, through undersigned counsel, come the **State of Louisiana**, through the **Louisiana Department of Natural Resources, Office of Coastal Management** and its **Secretary, Thomas F. Harris**, who respectfully represent as follows and request the Court allow this intervention:

1.

Louisiana Code of Civil Procedure article 1091 provides:

A third person having an interest therein may intervene in a pending action to enforce a right related to or connected with the object of the pending action against one or more of the parties thereto by:

- (1) Joining with plaintiff in demanding the same or similar relief against the defendant;
- (2) United with defendant in resisting the plaintiff's demand; or
- (3) Opposing both plaintiff and defendant.

2.

A two-fold inquiry has developed in Louisiana's jurisprudence regarding the requirements for intervention: first, the intervenor must have a justiciable interest in, and a connection to, the principle action. *Palace Props., L.L.C. v. City of Hammond*, (La.App. 1 Cir. 6/27/2003), 859 So.2d 15, 20, citing *Niemann v. American Gulf Shipping, Inc.*, 96-687, p. 6 (La.App. 5 Cir. 1/15/97), 688 So.2d 42, 45, writ denied 97-0404, (La. 3/27/97). 692 So.2d 397. The First Circuit, in *Amoco Production Company v. Columbia Gas Transmission Corporation*, 455 So.2d 1260, 1264 (La.App. 1 Cir. 8/31/1984), defined "justiciable right" in the context of an intervention as "the right of a party to seek redress or a remedy against either plaintiff or defendant in the original action or both...." As to the second inquiry, the court further held that the justiciable right must be "so related or connected to the facts or object of the principal action that a judgment on the principal action will have a direct impact on the intervenor's rights." *Id.* As set forth in more detail below, Louisiana law provides the State of Louisiana, through the

Louisiana Department of Natural Resources (“DNR”), Office of Coastal Management (“OCM”) with concurrent authority to enforce the provisions of law at issue in the current matter, thereby satisfying the justiciable interest prong. Moreover, that interest is directly connected to the principal action because any judgment issued in that action is subject to the requirements of La. R.S. 49:214.36(O), which requires monies received by a parish be used for integrated coastal protection. Consequently, DNR/OCM has a right to intervene in this proceeding in order to protect the rights of the State pursuant to their respective areas of statutory authority.

3.

Interventions must also be timely, in accordance with La. Code of Civ. Proc. art. 1031 and 1033. As an incidental demand under La. C.C.P. art. 1031, a petition for intervention can be filed without leave of court at any time up to and including the time the answer to the principal demand is filed. It may be filed after an answer, with leave of court, if it will not retard the progress of the principal action. La. C.C.P. art. 1033. The First Circuit Court of Appeal has held that, “[a]n intervention may be filed only while suit is pending and before judgment on the main demand.” *Van Lieu v. Winn-Dixie of Louisiana, Inc.*, 446 So.2d 1362, 1366 (La.App. 1 Cir. 1984). Courts have great discretion in deciding whether to allow an intervention if such intervention will not retard the progress of the main demand. *See Madere v. Lennix*, 535 So.2d 1290 (La.App. 5 Cir. 1988), *citing Volume Shoe Corp. v. Armato*, 341 So.2d 611 (La.App. 2 Cir. 1977).

## **BACKGROUND**

4.

On November 8, 2013, Plaquemines Parish and the State of Louisiana, *ex rel.* Parish of Plaquemines filed a Petition for Damages to the Plaquemines Parish Coastal Zone (the “Petition”) against several oil and gas exploration, production, and transportation operations seeking damages for destruction to coastal land and waterbodies allegedly caused by the Defendants activities. The Plaintiffs specifically seek damages as provided in the State and Local Coastal Resources Management Act of 1978, La. R.S. 49:214.21, *et seq.* (“SLCRMA”), the payment of restoration costs, and actual restoration of the Plaquemines Parish Coastal Zone.

5.

On December 18, 2013, the Defendants removed the state court action to the federal district court for the Eastern District of Louisiana alleging original jurisdiction based on diversity

jurisdiction, Outer Continental Shelf Lands Act, general maritime law, and federal question jurisdiction. The Parish quickly moved to remand the matter back to state court, and on December 1, 2014, the court granted the Parish's motion remanding the matter to state court. No answers have to date been filed in this action.

6.

On March 14, 2016, Attorney General Jeff Landry intervened in this matter, along with all other similar suits seeking recovery under La. R.S. 49:214.21, *et seq.* This intervention by the State of Louisiana through DNR/OCM, in concert with the intervention filed by the Attorney General, ensures that that the State of Louisiana's interests will be fully protected in this matter, and that any funds resulting from this litigation will be properly spent on restoring Louisiana's coast.

### **LEGAL FRAMEWORK**

7.

The Louisiana Department of Natural Resources ("DNR") is an executive branch agency of the state and is responsible for the conservation, management, and development of water, minerals, and other such natural resources of the state, including coastal management. La. R.S. 36:351(A). The Office of Coastal Management is created within DNR and is charged with performing the functions of the state relative to the coastal zone management program. La. R.S. 36:358; *see also* La. R.S. 49:214.26 (establishing a coastal zone program within DNR and authorizing the Secretary of DNR or his designee to administer the program).

8.

Louisiana Constitution Article IX, Section 1 provides, in pertinent part:

The natural resources of the state, including the air and water, and the healthful, scenic, historic, and esthetic quality of the environment shall be protected, conserved, and replenished insofar as possible and consistent with the health, safety, and welfare of the people. The legislature shall enact laws to implement this policy.

9.

The Louisiana Legislature, in 1978, enacted the State and Local Coastal Resources Management Act ("SLCRMA") (Act 361 of 1978, codified at La. R.S. 49:214.21, *et seq.*) (*i.e.* the Louisiana Coastal Zone Management Program), in order to balance conservation and development within Louisiana's coastal zone. SLCRMA is one of the public trust laws enacted by the legislature pursuant to La. Const. art. IX, sec. 1.

10.

In August 1980, Louisiana's coastal management program, the Louisiana Coastal Resources Program ("LCRP"), was approved by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration ("NOAA"), U.S. Department of Commerce, under section 306 of the Coastal Zone Management Act (16 U.S.C. § 1455(d)).

11.

Pursuant to the SLCRMA, in 1980, DNR adopted, and the legislature and the governor approved, the Louisiana Coastal Use Guidelines. *See* LAC 43:I.701-719. The enforceable policies of the LCRP, as approved by NOAA, include, but are not limited to, the 94 Coastal Use Guidelines adopted by the State, as well as Article IX, Section 1 of the Louisiana Constitution.

12.

In enacting SLCRMA, the legislature declared that it was the public policy of the State:

- (1) To protect, develop, and, where feasible, restore or enhance the resources of the state's coastal zone.

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- (5) To develop and implement a coastal resources management program which is based on consideration of our resources, the environment, the needs of the people of the state, the nation, and of state and local government.
- (6) To enhance opportunities for the use and enjoyment of the recreational values of the coastal zone.
- (7) To develop and implement a reasonable and equitable coastal resources management program with sufficient expertise, technical proficiency, and legal authority to enable Louisiana to determine the future course of development and conservation of the coastal zone and to ensure that state and local governments have the primary authority for managing coastal resources.
- (8) To support sustainable development in the coastal zone that accounts for potential impacts from hurricanes and other natural disasters and avoids environmental degradation resulting from damage to infrastructure caused by natural disasters.

La. R.S. 49:214.22.

13.

Under the SLCRMA, there are two types of coastal uses: uses of State concern and uses of local concern. Uses of State concern are those uses that directly and significantly affect coastal waters and which are in need of coastal management and which have impacts of greater than local significance or which significantly affect interest of regional, state, or national concern. La.

R.S. 49:214.25. Prior to commencing a use of the coastal zone, an applicant must first apply for and receive a coastal use permit (“CUP”). La. R.S. 49:214.30. The secretary of DNR (“Secretary”) is designated to make decisions on coastal use permit applications for uses of State concern, whereas the local government makes decisions as to uses of local concern in areas where an approved local program is in effect. Prior to issuing a CUP, the Secretary must ensure that the activity for which the application is being made is consistent with the State’s Comprehensive Master Plan for Integrated Coastal Protection (“Master Plan”) and with the Coastal Use Guidelines. *Id. See also* LAC: 43.I.701, *et seq.*

14.

DNR/OCM is given specific, non-exclusive authority to enforce SLCRMA and the LCRP. La. R.S. 49:214.36(D) provides that the Secretary “may bring such injunctive, declaratory, or other actions as are necessary to ensure that no uses are made of the coastal zone for which a CUP has not been issued when required or which are not in accordance with the terms and conditions of a coastal use permit.” According to La. R.S. 49:214.36(E), “[a] court may impose civil liability and assess damages; order, where feasible and practical, the payment of restoration costs; require, where feasible and practical, actual restoration of the areas disturbed; or otherwise impose reasonable and proper sanctions for uses conducted within the coastal zone...[t]he court may also award costs and attorney’s fees to the prevailing party.”

15.

Act No. 544 of the 2014 Regular Session of the Louisiana Legislature (“Act 544”) added subsection (O) to La. R.S. 49:214.36 to provide that the only state or local governmental entity rights or causes of action arising from any activity subject to the permitting of SLCRMA are those outlined in that law. Act 544 further provided that “[a]ny monies received by any state or local governmental entity arising from or related to a state or federal permit issued pursuant to R.S. 49:214.21, *et seq.* ... a violation thereof, or enforcement thereof, or for damages or other relief arising from or related to...**shall be used for integrated coastal protection, including coastal restoration, hurricane protection, and improving the resiliency of the coastal area.**” Act 544 applies to all claims existing or pending on the effective date of the Act, which was June 6, 2014.

16.

“Integrated coastal protection” is not defined in SLCRMA; however, it is defined in La.

R.S. 49:214.2, as follows:

"Integrated coastal protection" means plans, projects, policies, and programs intended to provide hurricane protection or coastal conservation or restoration, and shall include but not be limited to coastal restoration; coastal protection; infrastructure; storm damage reduction; flood control; water resources development; erosion control measures; marsh management; diversions; saltwater intrusion prevention; wetlands and central wetlands conservation, enhancement, and restoration; barrier island and shoreline stabilization and preservation; coastal passes stabilization and restoration; mitigation; storm surge reduction; or beneficial use projects.

17.

Many of the activities asserted by Plaquemines Parish in its Petition to have caused the damages alleged are included within the list of activities for which a coastal use permit must be issued, including, but not limited to: (1) dredge and fill activity which intersects with more than one water body; (2) all mineral activities, including exploration for and production of, oil, gas, and other minerals, all dredge and fill uses associated therewith, and all other associated uses; and, (3) all pipelines for the gathering, transportation or transmission of oil, gas, and other materials. *See* La. R.S. 49:214.25(A); *see also* Plaintiff's Petition, ¶ 19 – 25.

18.

The Parish has specifically included a list of the coastal use permits known to have been issued within the area of the complained-of activity that forms the basis of the lawsuit. *See* Plaintiff's Petition, ¶ 7 and Exhibit D.

19.

Plaquemines Parish has prayed for damages, restoration costs, and actual restoration in areas of the coastal zone subject to SLCRMA. As such, DNR's authority to enforce SLCRMA and seek the payment of restoration costs or require actual restoration of areas disturbed overlaps with the relief requested by Parish. More importantly, Act 544 requires that any monies received by a local governmental entity arising from or related to a coastal use permit, the enforcement of SLCRMA, or related to any use of the coastal zone subject to SLCRMA be used for integrated coastal protection. Thus, intervention is necessary to ensure that the State of Louisiana's interests, through the statutory authority of DNR/OCM, are fully protected and that in the event that the Parish is awarded any damages or other relief, restoration is achieved in a manner

consistent with state law, including but not limited to Part II of Title 49 of the Louisiana Revised Statutes – Louisiana Coastal Protection, Conservation, Restoration, and Management.

20.

The legislature gave both DNR and local governmental entities with approved local coastal management programs the authority to enforce SLCRMA with respect to coastal use permits issued by those entities, as well as for uses for which a coastal use permit has not been issued when required or which are not in accordance with the terms and conditions of such permit. La. R.S. 49:214.36.

21.

Likewise, the legislature also provided for the mission of the state as it relates to integrated coastal protection, stating:

The state must act to develop, implement, and enforce a comprehensive integrated coastal protection plan. The state must act to ensure that the plan incorporates a systems approach to integrate hurricane protection and coastal restoration efforts in order to achieve long-term and comprehensive integrated coastal protection. Comprehensive integrated coastal protection must proceed in a manner that recognizes that the proper functioning of each protective element is critical to the overall success of the plan and that without such proper functioning the safety of the state and its citizens and the viability of the entire plan are threatened. Further, comprehensive integrated coastal protection must proceed in a manner that recognizes the powers and duties of political subdivisions, including flood protection authorities, and levee districts, to fund and manage local activities that are consistent with the goals of a comprehensive integrated coastal protection plan. The state must act to conserve, restore, create, and enhance wetlands and barrier shorelines or reefs in coastal Louisiana while encouraging use of coastal resources and recognizing that it is in the public interest of the people of Louisiana to establish a responsible balance between development and conservation. Management of renewable coastal resources must proceed in a manner that is consistent with and complementary to the efforts to establish a proper balance between development and conservation.

La. R.S. 49:214.1(C).

22.

This statutory scheme makes clear that, while the parishes have certain missions, powers, and duties pursuant to SLCRMA, the state, through the designated executive branch agencies and offices, is also charged with conserving and restoring Louisiana's coast and developing and implementing policies, plans, and programs to achieve comprehensive integrated coastal protection *statewide*. Thus, state and local governmental entities are charged with acting in coordination and cooperation with each other in performing coastal restoration and hurricane protection. And while the state is tasked with the authority to "articulate a clear statement or priorities and to focus development and implementation of efforts to achieve comprehensive

integrated coastal protection,” La. R.S. 49:214.1(B), the independent authority of local governmental entities, including parishes, flood protection authorities, political subdivisions, and levee districts has also been maintained.

23.

Considering the constitutional and statutory structure set forth in Louisiana law, the executive branch agencies and offices responsible for the enforcement of the coastal zone management program and coastal protection and restoration have a real interest in ensuring the continued coordination of integrated coastal protection activities. The Louisiana Department of Natural Resources, Office of Coastal Management files this intervention in order to assert and protect those interests.

24.

The defendants are required to comply with all applicable state laws and regulations, including but not limited to SLCRMA. The defendants are also charged with complying with all terms and conditions of their coastal use permits issued pursuant to SLCRMA. To the extent there was a failure by the defendants to obtain permits required by law or to comply with the terms and conditions of their coastal use permits, there has been a violation of SLCRMA, subjecting the defendants to enforcement pursuant to La. R.S. 49:214.36.

25.

Louisiana Revised Statute 49:214.36 authorizes the assessment of damages, the payment of restoration costs, and actual restoration upon a determination of liability under SLCRMA, and La. R.S. 49:214.36(O) requires that recoverable damages be spent on integrated coastal protection.

#### **PRAYER FOR RELIEF**

WHEREFORE, the State of Louisiana through the Louisiana Department of Natural Resources, Office of Coastal Management and the Secretary of DNR, Thomas F. Harris, moves to intervene in this matter and pray that it be permitted to proceed as a party to this action, that after all parties have been duly cited to appear and answer and have been served with a copy of this Intervention, there be judgment in favor of Intervenor:

- (1) That any party or parties found to be liable for violations of SLCRMA be assessed damages, the payment of restoration costs, and actual restoration of the coastal area, in addition to any other appropriate relief authorized by the State Local Coastal



Resources Management Act, La. R.S. 49:214.21, *et seq.*, in accordance with La. R.S. 49:214.36 and specifically section 214.36(O);

- (2) Ordering that any judgment requiring actual restoration of lands within the coastal area be consistent with La. R.S. 49:214.21, *et seq.*, and specifically La. R.S. 49:214.36(O), as well as the Hurricane Protection, Flood Control and Coastal Restoration Act, which requires that restoration be used for, and be consistent with, comprehensive integrated coastal protection, including hurricane protection, coastal conservation, or coastal restoration; and
- (3) Ordering the payment of costs, reasonable attorneys' fees, and for full, general, and equitable relief pursuant to Louisiana law.

By attorneys:



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