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APALACHICOLA—At a Special Franklin County Commissioners meeting on Tuesday, July 21, 2010, a presentation was made by Secretary Mike Sole of the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) and Gary Wise of ACT, which is the state boom cell contractor concerning the current, past, and future status of the oil spill response especially as it relates to Franklin County. Secretary Sole is hopeful in his opinion that Franklin County is at a “low risk of impact” from the oil spill. To date all air and water quality tests in Franklin County have been a “non-detect” for oil from the spill. Due to the possible tropical depression in the gulf and its possible impact, Tier #1, #2, and #3 is being removed to reduce damage to the environment as well as to the boom. Two triggers have been agreed upon as to when to replace the boom. They are a five (5) day outlook and boom need based on past data. We must continue to look at the “risk balance” as it applies to the boom being in the water, according to Secretary Sole.

The main presentation was given by Lieutenant Steve Casky of the US Coast Guard concerning a proposed change in strategy for the protection of Bob Sikes Cut. The commissioners had previously approved a plan utilizing barges. At present there are no barges blocking passes in Florida. From their previous favorable experience with the system in Mississippi, etc., the Coast Guard is proposing using a three piece 42-inch “Navy Boom” system, held in place with 1,000 and 2,000 pound anchors, and a NOFI Skimmer to collect the deflected product. The US Navy will deploy the system and be responsible for its maintenance. The NOFI Skimmer is made in Norway. This plan has been approved to be used by Gulf County Commissioners to protect St. Joe Bay. After much discussion, the commissioners agreed to this change in strategy. Commissioner Sanders agreed, but made it clear that she will continue to hold Florida DEP responsible for any oil getting into the bay. Commissioner Jackel also agreed reluctantly, and made it clear that she was not comfortable with this being the absolute “cure all” for this situation. The Coast Guard will now proceed to secure the necessary assets.