

## FOREWORD

### U.S.-MEXICAN COOPERATION IN SHARING THE GULF OF MEXICO'S RESOURCES: A MULTI-YEAR RESEARCH PROJECT OF THE CENTER FOR U.S. AND MEXICAN LAW

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Mexico and the United States are inextricably joined. In addition to sharing a land border of 1,954 miles, the two countries share valuable natural resources—air, water, and natural resources that are not restricted by borders. Millions of Mexican immigrants to the United States have woven Mexican culture into the fabric of a diverse U.S. society, and since the entry into force of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) in 1994, the United States and Mexican economies have become increasingly intertwined. These linkages are not without challenges, however, including challenges generated by misunderstandings that spring from profound differences in U.S. and Mexican legal cultures. In recognition of the need to offset such misunderstandings, in 2012, the University of Houston Law Center established the Center for U.S. and Mexican Law: the first research center in the United States devoted to the independent study of Mexican law and of legal aspects of U.S.-Mexican relations.<sup>1</sup> The Center's goal is to focus attention on examining legal issues that may not have received adequate study or attention by either U.S. or Mexican lawyers and other professionals.

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1. See generally *Center for U.S. and Mexican Law*, U. HOUS. L. CENTER, <http://www.law.uh.edu/mexican-law> (last visited June 2, 2015).

The following article, *The 2012 Agreement on the Exploitation of Transboundary Hydrocarbon Resources in the Gulf of Mexico: Confirmation of the Rule or Emergence of a New Practice?*, represents the first binational study commissioned by the Center for U.S. and Mexican Law. The Gulf of Mexico is a vital resource shared by Mexico, the United States, and Cuba, but “sharing” the Gulf of Mexico does not mean that the countries bordering this immense ocean basin agree on how its resources should be exploited and preserved. The 2012 Transboundary Hydrocarbons Agreement took many years to negotiate, but it also left open many questions about equitable implementation of the Agreement by U.S. and Mexican authorities. Scientific evidence shows that oil and gas fields span the maritime borders, raising issues about equitable development between U.S. and Mexican interests. The authors of this binational study, Guillermo J. Garcia Sanchez and Dr. Richard McLaughlin, are Affiliate Scholars of the Center for U.S. and Mexican Law. They identify principles for exploitation of transboundary resources that have been developed under international and domestic law, and they recommend viable solutions to insure that exploitation of the resources will not generate conflict between the United States and Mexico, given the differences in regulatory cultures between the two nations.

The Center is indebted to the Harte Research Institute for Gulf of Mexico Studies at Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi, for collaborating on this project, under the guidance of Dr. Richard McLaughlin. In future phases, the Gulf of Mexico hydrocarbons project will explore the potential for U.S.-Mexican coordination of operational, safety and environmental policies for offshore hydrocarbon development.