

Technical Announcement

MMS

U. S. Department of the Interior
Minerals Management Service
Gulf of Mexico OCS Region

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Seafloor Characteristics and Distribution Patterns of *Lophelia pertusa* and Other Sessile Megafauna at Two Upper-Slope Sites in the Northeastern Gulf of Mexico

[OCS Study MMS 2007-035](#)

The Minerals Management Service (MMS), Gulf of Mexico OCS Region, announces the availability of a new study report, *Seafloor Characteristics and Distribution Patterns of Lophelia pertusa and Other Sessile Megafauna at Two Upper-Slope Sites in the Northeastern Gulf of Mexico*.

This report presents results of a study funded to document the seafloor characteristics and the distribution patterns of the deepwater coral *Lophelia pertusa* and other sessile megafauna at two sites in the Gulf of Mexico. The two sites, Viosca Knoll 826 (VK826) and Viosca Knoll 862-906 (VK862-906) are located on the upper DeSoto Slope subprovince. One of the sites, VK862-906, is in close proximity to the site reported from the 1950's field sampling by Moore and Bullis. The dominant taxa at both the VK862 and VK906 sites, in terms of numbers and biomass, are anemones. The largest megafauna observed were the antipatharians at VK862-906 with individual colonies estimated to be between 2.1 and 2.4 m and (7 and 8 ft) tall. There appear to be at least four species of antipatharians and collectively they are the second most abundant megafauna taxa at both sites. The dominant megafauna taxon at the VK862 site is *L. pertusa*, which has successfully developed extensive assemblage complexes, comprised of large colony aggregations/thickets, at numerous locations. VK826 has the most extensive development of *L. pertusa* found in the Gulf of Mexico to date.

This is an important addition and complimentary work to another project for which a final report will be released later this year, *Characterization of Northern Gulf of Mexico Deepwater Hard-Bottom Communities with Emphasis on Lophelia Coral*. Results of the project will also enhance the ability of MMS to protect sensitive deepwater biological features. The report includes sonar mosaics created from side-looking sonar data.

This report is available only in compact disc format from the Minerals Management Service, Gulf of Mexico OCS Region, at a charge of \$15.00, by referencing OCS Study MMS 2007-035. The report may be downloaded from the MMS website through the [Environmental Studies Program Information System \(ESPIS\)](#). You will be able to obtain this report also from the

National Technical Information Service in the near future. Here are the addresses. You may also inspect copies at selected Federal Depository Libraries.

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