



## NEWS RELEASE

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# Secrets of Historic Shipwreck Intrigue MMS Archaeologists

*Symposium Looks at First Analysis of 200-year-old Shipwreck in Gulf of Mexico*

**NEW ORLEANS** — Minerals Management Service (MMS) archaeologists who have been investigating the site of a historic shipwreck in the deepwater Gulf of Mexico will present preliminary findings at the 2008 Society for Historical Archaeology Conference on Historical and Underwater Archaeology this week in Albuquerque, New Mexico.

The shipwreck was discovered as a result of the permitting process for laying gas pipelines required by MMS, the Federal Agency under the U.S. Department of the Interior that regulates development of the nation's offshore energy resources on the Outer Continental Shelf. The identity of the ship is not yet known; archaeologists have dubbed it the "Mardi Gras Shipwreck" after the pipeline where it was found.

MMS, working in concert with Okeanos Gas Gathering LLC, and Texas A&M University's Oceanography Department, Nautical Archaeology Program, and Conservation Research Laboratory, conducted the actual site investigation in 4,000 feet of water last May.

"As the deepest archaeological excavation ever conducted, this project presented unique challenges and opportunities to learn about site conditions at this depth, as well as a wealth of information about the maritime history and archaeology of the Gulf of Mexico," said MMS marine archaeologist Dr. Chris Horrell.

Ensuring that significant archaeological sites are not adversely affected by oil and gas exploration and development is included in the agency's mission of managing the nation's offshore energy resources in an environmentally sound and safe manner. This responsibility includes the protection of prehistoric sites as well as historic shipwrecks.

In areas where archaeological sites are likely to be found, MMS requires the oil and gas industry to conduct surveys of the seafloor. MMS issues specific guidelines for conducting these remote-sensing surveys and writing reports for archaeological sites on the OCS.

"MMS archaeologists use these reports to review applications from industry to drill wells or construct pipelines," explained MMS marine archaeologist and chief of the social sciences unit,

Dr. Jack Irion. “MMS has funded studies to determine where on the OCS these potential archaeological resource sites are likely to occur in order to afford them greater protection,” he added.

Other MMS-directed studies have yielded significant scientific information. For example, MMS studies have documented the artificial reef effect on World War II deepwater shipwrecks, confirmed the discovery of the *U-166*, the only German U-boat sunk in the Gulf, and served as documentation to list the well-preserved side-wheel steamer *Josephine* on the National Register of Historic Places.

For an onsite interview at the SHA Conference at the Hyatt Regency Hotel in Albuquerque, call Caryl Fagot at 504- 650-7060. Archaeologists will be available Friday afternoon or Saturday morning.

—MMS—

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