



NEWS RELEASE

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MMS Identifies Proposed Action Areas and Mitigation Measures

Proposed 2007-2012 Lease Sales in the Central and Western Gulf of Mexico

NEW ORLEANS – The U.S. Department of the Interior’s Minerals Management Service (MMS) has identified the areas and mitigation measures to be considered part of the proposed action in ongoing environmental analyses covering eleven proposed oil and gas lease sales in the Central and Western Gulf of Mexico (GOM). All eleven of the proposed sales are included in the recent Draft Proposed Program for 2007-2012. This area identification allows planning for the Draft Environmental Impact Statement to proceed.

The area identification involves the areas to be considered in Western Gulf of Mexico Sales 204, 207, 210, 215, 218, and Central Gulf of Mexico Sale 205, 206, 208, 213, 216, and 222.

In advance of this decision, the MMS published in the *Federal Register* a Notice of Intent to Prepare an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) in March 2006 and a Call for Information and Nominations in April 2006. Public scoping meetings on the planned draft EIS have also been held. All comments received in response to these notices and meetings, as well as previously available information derived from historical oil and gas leasing in the Gulf of Mexico, were analyzed by MMS.

All unleased acreage in the Central and Western GOM planning areas, as defined in the previously noted Draft Proposed Program, will undergo environmental analyses, except for the following deletions from proposed leasing consideration:

- Whole and partial blocks within the boundary of the Flower Garden Banks National Marine Sanctuary.
- Whole and partial blocks that lie within the former Western Gap portion of the 1.4 nautical mile buffer zone along the United States treaty line with Mexico. These blocks or block portions are excluded from leasing consideration through January 2011. However, they will be considered in lease sales to be held after that date.

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- Blocks newly added to the Central GOM that are within 100 miles of the Florida coast.
- Blocks newly added to the Central GOM that are under an existing Presidential withdrawal through the year 2012 as well as subject to annual congressional moratoria.
- Blocks that are beyond the U.S. Exclusive Economic Zone in the area known as the northern portion of the Eastern Gap.

In addition to this area identification, the MMS has determined that the following mitigation measures, where applicable, should be analyzed as part of the proposed action in ongoing environmental analyses:

- Stipulations for the protection of topographic features, live bottoms, military areas (including standard use measures as well as special case evacuation and coordination requirements), operations in the Naval Mine Warfare Area, protected species, and blocks south of Baldwin County, Alabama.

The next step in this ongoing proposed lease sale process is the public release of the related draft multisale EIS.

—MMS—

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