



SPECIAL INFORMATION

U.S. Department of the Interior
Minerals Management Service
Office of Public Affairs

Date: November 22, 2005
Release: 3401

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Notice of Availability of the Environmental Assessment for Proposed Central Planning Area Lease Sale 198 (OCS EIS/EA MMS 2005-059)

NEW ORLEANS - The Minerals Management Service (MMS) has prepared an environmental assessment (EA) for proposed Outer Continental Shelf (OCS) oil and gas Lease Sale 198 in the Central Gulf of Mexico (GOM) (Lease Sale 198) scheduled for March 2006. Proposed Lease Sale 198 is the fourth Central Planning Area (CPA) lease sale scheduled in the *Outer Continental Shelf Oil and Gas Leasing Program: 2002-2007* (5-Year Program, OCS EIS/EA MMS 2002-006). The preparation of this EA is an important step in the decisionmaking process for Lease Sale 198.

The proposal for Lease Sale 198 (the offering of all available unleased acreage in the CPA) and its alternatives (the proposed action excluding the unleased blocks near biologically sensitive topographic features; the proposed action excluding the unleased blocks within 15 miles of the Baldwin County, Alabama, coast; and no action) were identified by the MMS Director in January 2002 following the Call for Information and Nominations/Notice of Intent to Prepare an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) and were analyzed in the *Gulf of Mexico OCS Oil and Gas Lease Sales: 2003-2007; Central Planning Area Sales 185, 190, 194, 198, and 201; Western Planning Area Sales 187, 192, 196, and 200 – Final Environmental Impact Statement; Volumes I and II* (Multisale EIS, OCS EIS/EA MMS 2002-052). The Multisale EIS analyzed the effects of a typical CPA lease sale by presenting a set of ranges for resource estimates, projected exploration and development activities, and impact-producing factors for any of the proposed CPA lease sales. The level of activities projected for proposed Lease Sale 198 falls within these ranges.

In this EA, which tiers from the Multisale EIS and incorporates that document by reference, MMS reexamined the potential environmental effects of the proposed action and its alternatives on the basis of any new information regarding potential impacts and issues that was not available

at the time the Multisale EIS was prepared. No new significant impacts were identified for proposed Lease Sale 198 that were not already assessed in the Multisale EIS. As a result, MMS determined that a supplemental EIS is not required and prepared a Finding of No New Significant Impact (FONNSI).

Interested parties are requested to send comments on this EA/FONNSI within 30 days of the Notice of Availability in the *Federal Register*. Comments may be submitted in written form enclosed in an envelope labeled "Comments on CPA Lease Sale 198 EA" and mailed (or hand carried) to the Minerals Management Service, Headquarters Office, Attention: Environmental Division, Environmental Assessment Branch (MS 4042), Parkway Atrium Building, 381 Elden Street, Herndon, Virginia 20170-4817.

All comments received will be considered in the decisionmaking process for Lease Sale 198.

To obtain a copy of this EA, you may contact the Minerals Management Service, Headquarters Office, Attention: Environmental Division, Environmental Assessment Branch (MS 4042), Parkway Atrium Building, 381 Elden Street, Herndon, Virginia 20170-4817. You may also view this EA on the MMS website at <http://www.gomr.mms.gov>.

MMS, an agency of the U.S. Department of the Interior, manages offshore oil and gas exploration as well as renewable and alternative energy sources such as wind, wave, and solar on 1.76 billion acres of the Outer Continental Shelf while protecting the human, marine, and coastal environments. The OCS provides 30 percent of oil and 21 percent of natural gas produced domestically, and sand used for coastal restoration. MMS collects, accounts for, and disburses mineral revenues from Federal and American Indian lands, and contributes to the Land and Water Conservation Fund and other special use funds, with Fiscal Year 2005 disbursements of approximately \$9.9 billion and more than \$153 billion since 1982.

MMS Main Website: www.mms.gov
Gulf of Mexico Website: www.gomr.mms.gov

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