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Denver's Lester and Piccirilli honored for Indian outreach

Ronald Lester and Thomas Piccirilli, part of the Indian Outreach Team of the U.S. Department of the Interior's Minerals Management Service in Denver, were recognized Feb. 2 in Washington by Interior Secretary Gale Norton. The two were awarded the prestigious "Secretary's Four C's Award" for their outreach efforts supporting the Department in its management and accountability of Indian mineral resources.

The Secretary's Four C's Award was granted to the Indian Outreach Team because of their outstanding contributions to Indian Tribes and individual Indian mineral owners in establishing long-term partnerships designed to conserve natural energy resources and strengthen infrastructures and economics for future generations.

The team, working closely with the Bureau of Indian Affairs, the Bureau of Land Management, and the Office of Trust Funds Management, has worked diligently to ensure a fair return for minerals produced on Tribal lands and on lands owned by individual Indian mineral owners. Since MMS was created in 1982, more than \$3.7 billion has been distributed on behalf of 41 Indian Tribes and 30,000 individual Indian mineral owners.

Lester and Piccirilli also have led numerous outreach efforts to help individual Indian mineral owners resolve a variety of issues. The team organized more than 70 outreach sessions in Indian country during 2004, and resolved some 6,000 Indian inquiries.

Lester, a minerals revenue specialist in the MMS Indian Compliance and Asset Management division, has worked 22 years for MMS, and has been with the federal government for 30 years. Piccirilli, a minerals revenue specialist with MMS, has been with the Federal government for 26 years. The two work at the MMS offices at the Denver Federal Center. Both men have been extremely active in efforts to help individual Indian mineral owners resolve a variety of issues, often traveling to remote locations in the Western United States to help ensure that Indian interests are protected.

MMS, part of the U.S. Department of the Interior, oversees 1.76 billion acres of the Outer Continental Shelf, managing offshore energy and minerals while protecting the human, marine, and coastal environments through advanced science and technology research. The OCS provides 30 percent of oil and 23 percent of natural gas produced domestically, and sand used for coastal restoration. MMS's collects, accounts for, and disburses mineral revenues from Federal and

American Indian lands, with Fiscal Year 2004 disbursements of approximately \$8 billion and more than \$143 billion since 1982. The Land and Water Conservation Fund, which pays for acquisition of state and federal park and recreation land, gets nearly \$1 billion a year.

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