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Contact: Debra Winbush
(504) 736-2597

Caryl Fagot
(504) 736-2590

**MMS Improves Well Permitting and Reporting System with “eWell”
New Electronic System to Simplify Data Exchange**

Working to find better ways to ensure that our Nation’s offshore energy resources are developed efficiently, the Minerals Management Service has implemented a new electronic reporting system for lessees and operators to exchange offshore well data with the MMS Gulf of Mexico Region’s District Offices. The new permitting and reporting communication system called “eWell,” scheduled for rollout on June 1, 2004, will streamline processes, reduce data redundancy, and improve the quality, timeliness, completeness, and compliance of the information exchange between MMS and industry.

At an industry news briefing today in Houston, MMS Director Johnnie Burton noted that current MMS regulations require companies to submit specific paper forms for completed and planned well activities. As part of a larger electronic government reengineering effort, MMS restructured six well permit and report forms and made them accessible electronically. The new system replaces paper versions of permits to drill, permits to modify wells, well activity reports, end of operations reports, and rig move notifications.

The eWell permitting and reporting system places these forms on-line and allows industry to submit them electronically via a secure Internet site for approval or acceptance, in lieu of paper submission.

According to Burton, “MMS analyses show our new eWell permitting and reporting system would reduce processing time for the 20,000 applications each year by 50 %, thus reducing costly rig waiting time. In addition to dramatically decreasing the number of steps involved in filing permits, the ability to electronically submit them eliminates the reliance on both internal and external mail, creating additional financial savings.”

There are many features incorporated into eWell that will permit greater efficiency in time and human resources and improved communication between the operator and district offices. For example, the system will automatically populate data and information in the electronic form from data previously submitted to MMS and stored in the our database . This feature will save time for the reporter. Internet-based forms with automated help screens will also aid the operator in completing the forms faster and more accurately.

Chris Oynes, MMS's Regional Director for the Gulf of Mexico, noted that, "For permits and reports submitted through this system, MMS has ensured security of company proprietary data and allows public real-time access to data that are releasable by regulation."

"Industry has been a willing partner to help improve the design of the system and supports its implementation," said Oynes. "Operators volunteered to test the system over many months, and through their input, many facets of the application were modified to enhance the ease of operation."

A Notice to Lessees, to be issued on May 10th, will provide operators with an application manual containing detailed directions for gaining access to the system. Extensive training for operators is scheduled to take place May through July. More than 50 companies have signed up for eWell training. It is expected that, within one year of commencing the program, 100% participation could be realized.

Within the Department of the Interior's e-Government strategic framework, MMS has recently embarked upon several e-Government projects that align with the President's Management Agenda. The OCS Connect project is a phased, multi-year e-Government transformation of MMS's Offshore Minerals Management (OMM) program that will dramatically reform and streamline business operations by fiscal year 2008.

To meet future mission requirements and encourage participation in the domestic Outer Continental Shelf (OCS) oil and gas program, the OCS Connect project will allow MMS to keep pace with the increasing complexity of oil and gas operations, greater workloads, and the need for more sophisticated technical analyses and data exchange. By re-engineering, streamlining business processes, and moving to on-line services, MMS and industry will realize cost savings from reduced cycle times to receive and process information, and citizens will experience more customized and user-friendly access to information and easier online participation in MMS's regulatory and planning processes.

The Minerals Management Service is the federal agency in the U.S. Department of the Interior that manages the nation's oil, natural gas, and other mineral resources on the Outer Continental Shelf in Federal offshore waters. The agency also collects, accounts for, and disburses mineral revenues from Federal and American Indian lands. MMS disbursed more than \$8 billion in FY 2003 and more than \$135 billion since the agency was created in 1982. Nearly \$1 billion from those revenues go into the Land and Water Conservation Fund annually for the acquisition and development of state and Federal park and recreation lands.

MMS Main Website: www.mms.gov
Gulf of Mexico Website: www.gomr.mms.gov
OCS Connect Website: www.mms.gov/ommegov

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