

**U.S. Department of the Interior  
Minerals Management Service  
Atlantic OCS Region**

***SPECIAL INFORMATION***

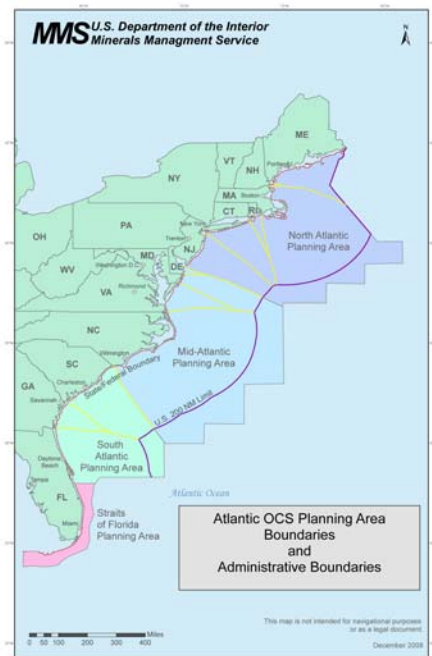
January 2009

**National Environmental Policy Act Compliance  
for Geological and Geophysical Activity on the Atlantic OCS**

**Purpose**

An environmental impact statement (EIS) is proposed in light of the multiple geological and geophysical (G&G) permits submitted to the Minerals Management Service (MMS) for the Outer Continental Shelf (OCS) waters of the Atlantic. This EIS will evaluate the environmental impacts of these proposed G&G activities. No National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) programmatic documents have been performed for G&G activities in the Atlantic OCS.

Previous NEPA programmatic documents for G&G activities in the Gulf of Mexico have been performed by the U.S. Department of the Interior, Minerals Management Service and the U.S. Department of the Interior, Geological Survey. The EIS proposed for the Atlantic may now be necessary not only because of the multiple permits received by MMS but also because of industry's expressed interest in expanding activities into the Atlantic offshore waters. This EIS will also review advances in G&G technology and improved knowledge of acoustic impacts on marine life. This EIS will determine whether significant impacts to Atlantic resources could occur as a result of G&G activities and, where needed, outline mitigation and monitoring measures that will reduce or eliminate the potential for impacts to the environment.



**National Environmental Policy Act Compliance**

The NEPA of 1969 (42 U.S.C. 4321-4347) is the foundation of environmental policymaking in the United States. The NEPA process is intended to help public officials make decisions based on an understanding of environmental

consequences and take actions that protect, restore, and enhance the environment. The NEPA established two primary mechanisms for this purpose:

- (1) The Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) was established to advise agencies on the environmental decisionmaking process and to oversee and coordinate the development of Federal environmental policy.
- (2) Agencies must include an environmental review process early in the planning for proposed actions.

The CEQ issued regulations (40 CFR 1500-1508) in 1978 implementing NEPA. The regulations include procedures to be used by Federal agencies for the environmental review process. Refer to the following CEQ NEPA website for additional guidance for implementing NEPA and for links to other websites dealing with environmental impact assessment:

<http://www.mms.gov/eppd/compliance/nepa/index.htm>.

In accordance with NEPA, MMS prepares environmental documents on various actions related to offshore energy and mineral collection activities. These documents may be environmental assessments or EIS's, depending on the nature of the action in question or the significance of potential impacts associated with the action. It is the MMS's policy to involve the public in preparing and implementing its NEPA procedures. For additional information, refer to the following website: <http://www.gomr.mms.gov/homepg/regulate/environ/nepa/nepaprocess.html>.