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Minerals Management Service's Offshore Program: Providing Energy from Domestic Sources for America

Meeting today's energy needs – as well as the energy needs of the future – is the daily challenge of the Minerals Management Service's (MMS) Offshore Minerals Management (OMM) program.

As the steward of mineral resources on the Outer Continental Shelf (OCS), MMS is responsible for all phases of mineral resource management in Federal waters, about 1.76 billion acres of submerged lands seaward of the States' coastal waters. The OCS provides 21 percent of the natural gas, 30 percent of the oil produced in the U.S., substantial quantities of sand for beach renourishment and wetlands protection, and over \$8 billion per year in revenue collections.

Energy production in the OCS plays a key role in the implementation of the President's National Energy Policy, in meeting the Nation's energy needs, supporting the economy, providing national security, and ensuring our quality of life. With passage of the Energy Policy Act of 2005, MMS has lead authority for renewable energy projects, such as offshore wind energy.


The MMS has worked diligently for over 20 years to build a successful offshore program that provides safe and environmentally sound OCS mineral resource development for the benefit of the American people. Additionally, MMS is committed to achieving the proper balance between providing energy for the American people and protecting unique, sensitive marine and coastal environments.

MMS's robust environmental studies program is designed to protect the offshore environment from potential adverse impacts of mineral resource exploration. Marine archaeology, ocean currents, life forms in the extreme deep waters, sea ice conditions in Alaska, and marine mammals in the

Gulf of Mexico are examples of some of the environmental studies that are currently underway. The studies provide scientific information that is critical to making sound energy resource and environmental management decisions.

The Rigs to Reefs program provides a first-rate example of environmental stewardship and protection. The program supports and encourages the reuse of oil and gas platforms in the OCS for reef development. Whether a platform is in use or retired, it can provide two to three acres of living and feeding habitat for thousands of underwater species whose survival depends on the protection provided by the structures.





Safety in the offshore workplace is a top priority for MMS. An international leader in offshore safety, MMS has established a regulatory program that sets standards for the design of facilities and the conduct of operations. The Technology Assessment and Research program evaluates new technologies for possible use by the offshore industry in order to improve efficiency and provide the safest possible environment for offshore workers. Sound engineering standards and rigorous inspections are critical. The MMS works closely with the energy industry to ensure the continued safety of offshore production facilities for both the workers and the marine environment.

Energy exploration in the deep waters of the Gulf of Mexico is perhaps the most exciting aspect of offshore energy exploration today. Most of the energy discoveries of recent years have been found in the Gulf's deep waters, with 54 percent of the Gulf's active leases in deep waters. Between 1995 and 2004, deep water oil production rose 550 percent, while deep water gas production rose 650 percent. There have been about 150 discoveries in deep water over the past 10 years, with about 109 fields now in production. Deep water activity is expected to continue with exploration in deep waters (1,000 feet and deeper) and ultra-deep waters (5,000 feet and deeper). Since 2002, there have been 24 significant discoveries in ultra-deep water.

Eroding coastlines are an increasing concern as more than half of the U.S. population lives near coastlines. MMS's sand and gravel program fulfills

the demanding role of providing sand and gravel to renourish coastal areas. The program provides geologic and environmental information – developed through partnerships with 14 coastal States – to identify and make available OCS sand deposits that are suitable for beach nourishment and coastal wetlands protection. This proactive management and coastal restoration effort is critical in helping States and local communities in their efforts to stabilize receding shorelines.



The MMS's Offshore Minerals Management program works to secure America's energy future and quality of life while protecting offshore workers and the environment.

For more information on MMS's offshore program, contact the MMS Office of Public Affairs at (202) 208-3985 or visit www.mms.gov.