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MMS HONORS STRAC MEMBERS WITH JAMES B. GRIFFITH AWARD

The U.S. Department of the Interior's Minerals Management Service today presented one state and two individuals with its newest award of appreciation, the James B. Griffith Award, for superior contributions to the success of the bureau's mission.

During the quarterly meeting of the State and Tribal Royalty Audit Committee (STRAC) in Sacramento, California, MMS Director Johnnie Burton presented the first ever James B. Griffith Awards to the State of Utah, Brenda Petersen of Colorado and Ellwood Soderlind of Wyoming. All of the awardees are longtime participating members of STRAC.

The award was created in honor of Wyoming State Auditor James B. Griffith, who more than 20 years ago, played a key role in getting states and Indian tribes to participate with the federal government in mineral audit activities.

"Jim Griffith's visionary leadership is reflected in this award, which is a reminder of the importance of cooperation between the federal government and the states and tribes in managing our mineral resources," said Burton. "We honor him today, as well as the recipients of the James B. Griffith Award."

The award formally honors states, tribes and selected individuals from STRAC, for their contributions towards improving both the MMS Minerals Revenue Management's compliance program and the cooperative audit programs between the MMS and their respective state or tribe.

Utah's State Tax Commission was presented a group award for its outstanding efforts in managing the cooperative audit agreement it has with MMS. Utah received high marks from MMS for completing audits on schedule, submitting high-quality products, achieving positive program reviews, and for consistently submitting timely and accurate budgets, work plans, vouchers and progress reports to MMS.

Brenda Petersen, a Senior Revenue Agent for the State of Colorado, was presented an award for her outstanding contributions to the MMS Onshore Oil and Gas Operational Model and the Compliance Implementation Project Team, as well as her overall assistance in making improvements to MMS compliance programs and systems.

Ellwood Soderlind, a Supervisory Auditor for the State of Wyoming, was cited with an award for his outstanding leadership of STRAC and his significant contributions to MMS mineral compliance activities including the Royalty Policy Committee's Coal Subcommittee.

As part of the MMS mission, the MRM program collects, accounts for and distributes revenues associated with mineral leasing and production on federal and Indian lands. Revenues are shared with states in which the federal leases are located. Last year states received more than \$750 million as their share of the federal revenues. Indian tribes and individual Indian landowners receive 100 percent of the revenues associated with their lands -- nearly \$200 million annually in recent years.

Comprising 10 states (California, Colorado, Louisiana, Montana, New Mexico, North Dakota, Oklahoma, Texas, Utah and Wyoming) and eight Indian tribes (the Blackfeet, Crow, Jicarilla Apache, Navajo Nation, Shoshone Arapaho, Southern Ute, Ute, and the Ute Mountain Ute), STRAC members perform much of the audit and compliance work for federal and Indian leases within the boundaries of each state or tribe. Through cooperative audit agreements that each member has with the MMS, they have collected more than \$340 million in royalties from oil, gas and solid minerals audits since 1985.

MMS 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 Indian leases. These revenues totaled more than \$6 billion in 2002 and more than \$127 billion since the agency was created in 1982.

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