



U.S. Department of the Interior
Minerals Management Service
Gulf of Mexico OCS Region

SPECIAL INFORMATION

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MMS Announces Revised Guidelines for Deepwater Operations Plans

The U.S. Department of the Interior's Minerals Management Service (MMS) issued today revised guidelines for the submittal of a Deepwater Operations Plan (DWOP) for all non-conventional deepwater development projects (water depths greater than 1,000 feet) and all projects using subsea production technology. The new guidelines, issued as Notice to Lessees and Operators (NTL) 98-8N, is a comprehensive document that answers many questions commonly asked by industry concerning DWOP content and the approval process.

While the new guidelines retain the three-part submittal for a DWOP - Conceptual, Preliminary, and Final, there is a significant change. The Conceptual Part, which provides an early opportunity for MMS and the lessee to agree on a plan of development prior to major expenditures for engineering design, is now required.

"This opens the door for a discussion of regulatory compliance issues during the initial stage of a project. By allowing operators to know, early in the process, that their proposed methods of dealing with situations not specifically addressed in the regulations are acceptable, both time and money can be saved," said GOMR Regional Director Chris C. Oynes.

The new NTL ensures that the information provided in a DWOP will allow MMS to review a project from a total system approach, emphasizing operational safety and environmental protection, and will demonstrate that the project is being developed in an acceptable manner.

The MMS is the Federal Agency that manages the Nation's natural gas, oil and other mineral resources on the OCS, and collects, accounts for and distributes about \$6 billion in revenues from Federal offshore mineral leases and from onshore mineral leases on Federal and Indian lands.

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**MMS's Website Address: <http://www.mms.gov>
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