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Contact: Debra Winbush
(504) 736-2597
Caryl Fagot
(504) 736-2590

MMS Holds First Public Meeting to Explore Potential Pipeline Authority

The Minerals Management Service is exploring potential new authority to ensure open and non-discriminatory access to oil and gas pipelines, and is gaining insights from the public through a series of public meetings. MMS held its first public meeting today in Houston to coincide with the agency's national awards ceremony for industry.

The public meeting provided an opportunity for industry representatives, the general public and other groups to comment on the bureau's potential implementation of pipeline authority for oil and natural gas.

A recent court order determined that the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) did not have authority to require data submittals for certain natural gas pipelines in the Outer Continental Shelf (OCS) and indicated the Interior Department may be the most appropriate federal regulator of pipeline access.

Companies engaged in the activity of moving oil and natural gas production on the Outer Continental Shelf may still be subject to the FERC's jurisdiction. However, if the FERC declares that a company's facilities perform a "gathering" function rather than a "transportation" function, then the facilities are exempt from the FERC's jurisdiction under the Natural Gas Act. As such, the FERC will not impose its ratemaking authorities (tariff calculation guidelines) on that facility. Ensuring open and nondiscriminatory access to these gathering pipelines may then fall to the MMS.

The MMS is scheduled to hold two more public meetings to better determine its role in regulating oil and natural gas pipelines under its Outer Continental Shelf Lands Act (OCSLA) authority.

May 11, 2004 9:00 a.m. Public Meeting
DOI Yates Auditorium
1849 C. Street N.W.
Washington, DC

May 14, 2004 9:00 a.m. Public Meeting
MMS Room 111
1201 Elmwood Park Blvd
New Orleans, LA

More information is available in the Federal Register notice online:
<http://a257.g.akamaitech.net/7/257/2422/14mar20010800/edocket.access.gpo.gov/2004/04-8247.htm>

MMS, part of Department of the Interior, manages the nation's oil, natural gas, and other mineral resources on the OCS in federal offshore waters. The agency also collects, accounts for, and disburses mineral revenues from Federal and American Indian lands. Between 1982 and 2003, MMS distributed more than \$135 billion in revenues from onshore and offshore lands, an average of more than \$6 billion per year, to the Nation, States and American Indians. Nearly \$1 billion from those revenues go into the Land and Water Conservation Fund annually for the development of State and Federal park and recreation lands.

*** MMS Securing Ocean Energy and Economic Value for America ***

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