

# MMS TODAY

U.S. Department of the Interior ■ Minerals Management Service

Spring 2001

## Secretary Norton Honors Industry Leaders in Houston

by A.B. Wade

Secretary of the Interior Gale Norton delivered the keynote address at MMS' annual ceremony in Houston, Texas honoring the energy industry's safest environmental stewards. At the April event, Norton also applauded the winners for their innovative fiscal leadership.

Executives from oil and natural gas companies were presented the Department of the Interior awards in recognition of their safety and pollution prevention records, fiscal accountability and best business practices.

"These prestigious awards recognize exemplary company performance and corporate commitment to safe offshore oil and gas operations and fiscal responsibility," Norton said. "The winners of these awards represent the best of the energy industry and set a standard that all companies should strive to achieve.

"You are the leading performers and pacesetters in this industry and I applaud each of you for your impressive safety and environmental records. As the stewards of our nation's limited energy resources, your corporate leadership has contributed to a successful partnership between the federal government and the oil and gas industry. Your excellent corporate leadership

has and will continue to enhance the viability of our nation's energy program. I applaud your commitment to being the best in the business," Norton added.

The winners of the 2000 Safety Award for Excellence (SAFE), the Secretary of the Interior's Mineral Revenues Stewardship Award, the Corporate Citizen Award, and the Corporate Leadership Award were honored.

The SAFE Award recognizes outstanding safety and pollution prevention achievement by offshore oil and gas operators and contractors. The 2000 SAFE Award winners are: Kerr-McGee Oil and Gas Corporation, Agip Petroleum Company, ENSCO Offshore Company and Danos & Curole Marine Contractors, Inc. The Mineral Revenues Stewardship



Gale Norton

Award recognizes companies that demonstrate exceptional compliance with mineral revenue laws and federal financial requirements.

see **Awards** next page

## Helmerich & Payne, Inc. Honored in California

MMS's Pacific Region office recently presented **Helmerich & Payne, Inc.** with the agency's District Safety Award for Excellence (SAFE) in recognition of its accident-free, extended-reach drilling operations on ExxonMobil's Platform Heritage located offshore Santa Barbara County, California.

This is the second consecutive year that Helmerich & Payne is recognized with a MMS safety award for its extended-reach drilling operations. Helmerich & Payne, a drilling contractor for ExxonMobil Production Co., was presented with the MMS safety award at a ceremony in the MMS regional office located in Camarillo, Calif.

"The Acting MMS Director joins me in commending Helmerich & Payne for its part in developing offshore mineral resources while maintaining a constant commitment to environmental protection, offshore safety, and regulatory compliance," said J. Lisle Reed, MMS's Pacific regional director.

"Helmerich & Payne, in conjunction with ExxonMobil, are safely and successfully utilizing state-of-the-art extended-reach drilling and well completion technology to access oil and gas reserves in the Sacate Field more than four miles away from Platform Heritage."

"This operation underscores **Helmerich & Payne's** professionalism while, at the same time, highlights the continuing advancements in today's drilling technology."

New Inside  
**WEB WORLD:**  
mms.gov

page 11

## The Norton File

Gale Norton, a lifelong conservationist, public servant and advocate for bringing common sense solutions to environmental policy, was confirmed as the 48<sup>th</sup> Secretary of the U.S. Department of the Interior on a bipartisan U.S. Senate vote in January 2001. Secretary Norton is the first female to head the 151-year-old federal agency.

With 20 years experience in natural resource policy issues, Norton served as Attorney General of Colorado from 1991 to 1999. In that capacity, she represented virtually every agency of the Colorado state government. She argued cases before the U.S. Supreme Court and other appellate courts, and testified numerous times before congressional committees.

As Attorney General, Norton worked with legislators and citizens to resolve matters such as hospital ownership, gasoline pricing and antitrust enforcement. She litigated state and federal constitutional issues, defended the state against federal mandates and won a major court victory pressuring the federal government to adequately clean up hazardous wastes at Rocky Flats and the Rocky Mountain Arsenal.

Norton also served as Chair of the Environment Committee for the National Association of Attorneys General. As a negotiator of the \$206



Photo courtesy National Park Service

In March, Norton visited Fort Clatsop National Monument in Oregon. From left are park superintendent Donald Striker; Michelle Bussard, executive director of the Lewis and Clark Bicentennial Council; Norton; Congressman Greg Walden; and U.S. Senator Gordon H. Smith

billion national tobacco settlement, Norton represented Colorado and 45 other states as part of the largest lawsuit settlement in history.

A nationally recognized public policy leader, Norton was appointed by President George Bush to the Western Water Policy Commission. She also served as Environment Committee Chair for the Republican National Lawyers Association and General Counsel of the Colorado Civil Justice League. The Colorado Women's Bar Association has awarded her their highest honor - the Mary Lathrop Trailblazer Award.

Prior to her election as Attorney General, Norton served in Washington, D.C. as associate solicitor of the U.S. Department of the Interior, overseeing endangered species and public lands legal issues for the National Park Service and

the Fish and Wildlife Service. She also worked as assistant to the Deputy Secretary of Agriculture and, from 1979 to 1983, as a Senior Attorney for the Mountain States Legal Foundation.

Norton graduated magna cum laude from the University of Denver in 1975 and earned her law degree with honors from the same university in 1978.

From 1983 to 1984, she was a National Fellow at Stanford University's Hoover Institution where she conducted research on innovative ways to control air pollution. Before becoming Interior Secretary, Norton was senior counsel at Brownstein, Hyatt & Farber, P.C. She and her husband, John Hughes, are avid hikers and outdoor enthusiasts.

---

### Awards: from cover

The 2000 Stewardship Award winners are: Devon Energy Corporation, Chevron USA Production Company and San Juan Coal Company.

Samedan Oil Corporation was the winner of the Corporate Citizen Award, an honor given to an outstanding company for both offshore operating performance and fiscal responsibility.

The Secretary also recognized the winners of the MMS Corporate Leadership Award (CORLA) for performing an act or service that enhanced the mission and objectives of the MMS.

CORLA winners were: Cyril Arney (Marathon), Jim Heimer (ExxonMobil), Tim Sampson (American Petroleum Institute) and Cheryl Stark (BP Amoco) in a group award for leadership in the development of technical standards. Tom Sellers of Conoco Oil Company received the award for outstanding

leadership in educating domestic and international groups on OCS exploration, development and regulatory policy.

Steve T. Brooks of ExxonMobil Corporation was honored for his leadership on the Deepstar regulatory committee, OOC regulations reviews and several technical standards.

#### Other CORLA Winners:

Andrew M. Burglass - Shell Exploration & Production Company: leadership in production and development training programs.

G. Hank Danos - Danos & Curole Marine Contractors: leadership in Gulf of Mexico regulatory compliance issues.

Charlie Duhon - Kerr-McGee Oil & Gas Corporation: leadership in developing safety and environment management program (SEMP) audit protocols.

Ronald G. Heck - Samedan Oil Company: leadership in 3-D seismic, rig contracting and baseline studies in the Pacific Region.

Andrew E. Levine - Tennessee Gas Pipeline Company: outstanding efforts to assist the new MMS royalty-in-kind program in gaining corporate knowledge necessary to succeed in business.

Wendy F. Daboval, Douglas A. Duke, Jimmy L. Franks, Ronnie A. Martin and Malcolm Doran Taylor, Texaco Exploration and Production, Inc., for working together on royalty valuation issues and completing compliance processes in a shorter timeframe.

Charles E. Roybal - BHP Minerals, New Mexico Operations: ongoing contributions to compliance reengineering efforts and complex valuation issues.

Blaine Wofford - Devon Energy Corporation: outstanding assistance to the royalty-in-kind program with gas plant processing economics.



# Lease Sale Attracts More than \$500 million in High Bids

*MMS staff report*

In New Orleans, the agency held a sale of offshore oil and natural gas leases in the Gulf of Mexico, attracting \$505,468,501 in high bids from 90 companies.

Of 4,390 tracts comprising approximately 23.19 million acres offshore Alabama, Louisiana and Mississippi that were offered, the MMS received 780 bids on 547 tracts.

The total of all bids was \$663,406,963. The number of tracts bid on was about 60 percent higher than the Central Gulf Sale held in 2000.

Bidding activity was very heavy for the shallow water; 338 tracts in less than 200 meters of water received 502 bids. This amounts to 64 percent of the sale. The highest bid received on a block was \$26,115,000, submitted by Exxon Asset Management Company for a block in the Mississippi Canyon.

Approximately 9 percent of the tracts receiving bids are in ultra-deep waters (more than 800 meters). The deepest tract bid on was Walker Ridge in 2,365 meters of water.

"We are very pleased with this sale," said MMS Acting Director Tom Kitsos. "Strong bidding by the independent oil and gas companies was a major part of the sale, and we are particularly pleased with the high interest shown in the shallow water area where deep gas deposits may be present." Kitsos noted that there were 11 companies who were first-time bidders.

The high bid on a block (each approximately nine square miles) will go through an evaluation process to ensure the public receives fair market value before a lease is awarded.

## Preparation of 5-Year Leasing Plan Underway

*MMS staff report*

The agency has begun soliciting comments from interested parties in preparation for a new, five-year outer continental shelf oil and gas leasing program for 2002-2007.

The program establishes the size, timing and location of OCS oil and gas leasing activity for the period it covers.

The OCS Lands Act requires the Secretary of the Interior to prepare and maintain five-year leasing programs. The new program will succeed the current one which runs through June 30, 2002.

"We are pleased to open this dialogue with the public and look forward to working with constituents and stakeholders in designing a new program that provides for sound management of the nation's offshore oil and gas resources in a manner that is responsive to the views and interests of those affected," said Tom Kitsos, acting director for the agency.

"While this is just the first step in a process that will play out over the next year and a half," Kitsos added, "it is significant because the comments and information we receive will provide a basis for framing the first draft of the next 5-year lease sale schedule.

We hope to hear from a large and broad constituency."

During the July 2002 to July 2007 time frame, the areas of the OCS off the Pacific and Atlantic coasts, a portion of the area off Florida in the Gulf of Mexico and the North Aleutian Basin area off Alaska are withdrawn from oil and gas leasing according to a 1998 presidential directive issued under the authority of section 12 of the OCS Lands Act.

None of those areas may be offered for lease under the new program unless the withdrawal is revised.

After reviewing all comments received from interested parties, the MMS will develop a schedule of lease sales for public comment. Subsequent steps in the preparation process required under the OCS Lands Act call for preparation and public issuance of two more program proposals and a final environmental impact statement before the Secretary of the Interior may approve the new program.

## New Deputy Secretary Picked

J. Steven Griles was recently picked by President Bush to serve as Deputy Secretary of the Interior. The nomination is subject to U.S. Senate confirmation.

"I am exceptionally pleased with the President's nomination of Steven Griles as Deputy Secretary," Interior secretary Norton said. "Steve will bring enormous institutional knowledge as well as extensive experience in bringing all voices together to turn environmental and energy conflicts into sound solutions. Steve's work will be critical in building partnerships and trust with all people of goodwill. I'm confident the Senate will move quickly on his confirmation."

Griles served at the Department of the Interior under President Reagan. Griles was the Assistant Secretary for Lands and Minerals Management from 1984 to 1989, Deputy Assistant Secretary for Land and Water from 1983 to 1984 and Deputy Director of the Office of Surface Mining from 1981 to 1983.

Griles currently serves as a Principal of National Environmental Strategies and as President of J. Steven Griles & Associates LLC.

From 1989 through 1995, Griles was senior vice president of Public, Environment and Marketing Activities at The United Company in Bristol, Va. Griles was also executive assistant director of the Virginia Department of Conservation and Economic Development in Richmond from 1970 to 1981.

Griles, a native Virginian, received his B.A. in Psychology and Economics from the University of Richmond in 1970 and conducted graduate studies at Virginia Commonwealth University.

The Deputy Secretary is second in command in the Department and has policy and administrative responsibility for assisting the Secretary in managing the Department's eight bureaus: the National Park Service, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Bureau of Land Management, Bureau of Indian Affairs, Minerals Management Service, Office of Surface Mining, U.S. Geological Survey, Bureau of Reclamation and the Office of Insular Affairs.

# AcrossMMS

For additional information on most of the following stories, visit our website at: [www.mms.gov](http://www.mms.gov).

## Agency Kicks into National Ocean Science Bowl

Ken Turgeon

Recently, teams of high school students converged on cities around the country over the past few weekends to test their comprehensive knowledge of the ocean sciences.

For the fourth year in a row, students participated in 19 regional competitions of the National Ocean Sciences Bowl with the goal of advancing to the national final competition in Miami, Florida, April 3-5.

But for the first time, MMS has been asked to co-fund the competition. "I'm pleased that the Consortium for Oceanographic Research and Education has requested MMS to help support the Science Bowl, and I'm pleased that we are

providing \$10,000 for this worthy ocean education activity," said MMS Acting Director Tom Kitsos. "Prior to providing funding for the Science Bowl we helped support an educational ocean drifter program for school children," Kitsos added.

This educational program was developed to stimulate interest in the ocean sciences among high school students and demonstrate to the public the importance of the oceans in our daily lives.

One of the long-term goals of the program is to foster the next generation of marine scientists, educators, and policy makers for the ocean sciences.

"We are pleased to coordinate a program that encourages science education and scientific literacy about the marine

environment," said Sarah Schoedinger, science bowl director at the Consortium for Oceanographic Research & Education.

"In the short-term," she continued "this program provides an avenue for the scientists in our community to interact with high school students and teachers in a way that is fun but also exercises their minds. In the long-term we hope that the NOSB provides new recruits to our research community as well as citizens who are better informed about our coastal areas and seas."

An estimated 2,000 students representing 264 high schools competed.

## 35 States Receive \$800 Million

MRM staff report

A record \$800 million was distributed to 35 states by the Minerals Management Service during 2000 as their cumulative share of revenues collected for mineral production on federal lands located within their borders and from federal offshore lands adjacent to their shores.

"Because of increased prices, we collected and therefore shared more revenues with the states," explained Thomas R. Kitsos, acting director for the agency. "Amounts vary according to production and market prices. \$541 million was distributed to states in 1999 and \$559 million in 1998."

The MMS is responsible for collecting, accounting for, auditing and disbursing revenues associated with mineral leases on federal and Indian lands.

Disbursements are made to states on a monthly basis, as bonuses, rents, royalties and other revenues are collected.

A state is entitled to a share of the mineral revenues collected from federal lands located within that state's boundaries. For the majority of federal lands, states and the federal government share the revenues: 50

percent to the state, 40 percent to the Reclamation Fund for water projects, and 10 percent to the General Fund of the U.S. Treasury. One exception, Alaska, gets a 90-percent share, as prescribed by the Alaska Statehood Act.

Certain coastal states with federal offshore tracts adjacent to their seaward boundaries receive 27 percent of those mineral royalties as well. Remaining offshore revenues are deposited in special accounts of the U.S. Treasury, including the General Fund, the Land and Water Conservation Fund and the Historic Preservation Fund.



MMS file photo

Money distributed to states is often used to maintain their parks and recreation areas like Anacapa Island of the Channel Islands National Park off Santa Barbara, Calif.

### States' Share of Federal Money

Alabama	\$14,935,610.13
Alaska	\$5,407,073.73
Arizona	\$62,836.48
Arkansas	\$1,430,018.03
California	\$24,882,585.36
Colorado	\$47,123,514.85
Florida	\$7,972.01
Georgia	\$54.51
Idaho	\$2,188,283.72
Illinois	\$139,593.58
Kansas	\$1,474,974.03
Kentucky	\$47,470.66
Louisiana	\$19,002,684.40
Michigan	\$479,530.02
Minnesota	\$12,536.11
Mississippi	\$1,162,688.16
Missouri	\$877,602.56
Montana	\$21,965,850.59
Nebraska	\$15,139.06
Nevada	\$2,905,398.33
New Mexico	\$258,585,797.99
North Carolina	\$118.51
North Dakota	\$4,639,925.36
Ohio	\$137,721.51
Oklahoma	\$2,524,092.05
Oregon	\$45,109.07
Pennsylvania	\$20,191.04
South Dakota	\$536,605.57
Tennessee	\$6,582.31
Texas	\$16,867,520.93
Utah	\$37,184,986.28
Virginia	\$155,757.47
Washington	\$1,677,029.22
West Virginia	\$259,214.44
Wyoming	\$333,553,356.79

**Total** **\$800,315,424.86**

# Testing Continues at Oil Spill Research Facility

By Walter Bonora

At 665 feet long and 65 feet wide it is one of the largest pools in the world. But it is not for recreation or training swimmers. The tank is used for testing and training of a different sort.

Oil spill response is the name of the game at The National Oil Spill Response Test Facility in Leonardo, New Jersey. Operated by MAR Inc, a Maryland based company under contract to the Minerals Management Service, the facility, also known as Ohmsett, is used to test equipment designed to detect, contain and clean up oil spills, as well as train response personnel in the use of the equipment.

Located an hour south of New York City, the facility features, in addition to its tank, a fully computerized data collection system, above and below waterline video and a complete oil storage and handling system. The tank has a wave maker that can reproduce various wave conditions.

Tests and training sessions are conducted throughout the year at the facility. For example, a joint project is underway between MMS and S.L. Ross, a Canadian research firm, to develop tests for dispersants (an oil spill chemical treating agent) and use the results to develop more effective and improved products. Other research will evaluate the toxicity and test the effectiveness of certain oil spill dispersants.

In late 1999, and again in the fall of 2000, the Ohmsett staff



OHMSETT file photo

An oil skimmer often used at the facility.

conducted burn tests to determine the durability of several innovative, at-sea "blankets" designed to cover and protect fire booms during burning operations at sea.

"Sometimes we cannot clean-up spilled oil fast enough," said Bob Urban of the U.S. Navy, "so we have to burn the oil. In doing so, we need to wrap fire resistant material, like a blanket, around oil containment booms."

In the tests, the blankets were set ablaze in the facility's tank at temperatures as high as 900 degrees Centigrade. "We test their resistance to fire for about three hours, and then make the determination as to whether improvements to the blankets are needed," Urban added.

Two of the blankets tested passed the standard three-hour test. But a third failed after several minutes' exposure to the flames.

Burn tests will be conducted in August to determine how well containment booms will function under at-sea conditions when exposed to the high temperatures of a burning substance. The tests sponsored by the Navy will involve igniting propane underwater to see the effects on oil containment boom equipment.

Such high temperature conditions might occur when a method known as "in situ burning," burning oil at sea under controlled conditions, is the chosen method of spill clean-up. In the event of an oil spill, the benefit of "in situ burning" is to prevent oil or other spilled substances from reaching a coastline.

The facility has been operated by t MMS since 1992. During its relative short history, more than one hundred tests and dozens of training sessions have been conducted to meet a high standard of oil spill response and research.

Clients testing equipment or attending sessions have included the U.S. Coast Guard, the Environmental Protection Agency, the Canadian Coast Guard and many national and international oil companies

"We are committed to ensuring that the best and safest technologies are used in oil spill clean-up operations," added James Lane of MMS.

## OIL SPILL RESEARCH IN ALASKA



MMS Alaska file photo

Rope Mop Skimmer Deployment in Broken Ice

Although large oil spills from offshore oil platforms are rare events, such spills are possible when a drilling, production or pipeline accident occur.

Operators are subject to stringent requirements for prevention of spills and must demonstrate a 5,000 barrel-per-

day response capability and be prepared for even larger spills.

Industry has acquired and stockpiled a vast amount of spill-response equipment for use in Alaska. Some of the equipment is stored at the drilling location to provide for an immediate response to a spill. Additional equipment is available from spill-response cooperatives if needed in the event of a very large spill.

The equipment includes everything from large offshore skimming systems and vessels to bird rehabilitation kits.

MMS periodically inspects the spill response equipment to ensure that it is available, well maintained, and appropriate for the area of operations.

MMS also requires that operators field test the equipment and conduct

response drills to ensure that personnel have been trained in the proper use of the equipment.

Also, burning spilled oil where it collected, known to the industry as "in-situ" burning, is recognized as a valuable response tool for use offshore in Alaska. "In-situ" burning can be very effective in open water with the use of fire-resistant booms and in broken-ice without the use of booms.

Recent offshore burn tests have shown that the smoke plume from "in-situ" burning would not pose a health threat to onshore communities.

But prevention of spills is still the best means to protect the environment. MMS's regulatory program includes very stringent prevention measures.





# The Global Perspective



## Workshops Key in International Relations

### APEC and China

The United States and China co-sponsored a workshop in Beijing, China in October on assessing and maintaining the integrity of offshore oil and gas facilities.

The workshop, sponsored by the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) Marine Resources Conservation Working Group, attracted over 100 participants representing 12 APEC economies. Attendees included government officials and experts from private industry and academia.

MMS organized the technical program which covered offshore platforms, pipelines and floating production systems.

### Bangladesh

The agency, under an agreement with the Department of Energy, conducted a workshop in Dhaka, Bangladesh in November on the role of regulatory agencies in the management of a nation's mineral resources.

The workshop was funded by the U.S. Agency for International Development and was co-sponsored by the Bangladesh Ministry of Energy and Mineral Resources and Petrobangla, the national oil company.

The Government of Bangladesh is establishing an autonomous regulatory body for power and gas, and MMS experts shared their experiences on the structure, function and goals of government regulatory agencies that manage energy resources.

### Kazakhstan

In Astana, Kazakhstan, MMS held a technical assistance workshop this past December, funded by the U. S. Agency for International Development (USAID). The workshop addressed key issues as they relate to the management of offshore reserves potential with a systematic program of data collection, re-



photo by Charlie Smith

The Presidential Palace in the commercial capital of Almaty, Kazakhstan

source evaluation and leasing strategy.

The workshop introduced the subject of "Value of Information" and "Bidding Theory" and was similar to the August 1999 workshop in Ashgabat, Turkmenistan that covered MMS' system for ensuring fair market return on oil and gas resources.

The agency's principal counterpart at the workshop was the Kazakhstan Ministry of Energy, Industry and Trade (MEIT). There was additional participation from the Agency for Investments, The Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Protection, the National Oil Company of Kazakhstan (Kazakhoil) and other agencies representing that nation.

*This report was prepared by Kevin Kunkel of MMS's INTERMAR office.*

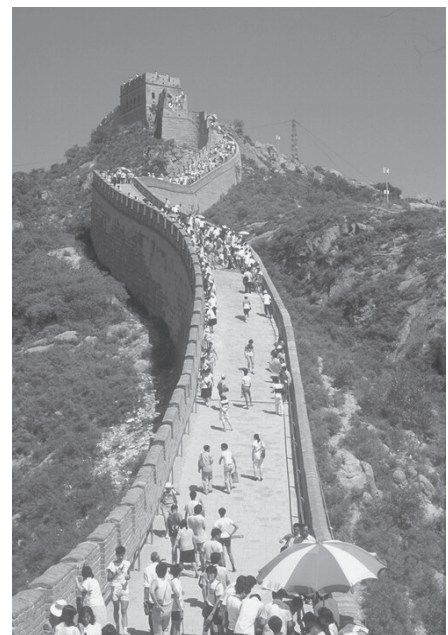


photo by Charlie Smith

The Great Wall of China





Attendees at the APEC Conference on assessing and maintaining the integrity of offshore oil and gas facilities.

MMS file photo

**The International Activities and Marine Minerals Division (INTERMAR) has a dual role in the Minerals Management Service. On behalf of the MMS, it functions as a liaison for agency involvement in international activities, and provides policy direction for management of minerals resources on the Outer Continental Shelf.**



China's Tieneman Square

photo by Charlie Smith

MMS takes an active approach to identify and become involved in international initiatives that promote better integration of safety and environmental concerns into offshore development decision-making. To do this, MMS focuses on monitoring, developing and refining safety and environmental standards; exchanges of technical information with international regulatory counterparts and providing technical advice to State Department.

### *Internationalization of Offshore Oil and Gas Standards*

Today, many offshore oil and gas producing nations are considering what role developed standards should play in their overall regulatory regime. Governments understand that, if done correctly, a set of internationalized standards, that allows for regional differences, can lower costs, make more resources economic to produce and raise worldwide safety and environmental performance.

If done incorrectly, internationalized standards that are imposed on the industry from external sources can be inefficient, costly and burdensome.





## The Agency's Cetacean Connection *by Bill Lang*

For many years scientists believed that certain whale species and other cetaceans did not inhabit the deep offshore waters of the Gulf of Mexico in significant numbers. The little that was known about Gulf marine mammals was based on opportunistic reporting of animals that washed up on the beach, and random sightings at sea. Entries in whaling logs from as early as the 1840's provided additional information.

Today nearly 28 cetacean species are known to occur in the Gulf of Mexico. The pantropical spotted dolphin is the most numerous inhabitant and is often seen in very large schools. The majority of these species stay in waters deeper than 200 meters. Only the bottlenose dolphin and Atlantic spotted dolphin are common in coastal water.

Sperm whales are the most common large whale in this body of water. For reasons not understood, baleen whales such as humpback, fin and right whales are all but absent from Gulf waters.

The Bryde's whale is the only baleen species thought to reside in the Gulf and the population is only about 50 individuals.

Four species of beaked whales are also known to roam Gulf waters. Beaked whales, which range in size from 13-43 ft., are deep diving animals, feeding mainly on fish, squid and bottom dwelling invertebrates.

Most people do not associate marine mammals in the Gulf of Mexico with MMS, the bureau of the Department of the Interior that regulates the offshore petroleum industry.

Yet, MMS has funded a number of environmental studies that address cetacean abundance and distribution related to oceanographic conditions. Recent and ongoing studies are looking at possible cetacean interaction with deepwater structures and effects of underwater noise.

"The MMS is responsible for assuring that the exploration and production of oil and gas reserves in federal waters are conducted in a manner that reduces risks to the marine environment," said Ken Turgeon, MMS's chief scientist.

"The agency strives to balance energy resource development with the protection of the human, marine and coastal environments."

All marine mammals are protected. Under federal law, it is illegal to harass,



*MMS file photo*

Two National Marine Fisheries Service scientists film a sperm whale during the cruise.

hunt, capture or kill any marine mammal in U.S. waters, except under special circumstances and with specific authorized permits. Certain marine mammal species whose continued existence appears in jeopardy are designated as threatened or endangered species.

In the Gulf of Mexico, the sperm whale is the only resident species given additional protection under the Endangered Species Act. In addition to strict laws that prohibit harm to the animals, areas of land or water critical to their survival are also protected.

Through its environmental studies program, the MMS has funded more than \$65 million in marine mammal research in Atlantic, Pacific, Gulf and Arctic waters since 1975.

Comprehensive studies focus on the distribution, abundance and behavior of marine mammals. The agency has also examined the potential effects on marine mammals of human activities such as noise, oil spills and other activities.

This information, combined with data that continues to be collected, will ensure that MMS has the information needed to prevent and regulate potential impacts from oil and gas activities on marine mammals.

As industry moves into deeper Gulf waters, more information is needed on the diverse cetacean community. The

MMS, in cooperation with the National Marine Fisheries Service and Office of Naval Research began a new multi-year research program in June 2000. In addition to cetacean surveys, the program is conducting detailed studies on sperm whales and behavioral responses to industry noise sources.

For a poster and teacher's companion please call 1-800-200-GULF.



*MMS file photo*



# Restoring Eroded U.S. Shorelines with Offshore Sand

## The Patrick Air Force Base Example

by Walter Bonora

In 1989 Hurricane Hugo slammed into coastal South Carolina, causing billions of dollars in property damage and severe beach erosion. Off the Louisiana coast, barrier islands are disappearing, and on North Carolina's Outer Banks, major Atlantic storms causes property and beachfront damage.

In fact, nearly 80 percent of the U.S. coastline has been hard hit by coastal erosion caused by storms and other factors, such as urbanization, changing sea levels, destruction of sand dunes and their grasses, shifting barrier islands and ocean currents, and coastal wave and wind action that rearrange sand deposits.

To address this critical problem, the Minerals Management Service is working with local communities, and federal and state agencies to restore eroded beaches and islands, helping to protect U.S. coastlines. The Service administers Interior's role in projects that dredge sand from federal offshore areas for these restoration efforts, ensuring that this public resource is developed in an environmentally sound manner.

The use of this offshore resource for coastline restoration, authorized in a 1994 federal law, has grown rapidly in the last several years. In 1998, MMS signed an agreement with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the National Park Service to use federal sand to restore a portion of Assateague Island in Maryland. The agency also reached an agreement that year with the city of Virginia Beach to use offshore sand to construct a beach restoration and hurricane protection project along a five-mile stretch of Sandbridge Beach, Va.

Offshore sand has also been used to rebuild beaches in Jacksonville, Fla., and Dam Neck, Virginia. From 1995 to 2000, MMS conveyed nearly 8 million cubic yards of sand for shore protection projects.

A recent example of the MMS role involves a unique initiative at Patrick Air Force Base in Brevard County, Fla. The agency is providing federal sand for shoreline restoration at the base, which will use the sand to replenish and protect their beaches from storm surges, high waves and erosion.



The agency is helping Patrick Air Force Base with its beach renourishment efforts, using sand pumped from federal waters to protect the base's beaches from erosion.

MMS file photo.

"This project will be the largest beach nourishment effort to date for Patrick Air Force Base," said Thomas Russell, a civil engineer at the base. "It also is our first attempt at pumping sand onto the beach, instead of hauling it by truck. By using dredging equipment already in place for a project in Brevard County, the base was able to reduce the overall cost of moving 600,000 cubic yards of sand for the project," Russell noted.

Carolita Kallaur, MMS associate director for Offshore Minerals Management, said MMS is working closely with the base to help protect their shoreline "in keeping with our overall

stewardship responsibilities and our obligation to the environment."

The agency's timely execution of its agreement with Patrick AFB officials allowed for the restoration work to begin immediately, resulting in an economically beneficial project for the federal government. "Working with base personnel, the Army Corps of Engineers, and representatives from Brevard County, the state of Florida, and contractor Olsen Associates, MMS was able to respond quickly so that the project could be completed in the most cost-effective way," said Kallaur.

### MMS's Environmental Studies Program Summary

The Environmental Studies Program (ESP) began in 1973 as a means to gather environmental, social and economic science information to support decision-making concerning the offshore oil and gas program.

There are three general goals for the program:

- to establish the information needed for assessment and management of environmental impacts on the human, marine and coastal environments in federal offshore waters and potentially affected coastal areas;

- to predict impacts on the marine biota which may result from chronic, low level pollution or large spills associated with OCS production; and

- to monitor human, marine and coastal environments to provide necessary information for identification of significant changes in the quality and productivity of these environments. For



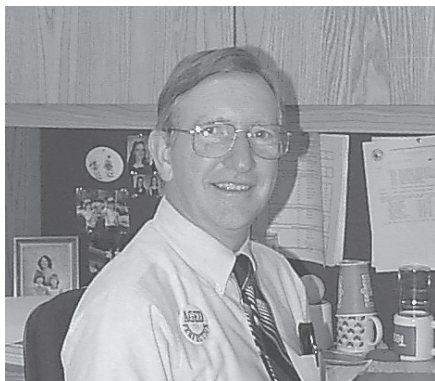
photo by Jim Nammens

Breaching Humpback whale. The agency is committed to providing energy while protecting the marine environment

a complete list of environmental studies see our website at [www.mms.gov](http://www.mms.gov) then link to offshore and the environmental program.

## Tom Ahlfeld: Oceanographer with MMS

by Blossom Robinson



Tom Ahlfeld

When Tom Ahlfeld returned to Florida for graduate school he was in for the shock of his life.

On his first day of classes at Florida State University, the professor of physical oceanography introduced himself to the roomful of prospective oceanographers. Then he looked them directly in the eyes and told them that not only would they not be able to make any money in this profession, but they would also face an amazingly incredible shortage of jobs.

By the end of the semester, the class had dwindled down to less than half the original number. Only a few dedicated and brave students remained. Lucky for MMS, Ahlfeld was one of them.

Growing up near sandy beaches and crystal blue waters, Thomas E. Ahlfeld, oceanographer for MMS, always knew that he wanted to work with marine life. The Miami, Fla. native enjoyed a childhood filled with fishing, swimming, scuba diving and snorkeling.

“At an early age, I developed a reverence and appreciation for the ocean that eventually led me to Loyola University in New Orleans.” There, Ahlfeld began his studies in biology.

After receiving his masters of science and doctorate in biological oceanography from Florida State University, Ahlfeld went to work full-time for the Department of the Interior’s Bureau of Land Management (BLM) in October 1975.

He worked as an oceanographer for the agency until MMS was established in 1982. While working for MMS, Ahlfeld not only got a chance to go on many exciting expeditions, but was also responsible for laying the foundations for many operations within the agency that run smoothly today.

While working as an oceanographer with the Environmental Sciences

Branch of MMS, Ahlfeld has overseen the development of biological and ecological monitoring studies conducted in the Atlantic and Pacific oceans, the Gulf of Mexico and in Alaska’s Beaufort Sea.

In the agency’s infant years, Ahlfeld served on the technical publications committee and accepted the responsibility of improving the dissemination of information generated by the environmental studies program.

Under this initiative, *Technical Summaries* were established. These summaries are an important part of the agency’s efforts to inform the public of the studies that are continually being conducted through the environmental studies program.

“Whenever a study is finished the findings are published in a report,” Ahlfeld explained. “These reports are often hundreds of pages long and highly technical. The average individual may not have the time to read the entire report and may not understand many of the terms. *Technical Summaries* provide a two to three page synopsis of the study. These are extremely helpful for trade reporters and the general public. The summaries are also available on the agency’s website.”

During his long tenure at MMS, Tom has also been involved in beach renourishment studies conducted off the Gulf coast of Florida. After the sand had been dredged, Tom assisted the team responsible for studying the effects of the dredging on marine organisms.

Although there are several different areas of oceanography, Ahlfeld chose biological oceanography and the study of deep-sea invertebrates for his graduate research at Florida State.

It was during that time that Tom encountered a rather delicate situation. He and the other students were doing research with the Navy off of the coasts of New Jersey and North Carolina. Their job was to study the organisms on the sea floor and how they had been affected by unused munitions that the Navy had dumped there.

During this research, the team accidentally brought up some live ordnance in a bottom trawl net making for some tense moments. “Needless to say, the ordnance was returned very carefully,” he quipped.

Ahlfeld hadn’t even started his career and already studying deep-sea invertebrates had proven to be an exciting endeavor.

Today, Ahlfeld is also responsible for coordinating MMS’ biological research

with the USGS Biological Resources Division. Some of this research deals with the identification of certain organisms and how they are interacting with their environment.

It isn’t often that species new to science are discovered, but through MMS’s environmental studies program, nearly 200 new species have been collected and identified.

When asked about his goals and dreams for the agency and the Environmental Sciences Branch, the oceanographer flashed his modest smile and shifted in his chair. But he was not uncomfortable, just serious. He wants the agency to continue to present information so that the general public can have the proper perspective on environmental issues.

“MMS has done a good job of providing the results of numerous studies to the public so that they see how the agency is striving to honor its commitment to the environment,” he said. Ahlfeld then added that “the recently expanded environmental program website (<http://www.mms.gov/eppd/index.htm>) represents a major advancement for disseminating our environmental studies information.”

Ahlfeld also wants to see the MMS continue to maintain the fair balance between offshore development and regulation. He believes that the agency can help the nation understand more about the marine environment through continued studies.

## Recent Publications

### Alaska

Alaska Annual Studies Plan-Final 2002-2003

MMS 2000-025—Mapping Cook Inlet Rip Tides Using Local Knowledge and Remote Sensing

MMS 2000-066—Aerial Surveys of Endangered Whales in the Beaufort Sea, Fall 1998-1999

MMS 2000-072—Monitoring Seabird Populations in Areas of Oil and Gas Development on the Alaskan Continental Shelf: A Computerized Pelagic Seabird Atlas for Alaska

### GOMR

Proposed Use of Floating Production, Storage, and Offloading Systems on the Gulf of Mexico Outer Continental Shelf, Western and Central Planning Areas, Final Environmental Impact Statement. OCS EIS/EA MMS 2000-090. Minerals Management Service. (2001) 782 + xv p. Available from GOM (free) and on the Internet.

Check our website [www.mms.gov](http://www.mms.gov) for a complete list of publications





## Web World: [mms.gov](http://mms.gov)

Check our websites for valuable information about this agency. Offshore, Minerals Revenue Management, environmental studies, lease sales, latest press releases, and more.

Go to [www.mms.gov](http://www.mms.gov) and navigate from there.

*(Aletcia Skinner serves as an MMS pagemaster and helped design web world)*

### Key Links

[www.mrm.mms.gov/](http://www.mrm.mms.gov/) (Minerals Revenue Management site)

[www.mms.gov/offshore/](http://www.mms.gov/offshore/) (Offshore Minerals Management site)

[www.mms.gov/ooc/newweb/ooc.html](http://www.mms.gov/ooc/newweb/ooc.html) (Communications site)

[www.mms.gov/library/](http://www.mms.gov/library/) (MMS Library)



*MMS file photo*

## X-Files Visits California Platform

By John Romero

**MMS encounters alien, paranormal activity offshore California as David Duchovny and the crew of X-Files visit Platform Houchin.**

MMS inspectors had a close encounter with the supernatural recently on Platform Houchin, an offshore production platform just over four miles off the coast of Carpinteria, Calif.

With a low hum of oil and gas production echoing throughout its maze of steel arteries, the huge 31 year-old facility provided a stark backdrop for Fox Mulder and special agent John Doggett during the recent filming of an upcoming episode of the Fox-TV hit series, the X-Files.

Cast and crew of the X-Files landed on the facility for three days of filming, including a one-day film sequence featur-

ing David Duchovny as Fox Mulder and Robert Patrick as FBI special agent John Doggett.

"Everything went as planned," said MMS onsite inspector Ralph Vasquez, "Both the operator and the production crew demonstrated a high level of safety throughout the filming."

MMS engineers and inspectors met with representatives of Pacific Offshore Operators Inc., who operate the platform, and X-Files producers prior to filming to go over safety procedures on the platform. "Offshore safety is paramount," said Shannon Shaw, MMS Camarillo District engineer. "If an opera-



*MMS file photo*

MMS Inspector Ralph Vasquez with Robert Patrick of X-Files

tor grants a production company access to their platform, we work with both the operator and the producers to outline a standard level of safety."

Vasquez agrees, "Bottom line, our goal is to ensure that all activity on the platform is conducted in a safe and environmentally responsible manner."

Many cast and crew members, including Duchovny and Patrick, were eager to learn more about OCS operations. "Most people had never seen a platform up close before let alone be on one!" Vasquez said.

Offshore platforms in California have been included in several television and motion picture productions, including Baywatch and Face-Off starring Nicolas Cage.



**NOTE:** This issue of *MMS Today* will be available in electronic format on our website. In order to reduce the number of paper copies we print and distribute, we'd like to know which format you'd prefer. If you'd like to receive an electronic version of *MMS Today*, please send an e-mail to [mms.today@mms.gov](mailto:mms.today@mms.gov), with your correct e-mail address.

## MMS Offices

### Minerals Management Service

1849 C Street, NW  
 Washington, DC 20240  
 (202) 208-3985  
 CONTACT: AB Wade

### Minerals Revenue Management

Minerals Management Service  
 P.O. Box 25165  
 Denver, CO 80225  
 (303) 231-3162  
 CONTACT: Michael Baugher

### Technical Communications Service

Minerals Management Service  
 381 Elden Street  
 Herndon, VA 20170-4817  
 (703) 787-1080  
 CONTACT: Arlene Bajusz

### Alaska OCS Region

Minerals Management Service  
 949 East 36th Avenue, Room 308  
 Anchorage, AK 99508-4363  
 (907) 271-6070  
 toll free: 1-800-764-2627  
 CONTACT: Robin Cacy

### Gulf of Mexico OCS Region

Minerals Management Service  
 1201 Elmwood Park Blvd.  
 New Orleans, LA 70123-2394  
 (504) 736-2595  
 toll free: 1-800-200-GULF  
 CONTACT: Barney Congdon

### Pacific OCS Region

Minerals Management Service  
 770 Paseo Camarillo  
 Camarillo, CA 93010  
 (805) 389-7520  
 toll free: 1-800-6PAC-OCS  
 CONTACT: John Romero

Tom Kitsos, Acting Director .....	202-208-3500
Bob Brown, Associate Director, Administration & Budget .....	202-208-3220
Walter Cruickshank, Associate Director, Policy & Management Improvement .....	202-208-3398
Lucy Querques Denett, Associate Director, Royalty Management .....	202-208-3512
Carolita Kallaur, Associate Director, Offshore Minerals Management .....	202-208-3530
John Goll, Regional Director, Alaska OCS Region .....	907-271-6010
Chris Oynes, Regional Director, Gulf of Mexico/Atlantic OCS Region .....	504-736-2589
J. Lisle Reed, Regional Director, Pacific OCS Region .....	805-389-7502
S.Dian Lawhon, Chief, Office of Public Affairs .....	202-208-3985

## MMS TODAY

Editor: Walter Bonora

U.S. Department of the Interior  
 Minerals Management Service  
 1849 C Street, NW; MS 4230  
 Washington, DC 20240

Website Address: <http://www.mms.gov>

*Remember to include your mailing label ID in all correspondence.*



**FIRST-CLASS MAIL**  
 POSTAGE & FEES PAID  
 DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
 PERMIT NO. G-270

