

**The NewsRoom**

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**Secretary of Interior Norton Presents Awards for Outstanding Service & Valor at 62nd Awards Ceremony in Washington, D.C.**

Secretary of the Interior, Gale Norton, today honored Minerals Management Service employees as part of the 62<sup>nd</sup> Department Honor Awards Convocation.

"Those being honored today have made all of us proud. They have gone beyond the decision to serve. They have made their choice their calling," Secretary Norton remarked in opening the ceremony in the Sidney Yates Auditorium at the main Interior building in Washington, D.C.

The various categories of awards covered employees who made exceptional efforts of public conservation and invaluable behind-the-scene contributions.

**MMS Recipients of the Secretary's Four C's Award**

The Secretary's Four C's Award is granted to a Department of the Interior employee, or a group or team of employees who demonstrate exceptional contributions, methods and efforts to promote the Secretary's initiatives. An individual or group/team nominated for this award must demonstrate excellent communicative relationships with all stakeholders involved in decisions that concern our nation's natural resources, creating win-win situations for stakeholders, as well as for the environment.

**Alaska Outer Continental Shelf Region**

The Alaska OCS Region was recognized with the Four C's Award for their exemplary service in the areas of exploration, development, and production of oil and gas in the OCS offshore Alaska. The region has established a continuing dialogue and cooperative relationship throughout the state of Alaska with local and Tribal officials who are most affected by oil and gas activities.

To further the goals and missions of MMS and DOI, the region has worked with Alaska native communities and local governments to build understanding and mutual respect and to ensure the need for continued environmentally safe exploration and production of domestic oil and gas resources on the OCS.

**Gulf of Mexico Protected Species Team**

The Gulf of Mexico Protected Species Team earned a Four C's Award for addressing the issue of the contribution of seismic surveys to underwater noise "pollution" and the effects of intense sound sources, such as air guns, on marine whales and turtles, especially sperm whales, in the Gulf of Mexico

The team has worked closely to form partnerships and exchange information to develop protective measures that are compatible with industry operations, design

and perform experimental studies and share the high cost of oceanographic research. By taking an active role in promoting communication among the various parties involved, the team was able to organize meetings and developing cooperation among various academic researchers, seismic industry representatives and a number of non-governmental organizations.

### **Indian Outreach Team**

The MMS Indian Outreach Team received the Four C's Award because of their outstanding contributions to Indian tribes and individual Indian mineral owners in establishing long-term partnerships designed to conserve natural energy resources and strengthen infrastructures and economies for future generations.

The team organizes and participates in over 60 outreach sessions in Indian country and resolves 7,000 Indian inquiries every year, reaching 30,000 individual Indian mineral owners. They provide exemplary coordination and integration skills with other Department bureaus by communicating with the Bureau of Indian Affairs, the Bureau of Land Management, and the Office of Trust Funds Management personnel. This results in building consensus and achieving "win-win" situations where information is provided to the Indians and public on the Department's mission.

### **MMS Distinguished Service Award Recipients**

The Distinguished Service Award is the highest honorary recognition an employee can receive within the Department of the Interior. It is granted for an outstanding contribution to science, outstanding skill or ability in the performance of duty, outstanding contribution made during an eminent career in the Department or any other exceptional contribution to the public service.

#### **MMS Recipients:**

**Don W. Hill**, Offshore Energy and Minerals Management Program (retired)

**Richard L. Wilhelmsen**, Pacific Outer Continental Shelf Region

**Richard E. Defenbaugh**, Gulf of Mexico Outer Continental Shelf Region.

**Charles J. Schoennagel, Jr.**, Gulf of Mexico Outer Continental Shelf Region.

### **MMS HealthierFeds Award Recipient**

A government-wide initiative to promote physical activity and healthier habits among federal employees resulted in the HealthierFeds Physical Activity Challenge. The Challenge was from October 4 to December 10, 2004. These awards recognize the bureaus with the highest percentage of their employees completing the challenge, the bureaus' points of contact for their dedication and significant contributions.

**Staci Atkins**, Administration and Budget

MMS, a bureau of the U.S. Department of the Interior, oversees 1.76 billion acres

of the Outer Continental Shelf, managing offshore energy and minerals while protecting the human, marine, and coastal environments through advanced science and technology research. The OCS provides 30 percent of oil and 23 percent of natural gas produced domestically, and sand used for coastal restoration. MMS collects, accounts for, and disburses mineral revenues from Federal and American Indian lands, with fiscal year 2004 disbursements of around \$8 billion and more than \$143 billion since 1982. The Land and Water Conservation Fund, which pays for acquisition of state and federal park and recreation land, gets nearly \$1 billion a year.

**Relevant Web Sites:**

[BOEM Main Website](#)

**Media Contacts:**

**Gary Strasburg** (202) 208-3985

[MMS: Securing Ocean Energy & Economic Value for America](#)  
U.S. Department of the Interior

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