

November 17, 2004

Notice of Availability of the Environmental Assessment for Proposed Eastern Planning Area Lease Sale 197

(OCS EIS/EA MMS 2004-069)

The Minerals Management Service (MMS) has prepared an environmental assessment (EA) for proposed Gulf of Mexico Outer Continental Shelf (OCS) Eastern Planning Area (EPA) Lease Sale 197. Proposed EPA Lease Sale 197 is the second EPA lease sale scheduled in the OCS Oil and Gas Leasing Program: 2002-2007. In this EA, MMS reexamined the potential environmental effects of the proposed action and its alternative based on any new information regarding potential impacts and issues that were not available at the time the *Gulf of Mexico OCS Oil and Gas Lease Sales 189 and 197; Eastern Planning Area; Final Environmental Impact Statement; Volumes I and II* (multisale EIS) was completed in May 2003. This EA is tiered from the multisale EIS.

The multisale EIS analyzed the effects of a typical EPA lease sale by presenting a set of ranges for resource estimates, project exploration and development activities, and impact-producing factors for either of the proposed EPA lease sales. The level of activities projected for proposed Lease Sale 197 falls within these ranges. No new significant impacts were identified for proposed Lease Sale 197 that were not already assessed in the multisale EIS. As a result, MMS determined that a supplemental EIS was not required and prepared a Finding of No New Significant Impact (FONNSI).

Interested parties may submit written comments on this EA/FONNSI to the Regional Supervisor, Leasing and Environment (MS 5410), Gulf of Mexico OCS Region, Minerals Management Service, 1201 Elmwood Park Boulevard, New Orleans, Louisiana 70123-2394. Comments should be made within 30 days of the Notice of Availability in the [Federal Register](#) and enclosed in an envelope labeled "Comments on EPA Lease Sale 197 EA/FONNSI." You may also send comments to the MMS email address: environment@boemre.gov. All comments received will be considered in the decisionmaking process for EPA Lease Sale 197.

To obtain a copy of this EA, you may contact the Minerals Management Service, Gulf of Mexico OCS Region, Attention: Public Information Office (MS 5034), 1201 Elmwood Park Boulevard, Room 114, New Orleans, Louisiana 70123-2394 (1-800-200-GULF). You may also view this EA on the MMS website at <http://www.gomr.mms.gov>.

The Minerals Management Service 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 American Indian lands. MMS disbursed more than \$8 billion in FY 2003 and more than \$135 billion since the agency was created in 1982. Nearly \$1 billion from those revenues go into the Land and Water Conservation Fund annually for the acquisition and development of state and Federal park and recreation lands.