



FOR RELEASE: July 7, 1999

Barney Congdon
(504) 736-2595

Caryl Fagot
(504) 736-2590

Scoping Meetings

To Receive Public Input for a Draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) On Proposed Eastern Gulf of Mexico OCS Oil and Gas Lease Sale 181

Introduction

On January 25, 1999, the Minerals Management Service (MMS) published, in the *Federal Register*, the Call for Information and Nominations (CALL) and the Notice of Intent (NOI) to Prepare an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) on proposed OCS oil and gas lease sales in the Eastern Gulf of Mexico (EGOM). In order to provide an early and open process for determining the scope of the EIS and for identifying the significant issues, alternatives, and potential mitigating measures to be addressed in the EIS, MMS will hold formal scoping meetings. Many comments have already been received in response to the CALL/NOI. Those statements are considered part of the scoping comments. Additional written scoping comments will be accepted during the actual meetings and through the mail until August 6, 1999. The EGOM Sale 181 is tentatively scheduled for December 2001.

The scoping meetings are scheduled as follows:

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Monday, July 19, 1999 7:00-10:00 p.m. Civic Center Port Sulphur, Louisiana | Tuesday, July 20, 1999 6:00-10:00 p.m. Ramada Plaza Hotel, 600 South Beltline Highway Mobile, Alabama | Wednesday, July 21, 1999 2:00-6:00 p.m. Civic Center 505 West Pensacola Street Tallahassee, Florida |
| Thursday, July 22, 1999 6:00-10:00 p.m. New World Landing 600 South Palafox Street Pensacola, Florida | Tuesday, July 27, 1999 7:00-10:00 p.m. Plantation Inn 1381 West Tunnel Boulevard Houma, Louisiana | |

In addition to this special information packet that has been distributed to an extensive list of interested parties, the MMS will also advertise the upcoming scoping meetings in local newspapers.

Scoping Meeting Format

A sign-in table will be available at each scoping meeting location. Participants will be requested to sign in, providing their name and address. The meetings will begin with a presentation by a MMS representative. The presentation will include a discussion of the purpose of the scoping meetings, the overall EIS process, and a schedule for the EIS. Following the presentation, time will be allotted for questions from the audience in order to clarify the purpose of the scoping meetings and to ensure that participants possess a general understanding of the proposal so they can provide meaningful input to the EIS process. It should be emphasized that the purpose of the scoping meetings is to **receive public input into the EIS process** to ensure that the EIS will be thorough and will address all pertinent issues. The decision to prepare an EIS has been made and information contained in the EIS will play a major role in the decision of whether or not to hold the proposed lease sale. Statements presented at the scoping meetings that merely reflect opposition or support for the proposed project will be of little use in preparation of the EIS.

The audience scoping comments will be handled by two MMS staff members, with one serving as a facilitator and one as a recorder. The procedure will entail going around the room in a round-robin fashion, allowing participants to state what topics or issues they wish to have addressed in the EIS. The facilitator will work with each individual to agree on the actual wording to ensure that their concern is properly expressed; the recorder will write it on an easel pad. Each person will be allowed to bring up one item at a time, and the process will continue until no one has further comments to offer. An open dialogue will be maintained between the participants and MMS staff as needed to answer questions and to clarify certain matters. However, lengthy discussion of technical issues that will ultimately be addressed in the EIS will be avoided.

The MMS looks forward to meeting with the public to receive their valuable input to the EIS process. Any questions regarding the upcoming scoping meetings should be directed to Dr. Ann Scarborough-Bull at (504) 736-2794.

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

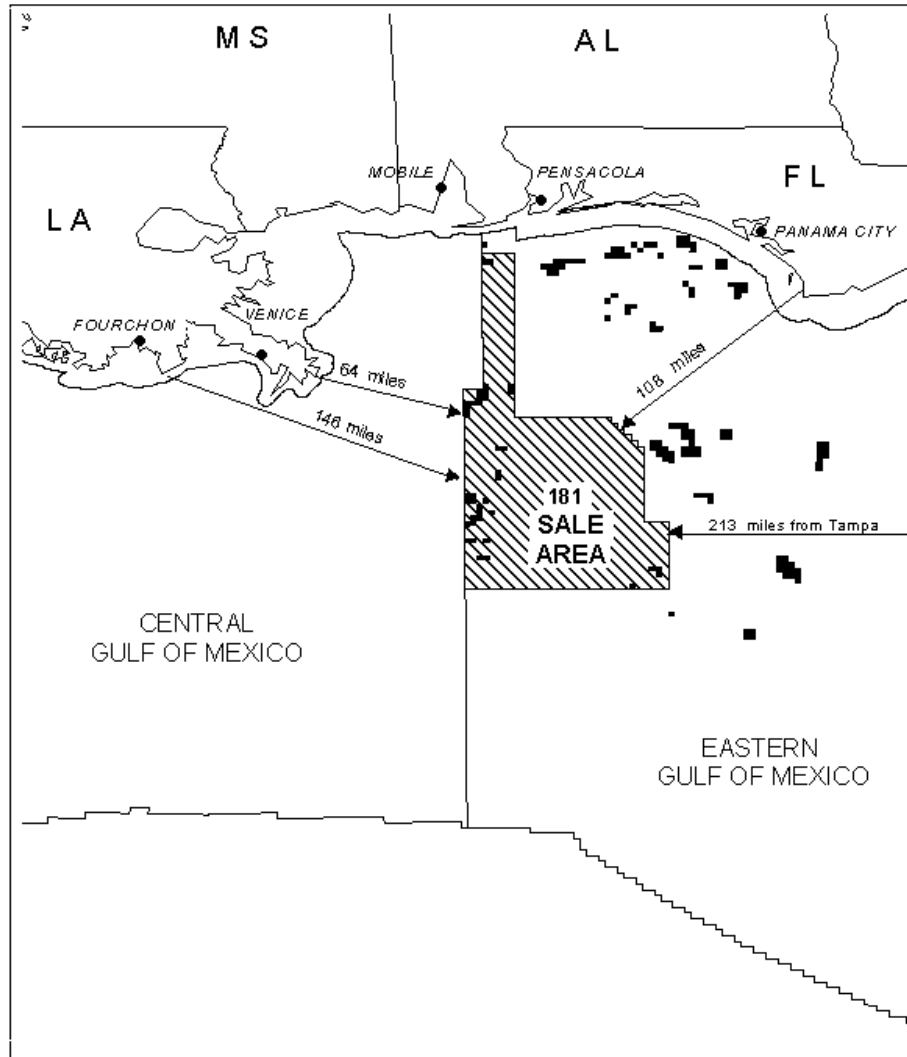
-MMS-GOM-

MMS's Website Address: www.mms.gov
24 Hour Fax-on-Demand Service: 202-219-1703


MMS

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

Eastern Gulf of Mexico Proposed Sale 181



30 0 30 60 Miles

 Available for Leasing Consideration

 Active Leases