



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

FOR RELEASE:

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**MMS to Prepare Environmental Assessment
for Proposed Eastern Gulf of Mexico Lease Sale 181**

The Minerals Management Service (MMS) announced that it is preparing an environmental assessment (EA) for the reduced area configuration of the proposed Eastern Gulf of Mexico (GOM) Lease Sale 181. A notice of intent to prepare the EA was published in the [Federal Register](#) on July 27, 2001.

The MMS proposes to offer for lease blocks offshore Alabama in the westernmost portion of the Eastern Planning Area of the GOM outer continental shelf (OCS). This proposed sale is the only sale in the Eastern Gulf Planning Area scheduled during the current 5-Year Oil and Gas Leasing Program, and the first proposed sale in the area since 1988.

The reduced Lease Sale 181 area represents about 25 percent of the original proposed Lease Sale 181 area, and encompasses 256 blocks, about 1.5 million acres, located 100 to 200 miles offshore Alabama in water depths ranging from 1,600 to 3,000 meters. An Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) had been prepared on the original proposed area. The EA is being prepared because the current reduced sale configuration area was developed after publication of the Final EIS, and was not one of the alternatives evaluated in the Final EIS.

Interested parties have an opportunity to submit comments specific to the environmental issues related to the reduced lease sale area on or before August 27, 2001. These comments should be sent to Minerals Management Service, Gulf of Mexico OCS Region, Office of Leasing and Environment, Attention: Regional Supervisor (MS 5400), 1201 Elmwood Park Boulevard, New Orleans, Louisiana 70123-2394. All comments received will be considered during preparation of the EA.

MMS 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 Indian leases. These collections totaled nearly \$8 billion last year and more than \$110 billion since the Agency was created in 1982. Annually, nearly \$1 billion from those revenues go into the Land and Water Conservation Fund for the acquisition and development of state and Federal park and recreation lands.

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MMS's Website Address: <http://www.mms.gov>