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MMS EXTENDS AGREEMENT WITH VIRGINIA TO STUDY SAND RESOURCES (#40068)

The U.S. Department of the Interior's Minerals Management Service (MMS) has awarded \$100,000 to the Virginia Institute of Marine Science (VIMS), of the College of William and Mary, for further studies and inventories of federal sand resources offshore their state, MMS officials announced today. Over the past two years, MMS has granted \$204,500 to VIMS for sand resource studies.

"This contract is a continuation of the partnership between MMS and the Commonwealth of Virginia to examine sand resources on the Outer Continental Shelf (OCS) between Cape Henry, VA and the North Carolina border," said MMS Acting Director Cynthia Quarterman.

"Researchers are focusing on sand resources that closely match the quality of beach sand in the areas of Virginia Beach and the Sandbridge community. A suitable match in sand quality facilitates the beach nourishment and restoration process," Quarterman said.

The project will involve collection of samples for future sediment, chemical, and biological references. Modeling of wave patterns near Sandbridge and a nearshore circulation study using remote sensing are scheduled for completion. "This environmental benchmarking is an important first step," said Quarterman, "should the offshore resources be needed at a later time.

"In previous years, the cooperative effort with VIMS has made significant progress," she said.

-- In 1992, work resulted in a geologic assessment of the southern section of the continental shelf offshore Virginia, and preliminary environmental modeling of the Sandbridge Shoal.

-- The 1993-1994 efforts focused on analyses of Sandbridge Shoal that included creation of a 3-dimensional geological model, enhanced wave analyses, and sediment sampling operations to confirm resource quality.

Similar efforts to evaluate marine mineral resources -- including other nonenergy minerals -- in federal waters have been initiated with all other states on the East Coast and the Gulf of

Mexico. As with MMS' other programs, the focus is on the assessment of selected sand deposits, and the evaluation of environmental, engineering and economic impacts related to sand extraction and placement.

MMS administers the federal offshore minerals program and manages the mineral royalty collection program for federal and Indian lands. The MMS Office of International Activities and Marine Minerals (INTERMAR) is responsible for the management of OCS sand and other nonenergy mineral resources. For more information contact INTERMAR at (703) 787-1300.

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