MMS

NEWS RELEASE

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MMS ANNOUNCES FINAL RULE ON GEOLOGICAL AND
GEOPHYSICAL EXPLORATIONS OF THE OCS

The U.S. Department of the Interior's Minerals Management Service is issuing a final rule covering requirements for the conduct of geological and geophysical (G&G) data collection. The final rule will be published in the *Federal Register* on December 24 and will go into effect on January 23, 1998.

This new rule clarifies obligations of third parties who obtain data and information collected under a G&G permit, updates addresses for filing a notice or applying for a permit, standardizes definitions and archaeological requirements, and reflects changes in technology. Operators will be required to notify MMS of all scientific research activities on the Outer Continental Shelf (OCS).

These modifications will enable MMS to ensure all G&G operations related to natural gas, oil, and sulphur are conducted in an environmentally sound manner, and to expedite applications and notices to MMS, and make regulatory language more clear and understandable. The final rule also clarifies MMS's existing ability under the OCS Lands Act to acquire G&G data and information that are necessary for determination of fair market value for leases, especially in areas of complex geology, and for analyses or assessments for royalty relief, and other purposes.

In order to assist industry in understanding how MMS will implement the final rule, MMS will conduct a meeting with industry and other interested parties in the Gulf of Mexico Region following publication of a meeting time in the *Federal Register*.

MMS is the federal agency that manages the Nation's natural gas, oil and other mineral resources on the OCS, and collects, accounts for and disburses about $4 billion yearly in revenues from offshore federal mineral leases and from onshore mineral leases on federal and Indian lands.

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