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MMS CELEBRATES THE "YEAR OF THE OCEAN" CAMPAIGN

The United Nations has declared 1998 as the International Year of the Ocean (YOTO) and the Department of the Interior's Minerals Management Service (MMS) will participate in a year-long initiative to recognize the importance of the world's oceans. This designation is an opportunity to promote public awareness of the importance the ocean plays in our lives and to initiate changes needed to sustain the marine resources on which we depend.

MMS, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, Environmental Protection Agency, Department of the Navy and at least 25 other Federal agencies have joined together to launch a public outreach campaign designed to focus attention on the importance of the oceans and marine environments as resources for sustainable development.

"As we enter 1998," said MMS Director Cynthia Quarterman, "we will highlight YOTO objectives and goals in every aspect of our work. Throughout the year, MMS will continue to foster cooperative efforts with industry, our constituents, and the general public to exemplify the importance of managing America's offshore energy resources, while at the same time, protecting America's coastal and marine environments."

The oceans are a fragile environment, and increasing demands have placed them at risk. It is the mission and responsibility of agencies like MMS, working with partners, to ensure the safe stewardship of our oceans so that future generations can enjoy their benefits while ensuring their survival.

The agency regards environmental safety and protection of marine life a top priority, and continually seeks improvements that reduce risks to marine habitats. MMS accomplishes this through both strong regulatory programs and an equally strong research program. Each year, MMS funds scientific research projects that study the possible effects of natural gas and oil development on coastal and marine environments and by funding marine mammal research studies.

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 over \$4 billion yearly in revenues from offshore federal mineral leases and from onshore mineral leases on federal and Indian lands.

Additional information about YOTO can be found at www.yoto.com, as well as at www.mms.gov/yoto.htm.

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