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BOEMRE Awards Contract for Mid-Atlantic Study

Partnership with NOAA and USGS to Examine Biological Habitats and Archaeological Resources

WASHINGTON, DC — The Bureau of Ocean Energy Management, Regulation and Enforcement (BOEMRE) today announced it has awarded nearly \$3 million to CSA International to conduct an environmental and archaeological study on mid-Atlantic deepwater hard bottom habitats and shipwrecks.

Each year, BOEMRE funds about \$30 million for environmental studies off the Atlantic and Pacific Coasts, Alaska, and the Gulf of Mexico. Information gained from these studies contributes significantly to knowledge about our oceans and informs U.S. policy decisions regarding offshore energy development.

"We will continue to seek out opportunities to work with our federal partners to enhance knowledge of our oceans and advance the work within the scientific community," said BOEMRE Director Michael R. Bromwich.

The study, slated to begin in early 2011, will be sponsored by the National Oceanographic Partnership Program and is a collaborative effort between BOEMRE, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Office of Ocean Exploration and Research (OER) and the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS). NOAA OER will provide two research vessels and a remotely operated vehicle, and USGS scientists will be working alongside researchers from CSA International.

The study will explore and examine selected habitats that will refine and extend the understanding of the distribution and complexity of hard bottom communities in the mid-Atlantic area. One objective of the study will be to determine environmental conditions that influence distribution of sensitive communities, especially regarding communities that are sensitive to oil and natural gas development.

The exploration and research effort will also be directed toward archaeological artifacts such as shipwrecks. Surveys and site-specific studies will be conducted to obtain necessary information for the avoidance of such artifacts if energy development operations were to one day be permitted in the area.

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