THE NEWS ROOM

FOR RELEASE:
November 15, 2010

THE BUREAU OF OCEAN ENERGY MANAGEMENT, REGULATION AND ENFORCEMENT

Office of Public Affairs

BOEMRE Completes Comparison Study of Fish Living at Pacific Offshore Oil and Gas Platforms and Natural Reefs

Knowledge of Fish Populations to Assist Scientific Analyses of Future Platform Decommissioning Offshore California

CAMARILLO, CA – The Bureau of Ocean Energy Management, Regulation and Enforcement (BOEMRE) today released the results from a six-year study of the different types of fish that reside around offshore oil and gas production platforms off the coast of California compared to the species that inhabit natural reefs in the same geographic area. Of particular note, the commercially depleted species of rockfish were found in abundance around oil and gas platforms.

The regional study, entitled Fish Assemblages Associated with Platforms and Natural Reefs in Areas Where Data are Non-Existent or Limited, finds that platforms harbor an abundance of juvenile and adult rockfish. The study will enhance the agency's scientific knowledge for analyzing potential effects on fish populations of future decommissioning of oil and gas platforms on the Pacific Outer Continental Shelf (OCS).

"As the nation looks ahead to the decommissioning of numerous offshore oil and gas platforms along the West Coast, we need to better understand the marine environment that has developed on and around these man-made structures," said BOEMRE Director Michael R. Bromwich. "This research will be a critical tool in our work to decommission facilities in an environmentally safe and responsible manner."

Researchers observed fish gatherings from the surface to the seafloor in the vicinity of platforms and natural reefs over a six-year period, from 2004 through 2009. The analyses were based on 40 submersible and hundreds of SCUBA dives on platforms and on 133 submersible and hundreds of SCUBA dives on natural reefs located offshore southern California. Researchers found that platforms harbor higher densities of both young and adults of economically important species than do most natural sites. The study also shows that fish groups found at platforms and natural sites are different and that many of the platforms serve as nursery grounds for a variety of depleted stocks of rockfish.

The Fish Assemblages report (BOEMRE 2010-012) can be accessed through the BOEMRE Environmental Studies Program Information System (ESPIS) database at: **https://www.gomr.boemre.gov/homepg/espis/espisfront.asp**.

This study was conducted through a Cooperative Agreement with the Marine Science Institute of the University of California Santa Barbara.

Contact: BOEMRE Public Affairs-Pacific