



U.S. Department of the Interior
Minerals Management Service
Gulf of Mexico OCS Region

Technical Announcement

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**Long-Term Monitoring of the East and West Flower Garden Banks
National Marine Sanctuary, 1998-2001: Final Report**

OCS Study MMS 2003-031

The Minerals Management Service (MMS), Gulf of Mexico OCS Region, announces the availability of a new study report, *Long-Term Monitoring of the East and West Flower Garden Banks National Marine Sanctuary, 1998-2001: Final Report*.

This report presents results of a monitoring study begun in 1988. Monitoring cruises were conducted in September 1998, 1999, 2000, and 2001. Data collection was conducted within previously established 100 by 100 m study sites on both the East and West Flower Garden Banks (FGB). Repetitive and random, nondestructive photographic techniques provided data pertaining to the condition of coral reef organisms, particularly coral species occurring on the banks. Percent cover of scleractinian corals and other major reef biota was determined from digitized images from random and repetitive photography of the coral reef community. Repetitive photography and sclerochronology were used to determine lateral growth rates of selected coral species. Growth rates and cover of live corals were compared between this study and previous studies conducted within the same study sites. Additionally, water quality, insolation, and temperature parameters were monitored at both sites. Through the 1998-2001 sample periods, the FGB appeared to be healthy and productive. No impact from oil and gas activity in the area has been documented before or after Sanctuary designation, and recreational activities have not been demonstrated to have a negative impact on the coral communities. No significant upward or downward trends in growth rates were evident and no correlations of growth to environmental parameters could be ascertained. Rates of coral growth at the Flower Garden Banks were in the mid- to upper range of growth rates of corals at various Caribbean Sea reefs.

This report is available only in compact disc format. The discs are available from the Minerals Management Service, Gulf of Mexico OCS Region, at a charge of \$15.00 by referencing OCS Study MMS 2003-031. You will be able to obtain this report also from the National Technical Information Service in the near future. Here are the addresses. You may also inspect copies at selected Federal Depository Libraries.

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MMS is the Federal agency in the U.S. Department of the Interior that manages the nation's oil, natural gas, and other mineral resources on the outer continental shelf in Federal offshore waters. The agency also collects, accounts for, and disburses mineral revenues from Federal and American Indian leases. These revenues totaled over \$6 billion in 2002 and nearly \$127 billion since the agency was created in 1982. Annually, nearly \$1 billion from those revenues go into the Land and Water Conservation Fund for the acquisition and development of state and Federal park and recreation lands.

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MMS's Website Address: <http://www.mms.gov>

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