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Minerals Management Service
Gulf of Mexico OCS Region

Technical Announcement

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Environmental Justice Considerations in Lafourche Parish, Louisiana

OCS Study MMS 2003-038

The Minerals Management Service (MMS), Gulf of Mexico OCS Region, announces the availability of a new study report, *Environmental Justice Considerations in Lafourche Parish, Louisiana*.

Under Executive Order 12898 (59 FR 7629), the MMS must gauge the potential impacts of the OCS program on vulnerable populations (an issue referred to as Environmental Justice). This study provides a characterization of environmental justice from potential hazards and impacts of OCS-related activities in Lafourche Parish, Louisiana, a principal land-based supply center for offshore activity occurring in the Gulf of Mexico. Five different classes of OCS-related activities are identified as being potentially hazardous to nearby communities. Transportation corridors, oil and natural gas pipelines, petroleum bulk storage facilities, shipyards, and natural gas processing plants are all located in Lafourche Parish. The vulnerability zones for the facilities modeled range from one-half mile for transportation corridors, crude oil pipelines, petroleum bulk storage facilities, and shipyards to 1 mile for the natural gas processing plants and natural gas pipelines. These distances represent the distance emergency response workers would need to evacuate nearby populations in case of a fire involving the specific substances at the site. The potential geographic and demographic impacts of OCS-related hazards on minority and low-income populations are identified using GIS techniques to integrate OCS-related activities, census data, and digital transportation data.

The patterns of racial and ethnic distributions around these facilities show a similar pattern. The most equitable distribution is found around the pipelines. Each of the other facilities shows particular patterns of racial and ethnic inequalities, most pronounced in the case of the Houma Indian population around each facility. The exceptions to this pattern are the petroleum bulk storage facilities, which are located in Port Fourchon and Thibodaux. The area around Port Fourchon is sparsely populated. Conversely, Thibodaux is a densely populated urban area. However, very little OCS-related activities occur in and around the city. The areas of greatest potential environmental justice impact are in those communities living along the levees in the southern portion of Bayou Lafourche, and to a lesser extent along Bayou Pointe au Chien, on the western border of the parish. Communities along Louisiana Highway 1 and Bayou Lafourche, such as Lockport, Larose and Golden Meadow, are home to OCS-related infrastructure, such as shipyards, gas processing plants, and pipelines. Larose hosts the greatest number of hazardous chemical routes, including Louisiana Highway 1, the Gulf Intracoastal Waterway, and Bayou Lafourche, and is home to two large shipyards and a gas processing plant. It has a relatively large population and is home to higher than average populations of Houma Indians, African-Americans, Asians, and Hispanics. For this reason, Larose represents an area of particular environmental justice concern. Many Houma Indians also hunt, trap, and fish in the region. Two areas have been identified as being of particular concern in this regard - the area around the community of Grand Bois, near the Terrebonne Parish border, and the wetlands to the west of Golden Meadow.

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 2003-038. 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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The Minerals Management Service 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 lands. MMS disbursed more than \$8 billion in FY 2003 and more than \$135 billion since the agency was created in 1982. Nearly \$1 billion from those revenues go into the Land and Water Conservation Fund annually 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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