

FOR RELEASE: February 22, 1994 CONTACT: John Barclay
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MMS WINS AWARD FOR "ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP"
IN FLOWER GARDEN BANKS NATIONAL MARINE SANCTUARY (#40013)

HOUSTON, TX -- The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration tonight honored the Interior Department's Minerals Management Service (MMS) for providing 20 years of protection for the Flower Garden Banks National Marine Sanctuary.

The award, presented during a "Night on the Flower Gardens" event at the Houston Museum of Natural Science, honored MMS for "its exemplary commitment to funding surveys, research, and monitoring on the banks," according to officials of the host organizations. Those included the Sanctuary, the Museum, the Flower Gardens Fund and the Gulf Reef Environmental Action Team. Tonight's event was the second annual in what sponsors say will be an ongoing series. Last year's celebration drew some 400 attendees.

"This award is truly special to us," said agency Director Tom Fry, who accepted the award. "It comes from an agency charged with protecting America's oceans. The award recognizes that, while MMS is in the business of offshore energy production, we do our job with a strong environmental conscience and with a commitment to an environmental ethic. Both NOAA and we understand that energy production and environmental sensitivity can co-exist in a positive way.

"MMS has spent more than \$7 million to do research on the Flower Garden Banks," he said. "We'll be spending more in the years ahead. It's important to gather and use good scientific information, to keep learning, so that the generations following us will have the Flower Garden Banks to enjoy as we have."

-MMS-

Subject: PR-2/23/94 Flower Garden Banks/MMS Honored by NOAA for Flower Garden Banks Nat'l Marine Sanctuary (#40013)