



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

FOR RELEASE: March 18, 1998

CONTACT: Barney Congdon
(504) 736-2595

John Romero
(504) 736-2775

Anne-Berry
Wade
(202) 208-3985

Lease Sale in Gulf of Mexico Attracts \$810 Million in High Bids

The U.S. Department of the Interior's Minerals Management Service (MMS) today held a sale of offshore oil and natural gas leases in the Central Gulf of Mexico attracting \$810,421,404 in high bids from 75 companies.

Sale 169 was held in New Orleans and received 1,188 bids on 794 offshore tracts; 4,180 tracts comprising approximately 22.55 million acres offshore Alabama, Louisiana, and Mississippi were offered. The total of all bids was \$1,349,676,391.

The highest bid received was \$28,005,120 submitted jointly by Statoil Exploration (US) Inc. and Sun Operating Limited Partnership for Green Canyon, Block 955. According to agency officials, approximately 68% of the tracts receiving bids are in ultra deep water (i.e. water depth of more than 800 meters). The deepest tract bid on was in 3,225 meters of water.

"This sale has attracted the third highest number of bids on Central Gulf of Mexico leases following 1996 and 1997. I believe these numbers demonstrate that the Gulf continues to be one of the most attractive areas for oil and gas exploration in the world. The development and production of the resources that will result from this sale will generate significant economic benefits throughout the United States. The commitment of the MMS is also to ensure that these activities will continue to be conducted in an environmentally safe and sound manner," said MMS Director Cynthia Quarterman.

The high bid on a block will go through an evaluation process to ensure that the public receives fair market value before a lease is awarded; each block is approximately nine square miles.

MMS is the Federal Agency that manages the Nation's oil and gas and other mineral resources on the OCS and collects, accounts for, and disburses about \$6 billion yearly in revenues from Federal offshore leases and Federal and Indian onshore mineral leases.

-MMS-GOM-

MMS's Website Address: www.mms.gov
24 Hour Fax-on-Demand Service: 202-219-1703

