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News Release: Rigs Drilling in Deepwater Gulf Reaches Record High

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July 20, 2000

The number of rigs drilling in deepwater in the Gulf of Mexico rose to a record high of 34 this week, according to the Department of the Interior's Minerals Management Service (MMS).

MMS Director Walt Rosenbusch commented that "This level of deepwater oil and gas activity has never been reached before. It illustrates the tremendous level of economic activity that is flowing into the deepwater portion of the Gulf of Mexico. Just last year, there were only 26 rigs working in deepwater." MMS defines deepwater as 1,000 feet of water or greater.

Independent oil and gas companies are drilling thirteen of the thirty-four wells. These include Conoco in 5,898' of water, Marathon in 5,620', Anadarko in 4,320', Kerr-McGee in 3,678', and Mariner Energy in 3,462'. Others include EEX, McMoRan, Amerada Hess, Union Pacific, Walter Oil and Gas, and Elf.

Director Rosenbusch also noted, "Several companies have filed plans for additional deepwater drilling later this year, so it is possible that the record will soon be broken again. We have seen the level of drilling and production continue to rise, and this confirms that the deepwater Gulf of Mexico is America's emerging frontier."

For additional information about deepwater activity, MMS has published an 89-page report describing *Deepwater Gulf of Mexico: America's Emerging Frontier* (OCS Report MMS 2000-022). The report is available online through the MMS Gulf of Mexico OCS Region website at www.gomr.mms.gov/homepg/whatsnew/techann/000022.html. The report can also be ordered from the Gulf of Mexico OCS Region Public Information at 1-800-200-GULF.

MMS is the Federal agency that manages the Nation's natural gas, oil and other mineral resources on the OCS, and collects, accounts for and disburses about \$4 billion yearly in revenues from offshore Federal mineral leases and from onshore mineral leases on Federal and Indian lands.

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