

THE NEWS ROOM

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BOEMRE Approves Gulf of Mexico Deepwater Exploration Plan Supported by Post-Deepwater Horizon Environmental Review

First Initial Plan to Undergo Site-Specific Environmental Review

NEW ORLEANS – The Bureau of Ocean Energy Management, Regulation and Enforcement (BOEMRE) today announced the approval of an Initial Exploration Plan (EP), submitted by BHP Billiton, Inc., for activities in deepwater Gulf of Mexico. The EP was completed in accordance with new safety and environmental standards implemented since the Deepwater Horizon explosion and oil spill, and is the first deepwater Initial EP approved to include the completion of a thorough site-specific Environmental Assessment (SEA).

BHP Billiton, Inc.'s plan includes one proposed deepwater exploration well in approximately 4,468 feet 124 miles offshore Louisiana. An EP describes all exploration activities planned by the operator for a specific lease or leases, including the timing of these activities, information concerning drilling vessels, the location of each planned well, and other relevant information that needs to meet important safety standards.

BOEMRE prepared the SEA to examine BHP Billiton Inc.'s proposed exploration activities in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and the implementation of departmental and bureau regulations.

The SEA included new scientific information that had not been previously available for consideration or analysis. Based on its review, BOEMRE found no evidence that the proposed action would significantly affect the quality of the environment. Therefore, BOEMRE determined that an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) was not required and issued a Finding of No Significant Impact, which allowed the Initial EP to be approved.

For more information on pending, submitted and approved plans, go to:
http://www.gomr.boemre.gov/homepg/offshore/safety/well_permits.html.

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