

**UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
MINERALS MANAGEMENT SERVICE
GULF OF MEXICO OCS REGION**

NTL No. 2009-G04

Effective Date: January 27, 2009
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NOTICE TO LESSEES AND OPERATORS OF FEDERAL OIL, GAS, AND SULPHUR
LEASES, PIPELINE RIGHT-OF-WAY HOLDERS, AND
LESSEES OF MINERALS OTHER THAN OIL, GAS, AND SULFUR
ON THE OUTER CONTINENTAL SHELF, GULF OF MEXICO OCS REGION

Significant OCS Sediment Resources in the Gulf of Mexico

As steward over all mineral resources on the Outer Continental Shelf (OCS), Minerals Management Service (MMS) is charged with the duty to balance mineral development with the protection of the human, marine, and coastal environment. This responsibility requires MMS to ensure that all operations on the OCS do not cause serious harm or damage to, or waste of any natural resource.

This Notice to Lessees and Operators and Pipeline Right-of-way Holders (NTL) is issued pursuant to 30 CFR 281.8 and provides guidance for the avoidance and protection of significant OCS sediment resources essential to coastal restoration initiatives in the MMS Gulf of Mexico OCS Region (GOMR). This NTL provides a website address for supporting information about MMS requirements for OCS marine mineral leasing and operations in the Gulf of Mexico.

Definition

OCS sediment resources refer to the sediment deposit(s), including clay, silt, sand, and gravel size particles and shell, found on or below the surface of the seabed on the OCS, as defined in Section 2(a) of the OCS Lands Act (43 U.S.C. § 1331(a)).

Purpose

Coastal restoration, beach nourishment, and levee reconstruction are crucial to mitigate future coastal erosion, land loss, flooding, and storm damage in the Gulf of Mexico, especially along coastal Louisiana. The success of that long-term effort depends on locating and securing significant quantities of OCS sediment resources that are compatible with the target environments being restored. Offshore sand resources, like upland sources, are extremely scarce where most needed. Additionally, sizable areas of these relatively small offshore sand resources are not extractable because of the presence of oil and gas infrastructure, archaeologically sensitive areas, and biologically sensitive areas.

The use of OCS sediment resources is authorized by MMS through its Marine Minerals Program. The MMS GOMR is implementing new measures to help safeguard the most significant OCS sediment resources, reduce multiple use conflicts, and minimize interference with oil and gas operations under existing leases or pipeline rights-of-way (ROW).

Significant OCS Sediment Resources Avoidance and Protection Policy

Make sure that bottom-disturbing activities (including surface or near-surface emplacement of platforms, wells, drilling rigs, pipelines, umbilicals, and cables) avoid, to the maximum extent practicable, significant OCS sediment resources. For the purpose of this NTL, any activity that lasts more 180 days and is located within 305 lateral meters (1,000 feet) and 20 vertical meters (65 feet) below the natural seafloor of any designated sediment resources is considered bottom-disturbing and inconsistent with this policy.

For a list, maps, and digital Geographic Information Systems (GIS) data of significant OCS sediment resources that MMS has identified in the Gulf of Mexico, please see the MMS Internet website at <http://www.mms.gov/sedimentandgravel/multipleuse/>. The website also provides information regarding (1) the potential adverse impacts of dredging operations on existing infrastructure, (2) MMS requirements of potential OCS sand and gravel lessees concerning the identification of the location of existing infrastructure, and (3) MMS project-specific requirements for the establishment of operational setbacks to avoid direct or indirect impact to existing infrastructure. The MMS will update the above referenced material as necessary.

As applicable, the MMS GOMR will analyze OCS plans and pipeline applications for consistency with this protection policy. If it is determined that significant OCS sediment resources may be impacted by a proposed activity, the MMS GOMR may require you to undertake measures deemed economically, environmentally, and technically feasible to protect the resources to the maximum extent practicable. Measures may include modification of operations and monitoring of pipeline locations after installation.

Future requests for in-place decommissioning of pipelines in these designated areas are discouraged. If it is deemed necessary, MMS may require pipelines previously decommissioned in place to be removed to minimize conflict with other uses of the OCS.

Guidance Document Statement

The MMS GOMR issues NTL's as guidance documents in accordance with 30 CFR 250.103 to clarify, supplement, and provide more detail about certain MMS regulatory requirements and to outline the information you provide in your various submittals. Under that authority, this NTL sets forth a policy on and an interpretation of a regulatory requirement that provides a clear and consistent approach to complying with that requirement. However, if you wish to use an alternative approach for compliance, you may do so, after you receive approval from the appropriate MMS GOMR office under 30 CFR 250.141.

Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995 Statement

This NTL does not impose additional information collection requirements subject to the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995.

Contacts and Mailing Addresses

A. Contacts

The following table provides contact names, telephone numbers, and e-mail addresses if you have any questions regarding this NTL, specific OCS plans or pipeline applications, and or the Marine Minerals Program:

For...	Contact	Phone	E-mail
This NTL	MMS GOMR Office of Field Operations	(504) 736-2845	
Specific EP's or DOCD's	Mr. Michael Tolbert	(504) 736-2867	michael.tolbert@mms.gov
Specific pipeline applications	Mr. Alex Alvarado	(504) 736-2547	alex.alvarado@mms.gov
Marine Minerals Program	Ms. Renee Orr	(703) 787-1215	renee.orr@mms.gov

B. Mailing Addresses

The following table provides the mailing addresses for the respective MMS offices:

For...	Address
MMS GOMR Plans Section	Minerals Management Service Gulf of Mexico OCS Region Office of Field Operations Attention: Plans Section (MS 5230) 1201 Elmwood Park Boulevard New Orleans, Louisiana 70123-2394
MMS GOMR Pipeline Section	Minerals Management Service Gulf of Mexico OCS Region Office of Field Operations Attention: Pipeline Section (MS 5232) 1201 Elmwood Park Boulevard New Orleans, Louisiana 70123-2394
MMS Marine Minerals Program	Minerals Management Service Offshore Energy and Minerals Management Leasing Division Attention: Marine Minerals Program (MS 4010) 381 Elden Street Herndon, Virginia 20170

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Lars T. Herbst
Regional Director