



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

FOR RELEASE: January 25, 1999

**Minerals Management Service
Call for Interest and Information and
Notice of Intent to Prepare an Environmental Impact Statement for
Proposed Federal Oil and Gas Lease Sale 181 in the Eastern Gulf of Mexico**

We need your information!

The Department of the Interior's Minerals Management Service (MMS) has recently begun a 3-year planning process that involves considering a Federal oil and gas lease sale in the Eastern Gulf of Mexico area. We are the Federal Agency having management responsibilities for our Nation's Outer Continental Shelf (OCS) oil and gas program.

The MMS has published the Call for Interest and Information (Call) and Notice of Intent (NOI) to Prepare an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for proposed Eastern Gulf of Mexico (EGOM) oil and gas Lease Sale 181, which is tentatively scheduled in December 2001. The Call/NOI was published in the January 25, 1999, issue of the [Federal Register](#) (64 FR 3707). Copies of the Call/NOI may also be obtained from the MMS Gulf of Mexico Region Public Information Office at (800) 200-GULF or (504) 736-2519.

The area covered by this Call/NOI is a small portion of the EGOM Planning Area 15 miles or more due south of the coast of Alabama and 100 miles or more due south of the Florida Panhandle. It includes 1,033 blocks covering 5.949 million acres. This is the area identified as available for leasing consideration for Sale 181 in the 1997-2002 OCS Oil and Gas Leasing Program. This would be the first Federal oil and gas lease sale in the Eastern Gulf of Mexico area since 1988. During development of the 5-Year Program, the MMS consulted with the States of Alabama and Florida and was responsive to concerns in identifying this area. The MMS considers all of this area to have potential for the discovery of accumulations of hydrocarbons. None of the EGOM outside the Sale 181 area is available for leasing in this 5-Year Program. In addition, in a June 1998 announcement, the President withdrew from leasing until 2012 numerous areas of the OCS, including all of the EGOM outside the area identified as available for leasing consideration for Sale 181.

The Call/NOI is an information-gathering step to ensure that all interests and concerns regarding the proposed sale are communicated to MMS in the earliest stage of its ongoing 3-year sale planning process. The information gathered in the Call assists in the determination of areas to be offered for lease. The NOI initiates an information-gathering process used in developing the EIS that will be prepared for the areas identified for leasing by the Call process.

We request that you identify via written comments any issues and areas of concern which should be considered as we proceed with this process. For example:

- What significant issues and affected resources should be addressed?
- What alternatives or mitigative measures should be considered?
- Are there data gaps that should be considered?

Please note that the MMS is considering changing the proposed Sale 181 bid opening/reading from December 2001 to March 2002, and holding it in conjunction with proposed Central Gulf of Mexico Sale 182. You are requested to consider this proposed Sale 181 schedule change and include any comments on this matter in your response to this Call/NOI.

Comments on the Call/NOI should be received within 60 days following the publication date in the *Federal Register*, i.e., no later than March 26, 1999. Responses may be sent by telefax to (504) 736-2631 or mailed to the following address:

Minerals Management Service
Gulf of Mexico OCS Region
Office of Leasing and Environment
Attention: Regional Supervisor (MS 5400)
1201 Elmwood Park Boulevard
New Orleans, Louisiana 70123-2394

Specific information on the Call may be obtained from Mr. Charles Hill at (504) 736-2795. Specific information on environmental issues relative to the NOI may be obtained from Dr. Ann Bull at (504) 736-2794.

The 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 last year disbursed about \$6 billion in revenues from Federal offshore leases and Federal and Indian onshore mineral leases.

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

