



NEWS

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Secretary Norton Announces Eastern Gulf of Mexico Lease Sale 181, Scheduled for Dec. 5

– Increased domestic production and conservation needed to reduce foreign oil dependence, says Secretary Norton --

(HOUSTON) – Interior Secretary Gale Norton today announced energy production in Lease Sale 181, located in the Eastern Gulf of Mexico, has been approved. Secretary Norton made the announcement during a speech to the Independent Petroleum Producers annual meeting in Houston, Texas.

The lease sale is scheduled for Dec. 5, 2001, at 9 a.m. in the Versailles Ballroom of the Riverside Hilton Hotel, 2 Poydras St., in New Orleans, La.

"In the aftermath of last month's terrorist attacks, Americans charged our government to strengthen national security. This is a positive step in that direction," Secretary Norton said. "True national security must expand conservation programs, reduce our dependence on foreign oil from evil dictators, such as Saddam Hussein, and create new jobs – all while protecting the environment."

The Interior Department has not held a lease sale in the eastern Gulf since 1988. The area included in Sale 181 is near the Crazy Horse project, one of the largest energy discoveries in the Gulf of Mexico. The sale area encompasses 256 blocks in the Eastern Gulf of Mexico outer continental shelf planning area and covers about 1.47 million acres.

"The Interior Department calculates the area contains 1.25 trillion cubic feet of natural gas – enough to serve 1 million U.S. families for 15 years. The area also contains 185 million barrels of oil – enough to fuel the automobiles of a million families for nearly six years," Secretary Norton said.

"I am firmly committed to a process that I call the Four C's: they are consultation, cooperation, and communication – all in the service of conservation," Secretary Norton said. "During the course of this entire sale process, we focused heavily on consultation, communication and cooperation with state government interests and together reached a decision and a sale that will create jobs, protect the environment and reduce our dependence on foreign oil."

Blocks in this sale are located in the deepwater portion of the federal outer continental shelf, due south of offshore Alabama, immediately adjacent to the Central Gulf of the Mexico planning area.

The final notice was published today in the *Federal Register*.

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