

## Working with the Smithsonian Institution's National Museum of Natural History

The MMS conducts numerous biological studies on the outer continental shelf of the United States in support of decision-making related to the development of offshore energy and mineral resources. These projects frequently result in large collections of invertebrate specimens.

Early in the history of the MMS Environmental Studies Program, it was recognized that extensive biological samples collected during MMS environmental studies were invaluable both to the relevant studies, but also to science in general. The MMS believed it was critical to have a system for archiving these specimens that will preserve them for the future as well as allow additional research.

The Smithsonian Institution's National Museum of Natural History is the Nation's most reliable and respected repository for biological collections. The MMS began an archiving program with the Smithsonian in 1979, with 2009 marking the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of this important partnership.

Since 1979, invertebrate specimens collected through the MMS Environmental Studies Program have been carefully maintained through the museum's archiving standards and made available to taxonomists around the world. This program is setting the standard for all federal agencies in preserving our scientific knowledge base for the future.

Over the last 30 years, more than 220,000 specimen lots have been curated by the Smithsonian and around 300 new marine species have been discovered as a result of MMS studies. Discoveries have included the fascinating "iceworm" that lives on the surface of frozen methane hydrate in deep waters of the Gulf of Mexico.

Ice worms found on an outcrop of methane hydrate in the Gulf of Mexico.



These animal collections represent one of the most extensive collections of marine organisms from U.S. continental shelves and slopes, in terms of geographic coverage and number of animal groups represented. Specimens from MMS studies represent more than 20% of the total Smithsonian database and in some animal groups MMS samples represent the majority of the museum's collections.

The Smithsonian Natural History Museum has created a [website](#) dedicated to collections from MMS-funded projects. It includes extensive information about individual project locations, dates, station data, and links to MMS final reports. It also includes a direct link to the online catalog database where individual records and images of specimens can be retrieved. At the bottom of the webpage are links to three large informative posters describing the long-term partnership between MMS and the Smithsonian.