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MMS Helps Compile and Publish a Gulf of Mexico Natural Gas and Oil Resource Database

INNOVATION #10

The U.S. Department of the Interior's Mineral Management Service (MMS) announced today the availability of an atlas series on Gulf of Mexico offshore natural gas and oil fields. This cooperative effort involved MMS, the U.S. Department of Energy, the Gas Research Institute, and the University of Texas Bureau of Economic Geology.

"The data base includes geophysical, geological, reservoir performance, and production information and analyses for more than 1,100 fields and 22,000 reservoirs," said MMS Director Cynthia Quarterman. "Researchers and academics, as well as industry, will benefit from the atlas project, which will enhance ongoing MMS efforts to use play analyses as the basis for fair market value and other decisions."

Within areas where typical or prospective productive natural gas or oil reservoirs exist, the atlas will make a systematic compilation of Gulf of Mexico reserves, production, and geologic data available to the public for the first time.

"It's exciting to see MMS work with other federal, state and non-profit organizations to be able to make such a wealth of scientific information easily accessible to the public free-of-charge. We truly can accomplish more when we work together to share information and maximize the resources we each have," Quarterman added.

The Department of Energy and the Gas Research Institute provided most of the funding for the atlas project's budget of $3.85 million. MMS provided ten percent of this amount over four years and dedicated large amounts of data and professional staff time estimated to value $2.9 million.

MMS, the University of Texas Bureau of Economic Geology, the Gas Research Institute, the Department of Energy have placed on the World Wide Web and made available to the public data and information for 2,634 offshore pools. The data provides the basis for the assessment of the potential quantities of undiscovered resources in the productive plays of the Gulf of Mexico Region. By early October 1996, the first complete atlas with associated digital data sets, maps, and cross-sections for Miocene and older plays will be available. The second complete atlas with associated digital data sets, for Plio-Pleistocene plays, will be published in April 1997.

In a related effort to provide potential bidders with more information prior to lease sales, MMS will provide additional drilling data by expanding its Indicated Hydrocarbon List (IHL). The IHL includes

detailed hydrocarbon information about previously drilled tracts in the MMS inventory. The next list will be released before the Western Gulf of Mexico Sale, scheduled for September 1996.

Each year approximately 400 exploratory wells are drilled in the Gulf of Mexico. Specific information on these wells is available to the public two years after drilling has occurred. The IHL incorporates much of this information in a single document. The MMS released its first IHL, which identified unleased tracts in the Central and Western Gulf of Mexico that had well bores with indicated hydrocarbons, in 1995. Basic information related to production, well bores, and pay range is included in the list. The next IHL to be released will add a new feature: nonproprietary well data from significant wells on leased blocks.

MMS is the federal agency that manages the nation's natural gas, oil, and other mineral resources on the OCS, and collect, accounts for, and disburses about $4 billion yearly in revenues from offshore federal mineral leases and from onshore mineral leases on federal and Indian lands.

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