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MMS WINS NATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL AWARD

The U.S. Department of the Interior's Minerals Management Service (MMS) has been awarded a 1996 Federal Environmental Quality Award in ceremonies held today in Houston, Texas. Presented by the Council on Environmental Quality and the National Association of Environmental Professionals, the award recognizes excellence achieved through implementing the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). The MMS award was for environmental work done in the Flower Garden Banks National Marine Sanctuary in the Gulf of Mexico offshore Texas. Dr. Marc C. Bruner, President of the National Association of Environmental Professionals, said the agency was "...commended for its actions to integrate environmental values into its agency mission and its commitment to excellence in environmental decision making." Tom Gernhofer, MMS Associate Director for Offshore Energy and Minerals Management, accepted the award.

"We're particularly proud to receive this award for the second time," said MMS Director Cynthia Quarterman, who noted that the agency had been recognized in 1994 with a Federal Environmental Quality Award. "To be honored twice is a tribute to the professionalism and commitment of MMS staff. We have demonstrated that we can develop offshore natural gas and oil resources while protecting the environment."

The Flower Garden Banks are a pair of colorful coral reefs 12 miles apart and 120 miles off the Texas coast. They were designated the Nation's tenth national marine sanctuary in January 1992.

MMS is the federal agency that manages the Nation's natural gas, oil, and other mineral resources on the OCS, and collects, 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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