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Innovation 15

MMS LISTENS TO CUSTOMERS TO IMPROVE SERVICE AND CUT COSTS

The U.S. Department of the Interior's Minerals Management Service (MMS) announced today that the Gulf of Mexico Regional Office in New Orleans is implementing a series of innovations that will save time and money for its customers. The changes -- aimed at the Region's Lease Adjudication Office -- were recommended by a work group composed of representatives from the natural gas and oil industry, and related service groups, working with MMS staff.

"MMS is committed to identifying customer needs and finding innovative ways to meet them in order to ensure that MMS meets the Administration's challenge to reinvent government," said MMS Director Cynthia Quarterman. "It's important that all lease document requests are handled promptly and correctly. Working together in focus groups has helped MMS and our customers better understand each other's needs -- a critical starting point in reengineering our internal processes."

The Adjudication Office processes post-lease transfer documents such as assignment of record title and operating rights, designation of operator, relinquishments, nonrequired filings, and company qualification documents including necessary updates. Their customers include natural gas and oil interests, attorneys, and consultants.

Among the improvements customers recommended, MMS has implemented the following:

- o Reducing the cost of copies and certifications by 90 percent;
- o Cutting the waiting period for new assignments by 75 percent;
- o Faxing weekly information such as assignment status and other relevant, programmatic information to landmen and operators;
- o Posting lease sale statistics on the World Wide Web so customers have immediate, same-day, free access; and
- o Converting lease records to digital imaging records to facilitate information transfers.

Other recommendations that will be phased in over the next year include:

- o Allowing a multiple level of operating rights;
- o Eliminating filings of multiple originals; and
- o Providing electronic access to non-proprietary MMS lease information.

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 each year from offshore mineral leases and from onshore mineral leases on federal and Indian lands.

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