



**U.S. Department of the Interior  
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***NEWS RELEASE***

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**MMS Recognized for 'Rigs to Reefs' Program**

The Minerals Management Service recently received a special citation for their part in a "rigs-to-reef" effort at the annual Offshore Technology Conference in Houston. The multi-agency project turns unused offshore rigs into permanent artificial reefs.

In accepting the citation at the conference awards luncheon, MMS Director, Johnnie Burton stressed the importance of the effort. "We are proud to be a part of the Rigs-to-Reef program," she said. "Rigs provide an important habitat for marine life. This program ensures those habitats are preserved long after the rigs stop production."

The agency has worked with fisherman, scuba divers, coastal communities and offshore industry to address their concerns about the impact of oil and gas structures on the marine environment. After much research and assessment, MMS adopted a national Rigs-to- Reefs policy that encourages the reuse of oil and gas structures for offshore artificial reef developments.

Also recognized at the event were the Texas Parks and Wildlife Commission and the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries for their leadership in the program.

The reefs serve as havens for marine life and as destinations for thousands of divers and fishermen, creating a "positive impact on the environment in the Gulf of Mexico," said Charlie Richards, this year's OTC chairman.

MMS travels annually to OTC to conduct workshops on deepwater drilling and oceanography. OTC is the world's foremost event for the offshore oil and gas industry. The conference brings together national and international experts to showcase the latest technologies for development of offshore mineral resources.

MMS is the federal agency in the U.S. Department of the Interior that manages the nation's oil, natural gas and other mineral resources on the outer continental shelf in federal offshore waters. The agency also collects, accounts for and disburses mineral revenues from federal and Indian leases. These revenues totaled nearly \$10 billion in 2001 and more than \$120 billion since the agency was created in 1982. Annually, nearly \$1 billion from those revenues go into the Land and Water Conservation Fund for the acquisition and development of state and federal park and recreation lands.

--MMS-20 Years of Service to America--

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MMS Internet website address: <http://www.boem.gov>