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SYMPOSIUM

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The Minerals Management Service's Archaeology Program

The Minerals Management Service (MMS) was created in 1982 from those portions of the Bureau of Land Management and US Geological Survey which had authority over the leasing and development of mineral resources on the continental shelf. MMS's authority extends from that portion of the continental shelf beyond state waters out to 200 mi offshore, and beyond in some locations. The term "outer continental shelf" (OCS) is used for this area.

The OCS Lands Act authorizes the Secretary of the Interior to issue mineral leases and develop regulations governing mineral activities on the OCS. Included in the law and its implementing regulations is the requirement to consider the potential effects on archaeological resources of the actions for which permits are granted. Additionally, as on land, the National Historic Preservation Act requires that MMS take into consideration the effect of its undertakings on archaeological resources on the continental shelf. The National Environmental Policy Act and Executive Order (EO) 11593 also require that MMS consider archaeological resources on the continental shelf prior to development. According to the Department of Interior's Solicitor, MMS has the authority to protect archaeological resources on the continental shelf only from the effects of mineral development. The Solicitor also stated that those portions of EO 11593 dealing with location, inventory, and nomination of sites to the National Register apply only to those areas affected by OCS mineral activities.

The archaeological resources present on the continental shelf include both historic sites (mainly shipwrecks) and prehistoric sites inundated as a result of rising sea level after the last ice age. In order to protect these sites from the effects of OCS leasing activities, MMS has developed a program which uses available data and models to predict where, along the vast expanse of the continental shelf, archaeological resources might occur. The MMS then requires pre-development remote sensing surveys in those areas determined to have a high potential

for archaeological sites. If, as a result of the remote sensing survey, evidence of a possible archaeological site is discovered, then MMS, in consultation with the appropriate State Historic Preservation Officer, develops mitigative measures to protect the potential site area. The primary mitigation used is avoidance of the suspected site area; however, an investigation is sometimes conducted if avoidance of the potential site area is not possible.

MMS has completed archaeological baseline studies for the Atlantic continental shelf, the Gulf of Mexico shelf, the southern California shelf, and the Alaskan shelf. In their papers herein Larry J. Pierson addresses the southern California baseline study, and James Dixon addresses the Alaskan baseline study. A baseline study of the shelf off northern California, Oregon, and Washington is currently being funded. In addition to these basic studies which use existing data and predictive models to delineate where on the continental shelf archaeological sites are likely to occur, MMS funded a study to test the predictive model for prehistoric site occurrence on the Gulf of Mexico continental shelf. This study was conducted by Coastal Environments, Inc. and is discussed in the paper by Charles E. Pearson. MMS is in the process of completing another study which will refine the model for shipwreck occurrence in the Gulf of Mexico. This study will also attempt to determine whether shipwreck debris and modern debris can be distinguished solely on the basis of remote sensing signatures. Ervin G. Garrison of Texas A&M University covers this study in his paper.

Recently MMS joined the Florida Bureau of Archaeological Research in the archaeological investigation of sinkholes in the karst region offshore of the Gulf Coast of Florida. James S. Dunbar presents the results of this joint research project.

Lawrence E. Aten, Chief of the Interagency Resources Division of National Park Service, was instrumental in the initiation of the MMS archaeology program, and has remained active in the development of the program through studies and research. Dr. Aten presents the final paper in this symposium, summarizing the history and the future direction of archaeology on the continental shelf.

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