

CALL FOR INFO, SALES, 152 AND 155(#30022)

Barney Congdon

(504) 736-2595/

FOR RELEASE:

CONTACT: Carter Cornick

April 30, 1993

(202) 208-3983

MMS ANNOUNCES CALL FOR INFORMATION FOR  
CENTRAL AND WESTERN GULF LEASE SALES, 152 AND 155(#30022)

The Department of the Interior's Minerals Management Service (MMS) today announced a Call for Information and Nominations and Notice of Intent to Prepare an Environmental Impact Statement (Call/NOI) for natural gas and oil Lease Sale 152 in the Central and 155 in the Western Gulf of Mexico Planning Areas. The sales are tentatively scheduled for March and August, 1995, respectively.

"Publishing this Call/NOI in today's Federal Register marks the beginning of a detailed evaluation process that may result in making our Nation's natural gas and oil resources available to our domestic economy," said Acting MMS Director Carolita Kallaur. "The energy resources in the Gulf of Mexico continue to be an important component of the U.S. energy mix. Natural gas sources which may be discovered as a result of these sales could aid in the country's move to alternative fuels."

The Call/NOI constitute one of the initial data gathering steps (in the two to three year pre-lease sale planning process) assuring that all interests and concerns regarding specific sales are communicated to MMS. The Call, which outlines the area to be considered for leasing and the area MMS believes has hydrocarbon potential, requests nominations from industry on areas of interest and information from interested parties on environmental or special concerns. The Notice of Intent begins the "scoping" process used in preparation of the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS), and is designed to involve Federal agencies, State and local governments, and other interested parties.

"Pre-sale notification allows time for the public input which is so valuable to us in determining the issues that must be addressed in the EIS," said Acting Director Kallaur. "In this case, however, extensive environmental and economic studies programs have been conducted in the proposed sale areas since 1973. We have gathered and evaluated environmental information on biologically sensitive habitats, physical oceanography, ocean-circulation modeling, and ecological effects of natural gas and oil activities."

The general areas detailed in the Call/NOI cover the entire central and western portions of the Gulf of Mexico between approximately 88 degrees W. longitude on the east and approximately 97 degrees W. longitude on the west and from the Federal-State boundaries seaward to the provisional maritime boundary between the United States and Mexico. The entire Call area (divided into two planning areas) is offshore the States of Alabama, Louisiana, Mississippi and Texas. The total area available for nominations and comments consists of approximately 83.7 million acres (47.8 in the Central Gulf of Mexico Planning Area and 35.9 in the Western Gulf of Mexico Planning Area).

Nominations and comments are due 45 days following publication in the Federal Register. Written comments on the scope of the EIS, significant issues which should be addressed, and alternatives which should be considered are also due within 45 days. Responses should be sent to:

Minerals Management Service  
Gulf of Mexico OCS Region  
Regional Supervisor  
Leasing and Environment  
Public Information Unit  
1201 Elmwood Park Boulevard  
New Orleans, Louisiana 70123-2519

-MMS-

NOTICE TO EDITORS: DETAILED FACT SHEETS AND A MAP ARE ATTACHED

SALE 152, CALL FOR INFO, NOMINATIONS, ETC.

Barney Congdon

FOR RELEASE:  
April 30, 1993

CONTACT: Carter Cornick  
(202) 208-3983

SALE 152, CENTRAL GULF OF MEXICO PLANNING AREA  
CALL FOR INFORMATION AND NOMINATIONS AND NOTICE OF INTENT  
TO PREPARE AN ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT

The Department of the Interior's Minerals Management Service (MMS) has issued a Call for Information and Nominations and Notice of Intent to Prepare an Environmental Impact Statement (Call/NOI) for an offshore natural gas and oil lease sale, Sale 152, tentatively scheduled for March 1995, in the Central Gulf of Mexico. This fact sheet contains a description of the area

included in the Call/NOI, as well as relevant background information.

#### PURPOSE OF Call/NOI

The Call/NOI is one of the initial information gathering steps to ensure that all interests and concerns regarding the specific sale are communicated to MMS for future decisions in the leasing process. This Call/NOI does not indicate a preliminary decision to lease in the area described below.

Information submitted in response to this Call/NOI will be used for several purposes:

- \* To further identify areas of potential for natural gas and oil development;
- \* To initiate the scoping process used in preparation of the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS), designed to involve Federal agencies, State and local governments, and other interested parties in aiding MMS in determining significant issues and alternatives to be addressed in the EIS.

Comments may be used in developing lease terms and conditions to ensure safe offshore natural gas and oil activities and to point out potential conflicts between offshore natural gas and oil activities and the Coastal Zone Management Programs (CZMP) of affected States.

#### DESCRIPTION OF AREA

The area of this Call/NOI covers the entire Central Gulf of Mexico Planning Area approximately 88 degrees W. longitude on the east, to its western boundary at the offshore line between Texas and Louisiana, and then southeasterly to approximately 28 degrees N. latitude, and east to approximately 92 degrees W. longitude, and finally south to the provisional maritime boundary with Mexico which constitutes the southern boundary of the area. The area available for nominations and comments consists of about 47.8 million acres. The northern part of the area is bounded by the Federal-State boundary offshore the states of Alabama, Louisiana and Mississippi.

#### LEASING HISTORY

In May 1992, the MMS offered 5,213 tracts covering 28 million acres in the Central Gulf of Mexico Sale 139. Of the area offered, 144 tracts were leased for bonuses totaling \$54.4 million. Central Gulf Sale 142 was held on March 24, 1993, and resulted in \$69 million in high bids received on 201 tracts. Sale results will be finalized upon completion of the bid review

process.

Sale 147 is the next Central Gulf sale scheduled for March 1994. A Proposed Notice of Sale announcing the availability of the Draft Environmental Impact Statement and the tentative Sale 147 date was published April 29.

#### ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT

As required by the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969 (42 U.S.C. 4321 et seq.), MMS also is announcing its intent to prepare an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for Sale 152. The Notice of Intent also serves to initiate the "scoping" process, involving other Federal agencies, State and local governments, and other interested parties. Scoping helps MMS determine significant issues and alternatives to be addressed in the EIS. The EIS will focus on the potential environmental effects of leasing, exploration, and development on the blocks included in the area defined in the Area Identification as the proposed area of the lease sale. Alternatives to the proposal which may be considered are: to delay the sale, cancel the sale, or modify the sale.

#### COMMENT PERIOD

Nominations and comments concerning the Call and scoping comments resulting from the NOI must be received no later than 45 days following publication of the Call/NOI in today's Federal Register in envelopes labeled "Nominations for Proposed 1995 Lease Sales in the Gulf of Mexico," or "Comments on the Call for Information and Nominations for Proposed 1995 Lease Sales in the Gulf of Mexico," as appropriate. Comments are sought from all interested parties about particular geological, environmental, biological, archaeological, or economic conditions or conflicts, or other information which may bear upon the potential leasing and development of this particular area. The original Call map with indications of interest and/or comments must be submitted to:

Minerals Management Service  
Gulf of Mexico OCS Region  
Regional Supervisor, Leasing and Environment  
Public Information Unit  
1201 Elmwood Park Boulevard  
New Orleans, Louisiana 70123-2394  
(504) 736-2519

The standard Call map outlines the Call area and shows the area identified by MMS as having potential for the discovery of natural gas and oil. The map is available, free of charge, from

the Gulf of Mexico OCS Regional Office at the Louisiana address shown above.

#### TENTATIVE SCHEDULE

Final delineation of the area for possible leasing will be made at a later date in compliance with applicable laws including all requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (42 U.S.C. 4321 et seq.) as amended, and the OCS Lands Act, as amended, and with established departmental procedures. Tentatively scheduled major actions that will precede Sale 152, proposed for March 1995, are:

Comments Due on the Call	June '93
Scoping Comments Due	June '93
Area Identification	July '93
Draft EIS/Proposed Notice of Sale (PNOS) Published	April '94
Public Hearings on Draft EIS Held	June '94
Governor's Comments Due on PNOS	July '94
Final EIS Published	December '94
Final Notice of Sale Published	February '95
Sale	March '95

-MMS-