

FOR RELEASE: February 16, 1994

CONTACT: John Barclay  
(202) 208-3983

THREE FEDERAL AGENCIES SIGN MEMO OF UNDERSTANDING  
ON THEIR RESPONSIBILITIES UNDER OIL POLLUTION ACT (#40011)

The U.S. Departments of the Interior (DOI) and Transportation (DOT) and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) have reached an agreement on the division of regulatory duties mandated by the Oil Pollution Act of 1990 (OPA).

The Memorandum of Understanding, which became effective Feb.3, 1994, allocates responsibilities including oil spill prevention and control, response planning, and response equipment inspection for offshore facilities.

The duties will be shared among the agencies based on the locations of facilities being regulated, with the coast line marking the boundary. EPA will be responsible for non-transportation-related facilities located landward of the coast line. The U.S. Coast Guard and the Research and Special Programs Administration of the DOT will handle transportation-related facilities, including pipelines, located landward of the coast line. The Interior Department's Minerals Management Service (MMS) will be responsible for facilities, including pipelines, located seaward of the coast line.

MMS Director Tom Fry noted that the understanding is separate from MMS's current effort to gather information concerning new requirements for evidence of financial responsibility for oil spills, though both issues are covered by the same law. "This agreement," he said, "simply spells out specific areas of responsibility for the agencies involved in regulating the industry. It's in line with President Clinton's determination to create a more streamlined government that works better and costs less.

"The result," he said, "will be more efficiency, better coordination among agencies, stronger protection for the environment and better service for our stakeholders."

Fry said MMS had pressed for the agreement after receiving a number of comments from the public. "Without an understanding such as this," he said, "there was a possibility that four Federal agencies could have had overlapping responsibilities. That would have resulted in confusion and inefficiency."

-MMS-

Subject: PR-02/16/94 OPA'90 MOU/3 Fed. Agencies...MOU...OPA'90  
Respons. (#40011)