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MMS AWARDS \$113,058 CONTRACT TO CONTINENTAL SHELF ASSOCIATES,
INC.
(#40026)

The Department of the Interior's Minerals Management Service (MMS) announced today that a \$113,058 contract has been awarded to Continental Shelf Associates, Inc. in Jupiter, Florida, to continue the long-term monitoring of the East and West Flower Garden Banks.

The Flower Garden Banks are a unique pair of colorful coral banks located along the outer continental shelf, approximately 120 miles offshore Texas. The zone was officially designated as a National Marine Sanctuary by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) in 1992.

The study, which is being funded equally by MMS and NOAA, will monitor the health of corals and coralline algae of the reef crests on both Flower Garden Banks, said MMS Director Tom Fry.

Three survey cruises, utilizing scuba divers and remotely operated vehicles (ROV), will be conducted over 30 months, Fry said. Monitoring techniques will include:

- Photographic and videotape samples to determine coral community structure and general health conditions;
- Exact, repetitive close-up photography of fixed, permanent coral stations to determine coral growth rates;
- Repetitive photography of fixed areas to evaluate long-term changes in individual coral colonies; and
- Collection of data on water, sediment, and weather conditions including water temperature, salinity, and dissolved oxygen.

"MMS is committed to obtaining the best scientific data possible so we can make sound decisions toward ensuring the protection of marine and coastal environments," Fry said.

MMS administers federal offshore mineral programs and manages the federal mineral royalty program.

The MMS Environmental Studies Program has initiated scientific research that has generated more than 750 peer-reviewed scientific articles and numerous reports addressing marine and coastal scientific issues.

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Subject: PR-4/11/94 Continental Shelf Associates/MMS Awards
\$113,058 Contract to Continental Shelf Associates, Inc. (#40026)