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MMS AND CORPS OF ENGINEERS COOPERATE ON FLORIDA  
BEACH NOURISHMENT PROJECT

The U.S. Department of Interior's Minerals Management Service (MMS) has signed a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) to promote interagency cooperation on a Florida beach nourishment project, MMS officials announced today.

The MOA is the first such agreement signed under an October 1994 amendment to the Outer Continental Shelf (OCS) Lands Act, which provides the Secretary of the Interior the authority to negotiate agreements for use of sand, gravel and shell resources located on federal offshore lands for projects of public benefit. The law allows the Department to enter into an MOA with other federal agencies involved and negotiate a noncompetitive lease with the appropriate state or local government agency. Prior to the Amendment, rights to the sand, gravel and shell resources could only be transferred by a competitive leasing process similar to that used for OCS gas and oil resources.

This project will provide sand for nourishment of about seven miles of beaches from Atlantic Beach to Jacksonville Beach, FL. Previous work identified the need for 1.24 million cubic yards of sand on the federal OCS located approximately seven to eight miles off Florida's coast.

"This MOA signifies the importance of interagency teamwork and the role of MMS to assess and provide access to federal sand resources needed for control of coastal erosion," said MMS Director Cynthia Quarterman. "But this is just the first of two steps -- required under the new law -- toward implementing this important shore protection project. The next required step is the signing of a noncompetitive lease between MMS and either the state or the local government.

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"We have kept the State of Florida and the City of Jacksonville informed on the status of this process and are working diligently with them to develop and issue a noncompetitive lease as soon as possible," Quarterman added. "The end result will mark a new level of cooperation between the federal government and Floridians."

MMS and Florida are also involved in a cooperative effort to identify OCS sand resources that could be used for beach nourishment along Florida's east coast, south of Cape Canaveral.

MMS is the federal agency that manages the nation's natural gas, oil and other mineral resources on the OCS, and collects and disburses about \$4 billion yearly in revenues from offshore federal mineral leases and from onshore mineral leases on federal and Indian lands.

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