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MMS CONTINUES AGREEMENT WITH MISSISSIPPI TO EVALUATE SHELL RESOURCES IN THE NORTHERN GULF OF MEXICO

The U.S. Department of the Interior's Minerals Management Service (MMS) has awarded \$40,000 to Mississippi's Marine Minerals Technology Center (MMTC) to evaluate shell resources in the northern Gulf of Mexico, MMS officials announced today. The project marks the first use of state-of-the-art technology -- a multi-channel, high resolution seismic system -- to evaluate shallow water shell deposits.

Shell is widely used throughout the southern United States as construction material in building roads and foundations.

"Since 1989, including these funds, MMS has provided \$120,000 to MMTC for cooperative studies of offshore resources," said MMS Director Cynthia Quarterman. "Collaborative efforts such as this are an investment in good science. The resulting data will enable us to make environmentally sound resource decisions in the future."

Study plans call for a multi-phased project designed to:

- develop seismic "signatures" for known inshore shell deposits that could be used to identify offshore buried shell and other type deposits;
- develop and evaluate an exploration method to help identify potential shell deposits in federal waters; and,
- identify resource areas based on the results of the high-resolution seismic work as favorable sites for future study for offshore shell deposits.

Similar efforts to evaluate marine mineral resources--especially sand resources for use in beach restoration--have been initiated with other States on the Gulf of Mexico and on the East Coast.

The MMS is the federal agency that manages the Nation's natural gas, oil and other mineral resources on the Outer Continental Shelf, and collects, accounts for 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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