

**U.S. Department of the Interior
Minerals Management Service
Office of Communications**

FOR RELEASE: November 1, 1996

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MMS ISSUES PROPOSED NOTICE OF SALE FOR CENTRAL GULF OF MEXICO SALE 166

The proposed Notice of Sale and draft environmental impact statement (EIS) for Outer Continental Shelf Natural Gas and Oil Lease Sale 166 in the Central Gulf of Mexico have been issued by the U.S. Department of the Interior's Minerals Management Service (MMS). The Notice proposes offering 5,040 blocks covering about 27.06 million acres. The Central Gulf of Mexico offers blocks offshore Louisiana, Mississippi, and Alabama that range from 3 to 220 miles from shore, with water depths ranging from 3 to over 3,200 meters.

"This is the second Central Gulf of Mexico sale in which blocks receiving bids in water depths of 200 meters or more are eligible for consideration under the Deep Water Royalty Relief Act," said MMS Director Cynthia Quarterman. "The results of Central Gulf Sale 157, held April 24 this year, clearly indicated that royalty relief was a tremendous success by setting an all-time leasing record on the number of bids received and number of blocks leased. Four hundred and forty-two bids on blocks in 400 to 800 meters of water clearly set the course for the future of the Gulf of Mexico."

Sale 166, scheduled to be held early March 1997, will be the 54th OCS lease sale in the Central Gulf. Copies of the proposed Notice of Sale are available from the Gulf Region's Public Information Office, 1201 Elmwood Park Boulevard, New Orleans, Louisiana 70123-2394, telephone (504) 736-2519 or 1-800-200-GULF. Supplemental documents may also be obtained from that office.

MMS is the federal agency that manages the Nation's natural gas, oil and other mineral resources on the OCS, and collects, accounts for, and disburses about \$4 billion each year from offshore mineral leases and from onshore mineral leases on federal and Indian lands.

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