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***NEWS RELEASE***

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**CONTACT:** [Anne-Berry Wade](#)  
(202) 208-3985  
[Caryl Fagot](#)  
(504) 736-2590

**MMS RECEIVES VICE PRESIDENT'S "HAMMER AWARD"  
FOR INNOVATIVE ACHIEVEMENTS PROGRAM**

Today, the Minerals Management Service (MMS) was awarded Vice President Gore's National Performance Review "Hammer Award" for the agency's *Innovative Achievements Program*, an agency-wide, staff-driven improvements initiative. The award was presented to MMS employees by the Department of the Interior's Deputy Secretary John Garamendi, at a ceremony in New Orleans, Louisiana. The award—a \$6 hammer wrapped in red, white, and blue ribbon—symbolizes the reinvention and dramatic change from the days when the federal government paid \$400 for a hammer to become a more efficient and better run government.

Over the past two years, MMS has evolved from a traditional agency to a customer and mission driven organization. To steer this process, MMS Director Cynthia Quarterman established the *Innovative Achievements Program* which challenged all MMS employees to actively participate in transforming the agency. The *Innovative Achievements Program* began as a grass-roots effort and has become a widely accepted, agency-wide initiative to change MMS's culture, to encourage employee creativity, to streamline work processes, and to improve customer service.

On presenting the award in New Orleans, Deputy Secretary Garamendi said, "MMS has renewed its commitment to common sense government by delivering outstanding customer service, developing creative partnerships, and involving employees in identifying opportunities for improvement and problem solving. This program has allowed MMS to reinvent and improve the programs and operational methods across the entire organization." Garamendi added, "I am extremely proud to present this award to each employee at MMS. It's not often that we can collectively say we got hammered and we commit to continue the same behavior!"

The Hammer Award is based upon the principles of putting customers first, cutting red tape, empowering employees, and getting back to basics. In response to receiving the award on behalf of all employees, MMS Director Quarterman stated, "I knew intuitively that the *Innovative Achievements Program* would work. Now we have the evidence that shows it is the employees who are the heart and soul of this agency. I am extremely proud of the dedication, hard work, and professionalism that each MMS employee has shown. Their innovative ideas have enabled this agency to achieve so much, so quickly. What the American public has seen so far is just the tip of the iceberg."

MMS's first innovative achievement was announced in September 1995 and employees have since developed and implemented 22 additional ideas such as: establishing an internship program for Indian Tribes with mineral resources, issuing new well naming and numbering standards, revising testing requirements for blow-out preventers, simplifying environmental impact statements, reducing paperwork for industry, offering free electronic reporting software, and implementing a new audit tracking system.

In 1996, a MMS team received a Hammer Award for their Plain English Initiative in writing regulations, and in 1997 a MMS employee was on the Interior Department team that received a Hammer Award for assisting with establishing a workplace family support room.

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

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