



U.S. Department of the Interior
Minerals Management Service
Gulf of Mexico OCS Region

NEWS RELEASE

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MMS Extends Period to Accept or Reject Bids On Offshore Natural Gas And Oil Tracts for Central GOM Sale 169

The U.S. Department of the Interior's Minerals Management Service (MMS) today announced a decision extending the 90-day period within which the Agency must accept or reject high bids received in Outer Continental Shelf (OCS) Sale 169. The notice, which appears in the May 27, 1998, *Federal Register*, extends the time period 30 days, from June 15, 1998, to July 15, 1998.

In the Central Gulf of Mexico Sale 169, held March 18, 1998, MMS received 1,188 bids on 794 tracts, with 512 tracts requiring detailed reviews. Because of the increased workload—a result of the large number of bids received in this sale—MMS is unable to conduct and complete the entire bid review process for this sale within the 90 days.

MMS implemented a rule change that appeared in the July 3, 1996, *Federal Register*, which authorized the extension of evaluation periods under certain circumstances. Agency officials noted that the existing 90-day time frame, established in 1982, was too rigid and did not provide enough time to complete the review process given the complexities in evaluating certain tracts.

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 distributes about \$6 billion in revenues from Federal offshore mineral leases and from onshore mineral leases on Federal and Indian lands.

-MMS-GOM-

MMS's Website Address: <http://www.mms.gov>
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