

Technical Announcement

MMS

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

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Characterization of Northern Gulf of Mexico Deepwater Hard-Bottom Communities with Emphasis on Lophelia Coral

[OCS Study MMS 2007-044](#)

The Minerals Management Service (MMS), Gulf of Mexico OCS Region, announces the availability of a new study report, *Characterization of Northern Gulf of Mexico Deepwater Hard-Bottom Communities with Emphasis on Lophelia Coral*.

Interest in deepwater corals has increased rapidly in the last decade as more coral systems are discovered worldwide and their importance in providing habitat for diverse communities is realized. This report presents the results of a study of 10 sites on the northern Gulf of Mexico continental slope consisting of hard-bottom areas that generally include dense assemblages of the coral *Lophelia pertusa*. Study elements include geological characterization; biological characterization, imaging, and sampling; water chemistry; and physical oceanography including short-term and long-term current meter deployments. This was the first comprehensive study of the distribution of *Lophelia pertusa* and its biology and ecology in the Gulf of Mexico. Results suggest that *Lophelia pertusa* plays a significant role in the ecology of hard-bottom habitats on the upper slope. Results of this study will be used to develop additional studies of hard-bottom habitats in the deep Gulf of Mexico and will also enhance the ability of MMS to protect sensitive deepwater biological features.

This report is available only in compact disc from the Minerals Management Service, Gulf of Mexico OCS Region, at a charge of \$15.00, by referencing OCS Study MMS 2007-044. The report may be downloaded from the MMS website through the [Environmental Studies Program Information System \(ESPIS\)](#). You will be able to obtain this report from the National Technical Information Service, in the near future. Here are the addresses. You may also inspect copies at selected Federal Depository Libraries.

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Telephone requests may be placed at

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MMS Main Website: www.mms.gov
Gulf of Mexico Website: www.gomr.mms.gov