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MMS Issues Proposed Notice of Central Gulf Lease Sale 190

The Minerals Management Service announced in the *Federal Register* today the availability of the Proposed Notice of Sale 190, an offshore oil and gas lease sale in the Central Gulf of Mexico, scheduled for March 17, 2004. Recently developed sale components under consideration by the MMS are

- The offering of Viosca Knoll Block 69, which has been unleased since late 1998 but unavailable for bid because of a pending appeal of the prior lease termination. The appeal has recently been withdrawn, and the block is therefore available for bid in this Proposed Notice of Sale 190.
- A revised Protected Species Stipulation that is designed to minimize or avoid potential adverse impacts to federally protected species such as sea turtles, marine mammals, Gulf sturgeon, birds, etc.
- Expanded Information to Lessee clauses regarding unleased blocks available for bid in this sale that may be affected by proposed OCS deepwater liquefied natural gas port facilities and sand dredging projects.
- Continuation of shallow-water deep gas and deepwater oil and gas royalty relief measures recently adopted in other Gulf of Mexico OCS lease sales for the purpose of increasing domestic natural gas and oil production to meet our Nation's energy needs. In addition, lessees can apply for added discretionary royalty relief on these leases, if needed.
- In addition to the protected species stipulation, this proposed notice also includes previously adopted lease stipulations relative to topographic features, live bottoms, military areas, blocks south of Baldwin County (Alabama), Law of the Sea Convention royalty payment, and below seabed operations on Mississippi Canyon Block 474.
- Finally, this proposed notice contains a requirement that every bidder submit, by the bid submission deadline, a Geophysical Data and Information Statement identifying any processed or reprocessed pre- and post-stack depth migrated geophysical data and information in its possession or control and used in the evaluation for each block upon which he is participating as a bidder.

Proposed Sale 190 encompasses about 4,281 available blocks in the Central Gulf of Mexico Outer Continental Shelf planning area offshore Louisiana, Mississippi, and Alabama. This area covers about 22.6 million acres. Blocks in this sale are located from 3 to about 210 miles offshore in water depths ranging from 4 to more than 3,400 meters. Estimates of undiscovered economically recoverable hydrocarbons expected to be discovered and produced as a result of this sale proposal range from 276 to 654 million barrels of oil and 1.59 to 3.30 TCF of natural gas.

MMS is the Federal agency in the U.S. Department of the Interior that manages the nation's oil, natural gas, and other mineral resources on the Outer Continental Shelf in Federal offshore waters. The agency also collects, accounts for, and disburses mineral revenues from Federal and American Indian leases. These revenues totaled over \$6 billion in 2002 and nearly \$127 billion

since the agency was created in 1982. Annually, nearly \$1 billion from those revenues go into the Land and Water Conservation Fund for the acquisition and development of state and Federal park and recreation lands.