

The NewsRoom

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MMS Completes Environmental Review of Seismic Activities and Effects on Marine Mammals

The Minerals Management Service (MMS) has announced the completion of an environmental assessment (EA) evaluating the potential environmental impacts of geological and geophysical (G&G) activities in the Gulf of Mexico. The EA analyzed the best available information on the effects of seismic surveys on marine resources, and in particular marine mammals, including sperm whales. Hundreds of documents were reviewed from around the world.

The activities analyzed in the EA include seismic surveys, deep-tow side-scan surveys, electromagnetic surveys, geological and geochemical sampling, and remote-sensing surveys which are used extensively to support oil and gas exploration in the Gulf of Mexico. The impact-producing factors considered in the EA include seismic survey noise, vessel and aircraft noise, seafloor disturbance, and space-use conflicts with seismic arrays. Each year there are about twenty MMS-permitted 3D seismic surveys conducted in the Gulf of Mexico.

The conclusion of the EA was that G&G activities are not expected to result in significant adverse impacts to any of the potentially affected resources. Potentially adverse but not significant impacts were identified for marine mammals, except the manatee, for which negligible impacts were identified. As a result, MMS has issued a Finding of No Significant Impact.

The EA will be included as part of an information package used by MMS in the near future to petition the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. This petition will request NOAA to issue regulations to allow small "takes incidental to seismic surveys in the Gulf of Mexico, under the enabling regulations of the Marine Mammal Protection Act.

To obtain a copy of the EA, (MMS 2004-054) you may contact the Minerals Management Service, Gulf of Mexico OCS Region, Attention: Public Information Office (MS 5034), 1201 Elmwood Park Boulevard, Room 114, New Orleans, Louisiana 70123-2394 (1-800-200-GULF). You may also view the EA on the [MMS website](#).

The Minerals Management Service 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 lands. MMS disbursed more than \$8 billion in FY 2003 and more than \$135 billion since the agency was created in 1982. Nearly \$1 billion from those revenues go into the Land and Water Conservation Fund annually for the acquisition and development of state and Federal park and recreation lands.

Relevant Web Sites

[MMS Main Website](#)

[Gulf of Mexico Website](#)

Media Contacts

[Debra Winbush](#)

(504) 736-2597

[Caryl Fagot](#)

(504) 736-2590