

The NewsRoom

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Florida Company Awarded Contract for Monitoring Health of Flower Garden Banks

The Minerals Management Service, in partnership with the Flower Garden Banks National Marine Sanctuary, has awarded a contract to continue monitoring the health of the East and West Flower Garden Banks coral reef communities in the northwestern Gulf of Mexico for another two years. This \$400,000 contract was awarded to PBS& J Ecological Sciences, located in Miami, Florida.

The monitoring effort will assess the health of the coral reefs, evaluate changes in coral population levels, measure coral and algae cover and growth rates, and investigate other community characteristics. The program will address concerns related to both gradual and punctuated degradation of these offshore ecosystems. Such data are useful in assessing the impacts of industrial activities and are valuable for resource management.

MMS continues its stewardship of the Flower Garden Banks, which was designated a marine sanctuary in 1992. In addition to the ongoing monitoring program, MMS has worked closely with the sanctuary manager on dive programs, facilitating seismic development agreements, oil spill response drills, pipeline sitings, and on advisory boards.

In 1994, the Flower Garden Banks National Marine Sanctuary program recognized MMS for more than 20 years of commitment to resource protection, funding of surveys, and supporting research at the Flower Gardens. MMS and the National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration look forward to continuing this long record of productive environmental concern and cooperation in protecting and preserving the valuable natural resources at the Flower Garden Banks.

The Minerals Management Service is the federal bureau 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 (OCS) in federal offshore waters. Currently, about 30 percent of the oil and 23 percent of the gas produced domestically comes from these federal waters. The bureau also collects, accounts for, and disburses mineral revenues from Federal and American Indian lands. MMS disbursed approximately \$8 billion in Fiscal Year 2004 and more than \$143 billion since it 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](#)

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U.S. Department of the Interior