

**The NewsRoom**

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**MMS's Public Commenting System Down  
Alternative Methods Set for Commenting on 5-Year Leasing Program**

WASHINGTON- Public Connect, the Internet-based public commenting system for the Minerals Management Service, has been disabled since Hurricane Katrina swept through the Gulf of Mexico area August 29. The storm and aftermath disrupted this system, which is hosted by computers at MMS's New Orleans offices. MMS employees are assessing the damage, but it is not known yet how long it will take to restore this system.

A week before the hurricane, on August 24, MMS published in the Federal Register a Request for Comments on the Preparation of a New 5-Year Outer Continental Shelf (OCS) Oil and Gas Leasing Program for 2007-2012; and on the Intent to Prepare an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the Proposed 5-Year Program (70 FR 49669). The notice requested the public submit comments by mail or through the Internet. However, because Public Connect is not available in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, all comments must now be submitted either by mail to: 5-Year Program Manager, Minerals Management Service (MS-4010), 381 Elden Street, Herndon, Virginia 20170 ; or by E-mail.

E-mail regarding the preparation of the EIS should be sent to [fiveyreiscomments@mms.gov](mailto:fiveyreiscomments@mms.gov). E-mail regarding any aspect of the 5-year leasing program besides its supporting EIS should be sent to [fiveyrplcomments@mms.gov](mailto:fiveyrplcomments@mms.gov). Related maps and fact sheets are available at the [5-Year Program](#) web site.

MMS did receive comments that were submitted to Public Connect before Hurricane Katrina hit on August 29, however since the system is currently inaccessible, all comments submitted through Public Connect should be re-submitted by E-mail or regular mail at the above addresses . Comments are due by October 11, 2005.

MMS, part of the U.S. Department of the Interior, oversees 1.76 billion acres of the Outer Continental Shelf, managing offshore energy and minerals while protecting the human, marine, and coastal environments. The OCS provides 29 percent of oil and 19 percent of natural gas produced domestically, as well as sand used for coastal restoration. MMS collects, accounts for, and disburses mineral revenues from Federal and American Indian lands, and contributes to the Land and Water Conservation Fund and other special use funds, with Fiscal Year 2004 disbursements of about \$8 billion and more than \$143 billion since 1982.

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