

**The NewsRoom**

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**MMS Sponsors Scientific Workshop to Identify Research Needs Offshore Virginia**

***Workshop Participants Will Explore Current Data and Identify Information Gaps***

**WASHINGTON** – The Department of the Interior's Minerals Management Service (MMS) is sponsoring a workshop to consider and identify environmental research needs in support of potential offshore oil and gas activities off the coast of Virginia. The workshop, hosted by the Virginia Institute of Marine Science, is scheduled for December 3-4, 2008, at the Williamsburg Woodlands Conference Center in Williamsburg, Virginia.

Participants attending this scientific workshop can expect to learn more about the current technical understanding of the marine environment off the coast of Virginia and will be invited to provide input for future scientific research needs in their area of expertise. Presentations by local scientists will address the areas of physical oceanography, fish and fisheries, marine mammals, socioeconomic and other relevant subjects.

The leasing process includes a comprehensive environmental analysis before any decision to lease is made," explained MMS Director Randall Luthi. "This is the reason for the workshop – to identify any information gaps that may exist for the areas offshore Virginia and to develop a research plan."

Workshop objectives include reviewing the status of environmental and socioeconomic information for offshore Virginia; developing recommendations for a plan of research; and exploring the potential for interdisciplinary research programs. Proceedings, which will be released through the MMS Environmental Studies Program, will include suggested future studies.

The workshop will begin at 8:25 a.m. and conclude at 4:30 p.m. on December 3, 2008 and begin again at 8:30 a.m. and conclude at 3:30 p.m. on December 4, 2008.

Registration is available on site at the Williamsburg Woodlands Conference Center in Williamsburg, beginning at 7:45 a.m. on December 3 and 4, 2008 or in advance on the workshop homepage at: <http://www.vims.edu/public/workshops/mmsworkshop/index.php>

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