



**U.S. Department of the Interior  
Minerals Management Service  
Gulf of Mexico OCS Region**

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**MMS Extends Period to Accept or Reject Bids  
On Offshore Natural Gas And Oil Tracts  
for Western GOM Sale 168**

The U.S. Department of the Interior's Minerals Management Service (MMS) today announced a decision extending the 90-day period within which the Agency must accept or reject high bids received in Outer Continental Shelf (OCS) Sale 168. The notice, which appears in the November 10, 1997, Federal Register, extends the time period 15 working days, from November 24, 1997, to December 9, 1997.

In the Western Gulf of Mexico Sale 168, held August 27, 1997, MMS received a WGOM record of 1,224 bids on 804 tracts, with 738 tracts requiring detailed reviews. Because of the increased workload—a result of the record breaking sale—MMS is unable to conduct and complete the entire bid review process for this sale within the 90 days.

MMS implemented a rule change that appeared in the July 3, 1996, Federal Register, which authorized the extension of evaluation periods under certain circumstances. Agency officials noted that the existing 90-day time frame, established in 1982, was too rigid and did not provide enough time to complete the review process given the complexities in evaluating certain tracts.

MMS is the Federal Agency that manages the Nation's natural gas, oil and other mineral resources on the OCS, and collects, accounts for and distributes about \$4 billion in revenues from Federal offshore mineral leases and from onshore mineral leases on Federal and Indian lands.

**-MMS-GOM-**