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MMS ESTABLISHES JOINT SUBCOMMITTEE ON
ENVIRONMENTAL INFORMATION FOR SELECT OCS
AREAS UNDER MORATORIA

The U.S. Department of the Interior's Minerals Management Service (MMS) has established a Joint Subcommittee on Environmental Information for Select Outer Continental Shelf (OCS) Areas Under Moratoria.

"The subcommittee will provide an independent review and evaluation of specific information needs for areas where controversy has led to Presidential or Congressional restrictions on leasing on the OCS," said MMS Director Cynthia Quarterman.

According to Paul Kelly, chairman of the OCS Policy Committee, and Michael Fry, chairman of the OCS Scientific Committee, at their meetings earlier this year both committees called for establishment of the Joint Subcommittee. The subcommittee will include members from the OCS Policy Committee and the OCS Scientific Committee of the Interior Department's Minerals Management Advisory Board.

Kelly and Fry jointly named as co-chairs former Scientific Committee member Larry P. Atkinson, of the Center for Coastal Physical Oceanography, Old Dominion University, Norfolk, Virginia, and Policy Committee member Ernest A. Mancini, State Geologist & Supervisor for the Geological Survey of Alabama.

"Under the able leadership of Messrs. Atkinson and Mancini," said Quarterman, "this subcommittee can perform a real service by helping the Department and MMS to more efficiently and effectively focus valuable research funds, and address questions critical to OCS program decisions."

"This is a good example of how government should work," added Kelly. "These committees exist to provide advice and counsel and to act as a sounding board. When the talents and expertise of the federal government are combined with those in state government and the private sector in order to try and resolve a problem, only good things can result."

Quarterman said that the subcommittee will assess environmental information and studies requirements in light of budgetary constraints, offshore oil and gas state-of-the-art

technology, the offshore industry's environmental record, industry interest, and the nature of the potential hydrocarbon resources in the areas under review (i.e., oil and natural gas).

"The MMS environmental studies program has severe budgetary restrictions," said Fry. "Combining the knowledge and expertise from these two committees gives us an opportunity to develop comprehensive and specific recommendations on how these funds should be allocated."

Fry said that the subcommittee, which will submit a report to the MMS Director within a year of its formation, may also identify and evaluate alternative strategies such as mitigation measures and stipulations which could influence the need for additional studies.

The MMS is the federal agency that manages the Nation's natural gas, oil and other mineral resources on the Outer Continental Shelf, and collects and disburses about \$4 billion yearly in revenues from offshore federal mineral leases and from onshore mineral leases on federal and Indian lands.

--MMS--

EDITORS NOTE: The Subcommittee Membership List is attached
Subcommittee on Environmental Information for Select OCS Areas
Under Moratoria

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