The NewsRoom
Date: September 25, 2008

MMS Enters into an Interagency Agreement to Compile Avian Data for the Atlantic Coast

WASHINGTON – The Minerals Management Service and the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) recently launched a three-year study of seabirds and shorebirds along the Atlantic coast for use in future environmental assessments regarding possible offshore wind energy development projects.

“This important study will enable us to make decisions based upon sound science as we work to expand our nation's energy portfolio through alternative energy in an environmentally responsible manner,” said MMS Director Randall Luthi.

The study will collect and analyze existing geographic and population information on a variety of seabird and shorebird species. The information gathered will be compiled in a Geographic Information System (GIS) database. The scientists at the USGS Patuxent Wildlife Research Center will develop a model, using such factors as wind and wave conditions, temperature, water chemistry and the presence of food to determine why seabirds live in certain locations at particular times of the year.

This study, which MMS provided $588,847 towards, augments ongoing efforts by the USGS and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. MMS interest is in the area of the Outer Continental Shelf (OCS) from New York to Virginia. The service aims to offer better understanding of the birds’ offshore presence.

MMS has funded nearly $800 million in environmental research over the past 30 years. The Environmental Studies Program (ESP) provides the solid scientific information needed for critical program decisions that must, by law, accommodate the delicate balance between the protection of the human, marine, and coastal environments and the nation’s exploration, development, and production of petroleum and alternate energy resources and other marine minerals and energy-related alternate uses of OCS structures.

Environmental studies are designed to address specific information needs concerning the environmental and socioeconomic state of a region, both before and after OCS activity. The scope of the program is geographically diverse, ranging from unique deepwater issues in the Gulf of Mexico to the extreme environment of the Alaskan arctic.

Contact:
Nicholas Pardi 202-208-3985