

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

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Dated: March 23, 2005.

Lucy Querques Denett,

Associate Director for Minerals Revenue Management.

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DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

Minerals Management Service

Gulf of Mexico, Outer Continental Shelf, Western Planning Area, Oil and Gas Lease Sale 196 (2005) Environmental Assessment

AGENCY: Minerals Management Service (MMS), Interior.

ACTION: Notice of availability of an environmental assessment.

SUMMARY: The Minerals Management Service is issuing this notice to advise the public that MMS has prepared an environmental assessment (EA) for proposed Outer Continental Shelf (OCS) oil and gas Lease Sale 196 in the Western Gulf of Mexico (GOM) (Lease Sale 196) scheduled for August 2005. Proposed Lease Sale 196 is the fourth Western Planning Area (WPA) lease sale scheduled in the *Outer Continental Shelf Oil and Gas Leasing Program: 2002-2007* (5-Year Program, OCS EIS/EA MMS 2002-006). The preparation of this EA is an important step in the decisionmaking process for Lease Sale 196. The proposal for Lease Sale 196 (the offering of all available unleased acreage in the WPA) and its alternatives (the proposed action excluding the unleased blocks near biologically sensitive topographic features and no action) were identified by the MMS Director in January 2002 following the Call for Information and Nominations/Notice of Intent to Prepare an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) and were analyzed in the *Gulf of Mexico OCS Oil and Gas Lease Sales: 2003-2007; Central Planning Area Sales 185, 190, 194, 198, and 201; Western Planning Area Sales 187, 192, 196, and 200—Final Environmental Impact Statement; Volumes I and II* (Multisale EIS, OCS EIS/EA MMS 2002-052). The Multisale EIS analyzed the effects of a typical WPA lease sale by presenting a

set of ranges for resource estimates, projected exploration and development activities, and impact-producing factors for any of the proposed WPA lease sales. The level of activities projected for proposed Lease Sale 196 falls within these ranges. In this EA, which tiers from the Multisale EIS and incorporates that document by reference, MMS reexamined the potential environmental effects of the proposed action and its alternatives based on any new information regarding potential impacts and issues that were not available at the time the Multisale EIS was prepared. No new significant impacts were identified for proposed Lease Sale 196 that were not already assessed in the Multisale EIS. As a result, MMS determined that a supplemental EIS is not required and prepared a Finding of No New Significant Impact (FONNSI).

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Mr. Dennis Chew, Minerals Management Service, Gulf of Mexico OCS Region, 1201 Elmwood Park Boulevard, MS 5410, New Orleans, Louisiana 70123-2394. You may also contact Mr. Chew by telephone at (504) 736-2793.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: In November 2002, MMS prepared a Multisale EIS that addressed nine proposed Federal actions that offer for lease areas on the GOM OCS that may contain economically recoverable oil and gas resources. Federal regulations allow for several related or similar proposals to be analyzed in one EIS (40 CFR 1502.4). Since each proposed lease sale and its projected activities are very similar each year for each planning area, a single EIS was prepared for the nine Central Planning Area (CPA) and WPA lease sales scheduled in the 5-Year Program. Under the 5-Year Program, five annual areawide lease sales are scheduled for the CPA (Lease Sales 185, 190, 194, 198, and 201) and five annual areawide lease sales are scheduled for the WPA (Lease Sales 184, 187, 192, 196, and 200). Lease Sale 184 was not addressed in the Multisale EIS; a separate EA was prepared for that proposal. The Multisale EIS addressed CPA Lease Sales 185, 190, 194, 198, and 201 scheduled for 2003, 2004, 2005, 2006, and 2007, respectively, and WPA Lease Sales 187, 192, 196, and 200 scheduled for 2003, 2004, 2005, and 2006, respectively. Although the Multisale EIS addresses nine proposed lease sales, at the completion of the EIS process, decisions were made only for proposed CPA Lease Sale 185 and proposed WPA Lease Sale 187. In the year prior to each subsequent proposed lease sale, an additional NEPA review (an EA) will be conducted to address

any new information relevant to that proposed action. After completion of the EA, MMS will determine whether to prepare a FONNSI or a Supplemental EIS. The MMS will then prepare and send Consistency Determinations (CD's) to the affected States to determine whether the proposed lease sale is consistent with their federally-approved State coastal zone management programs. Finally, MMS will solicit comments via the Proposed Notice of Sale (PNOS) from the governors of the affected States on the size, timing, and location of the proposed lease sale. The tentative schedule for the prelease decision process for Lease Sale 196 is as follows: CD's sent to affected States, March 2005; PNOS sent to governors of the affected States, March 2005; Final Notice of Sale published in the **Federal Register**, July 2005; and Lease Sale 196, August 2005. To obtain single copies of the Multisale EIS, you may contact the Minerals Management Service, Gulf of Mexico OCS Region, Attention: Public Information Office (MS 5034), 1201 Elmwood Park Boulevard, Room 114, New Orleans, Louisiana 70123-2394 (1-800-200-GULF). You may also view the Multisale EIS or check the list of libraries that have copies of the Multisale EIS on the MMS Web site at <http://www.gomr.mms.gov>.

Public Comments: Interested parties are requested to send comments on this EA/FONNSI within 30 days of this notice's publication. Comments may be submitted in one of the following three ways:

1. Comments may be submitted using MMS's Public Connect on-line commenting system at <https://occonnect.mms.gov>. This is the preferred method for commenting. From the Public Connect "Welcome" screen, search for "WPA Lease Sale 196 EA" or select it from the "Projects Open for Comment" menu.

2. Written comments may be enclosed in an envelope labeled "Comments on WPA Lease Sale 196 EA" and mailed (or hand carried) to the Regional Supervisor, Leasing and Environment (MS 5410), Minerals Management Service, Gulf of Mexico OCS Region, 1201 Elmwood Park Boulevard, New Orleans, Louisiana 70123-2394.

3. Comments may be sent to the MMS e-mail address: environment@mms.gov.

All comments received will be considered in the decisionmaking process for Lease Sale 196.

EA Availability: To obtain a copy of this EA, you may contact the Minerals Management Service, Gulf of Mexico OCS Region, Attention: Public Information Office (MS 5034), 1201 Elmwood Park Boulevard, Room 114,

New Orleans, Louisiana 70123-2394 (1-800-200-GULF). You may also view this EA on the MMS Web site at <http://www.gomr.mms.gov>.

Dated: March 7, 2005.

Chris C. Oynes,

Regional Director, Gulf of Mexico OCS Region.

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DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

Minerals Management Service

RIN 1010-AB57

Major Portion Prices and Due Date for Additional Royalty Payments on Indian Gas Production in Designated Areas Not Associated With an Index Zone

AGENCY: Minerals Management Service (MMS), Interior.

ACTION: Notice of major portion prices for calendar year 2003.

SUMMARY: Final regulations for valuing gas produced from Indian leases, published on August 10, 1999, require MMS to determine major portion values and notify industry by publishing the

values in the **Federal Register**. The regulations also require MMS to publish a due date for industry to pay additional royalty based on the major portion value. This notice provides the major portion values for the 12 months of 2003. The due date to pay is May 31, 2005.

ADDRESSES: See **FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT** section below.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: John Barder, Indian Oil and Gas Compliance and Asset Management, MMS; telephone (303) 231-3702; FAX (303) 231-3755; e-mail to John.Barder@mms.gov; or Shawna Hopkins, Indian Oil and Gas Compliance and Asset Management, MMS; telephone (303) 231-3817; FAX (303) 231-3755; e-mail to Shawna.Hopkins@mms.gov. Mailing address: Minerals Management Service, Minerals Revenue Management, ONCAM, Indian Oil and Gas Compliance and Asset Management, P.O. Box 25165, MS 396B2, Denver, Colorado 80225-0165.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: On August 10, 1999, MMS published a final rule titled "Amendments to Gas Valuation

Regulations for Indian Leases," (64 FR 43506) with an effective date of January 1, 2000. The gas regulations apply to all gas production from Indian (tribal or allotted) oil and gas leases, except leases on the Osage Indian Reservation.

The rule requires that MMS publish major portion prices for each designated area not associated with an index zone for each production month beginning January 2000, along with a due date for additional royalty payments. See 30 CFR 206.174(a)(4)(ii) (2004). If additional royalties are due based on a published major portion price, the lessee must submit an amended Form MMS-2014, Report of Sales and Royalty Remittance, to MMS by the due date. If additional royalties are not paid by the due date, late payment interest under 30 CFR 218.54 (2004) will accrue from the due date until payment is made and an amended Form MMS-2014 is received. The table below lists the major portion prices for all designated areas not associated with an index zone. The due date is May 31, 2005.

Gas Major Portion Prices and Due Dates for Designated Areas Not Associated With an Index Zone

MMS-Designated areas	January 2003 (MMBtu)	February 2003 (MMBtu)	March 2003 (MMBtu)
Blackfeet Reservation	5.57	6.48	9.53
Fort Belknap	4.97	5.10	5.84
Fort Berthold	4.32	5.88	6.31
Fort Peck Reservation	3.55	5.25	7.96
Navajo Allotted Leases in the Navajo Reservation	4.37	4.50	5.82
Rocky Boys Reservation	3.75	4.65	6.76
Ute Allotted Leases in the Uintah and Ouray Reservation	2.90	3.21	5.05
Ute Tribal Leases in the Uintah and Ouray Reservation	3.20	3.68	6.47

MMS-Designated areas	April 2003 (MMBtu)	May 2003 (MMBtu)	June 2003 (MMBtu)
Blackfeet Reservation	6.63	6.64	7.05
Fort Belknap	5.04	5.08	5.27
Fort Berthold	4.28	4.76	4.83
Fort Peck Reservation	4.43	4.29	4.97
Navajo Allotted Leases in the Navajo Reservation	3.65	4.02	4.88
Rocky Boys Reservation	4.04	4.16	4.57
Ute Allotted Leases in the Uintah and Ouray Reservation	3.19	4.04	4.42
Ute Tribal Leases in the Uintah and Ouray Reservation	3.51	4.39	4.83

MMS-Designated areas	July 2003 (MMBtu)	August 2003 (MMBtu)	September 2003 (MMBtu)
Blackfeet Reservation	7.09	5.73	6.14
Fort Belknap	5.18	5.03	5.13
Fort Berthold	4.22	4.25	3.93
Fort Peck Reservation	4.69	4.71	4.47
Navajo Allotted Leases in the Navajo Reservation	4.66	3.87	4.31
Rocky Boys Reservation	4.04	3.62	3.76
Ute Allotted Leases in the Uintah and Ouray Reservation	4.60	4.11	4.24
Ute Tribal Leases in the Uintah and Ouray Reservation	4.24	3.94	4.05