

## Minerals Management Service



Cynthia Quarterman, Director  
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### MMS Launches Intranet

MMS recently took a significant technological stride forward by launching its intranet, known within the agency as the Pipeline. The intranet offers exciting new ways for MMS employees to share information, tap into vast quantities of data, and work more efficiently and effectively.

The MMS Pipeline uses the same technology as the Internet and works the same way, though on a smaller scale. The intranet speeds internal communication and performs a variety of useful business functions. The main difference in the two systems is that, unlike the MMS Website on the Internet, which the public may access, the Pipeline is restricted to MMS employees.

The Pipeline, which became available in January, includes a growing library of online references; employee and human resources information; additional information on how to use the internet; budget, finance, and procurement information; science and technology references, links, and resources; Offshore and Royalty Program activities and data; collaborative opportunities; news and local information for MMS headquarters and regional offices; and a search feature to help users find information.

More applications are on the horizon. For example, shared "whiteboards" will enable employees to hold electronic meetings and allow whiteboard participants to see what is being written on a whiteboard and to add their comments to the discussion in real time, streamlining electronic conversations. Eventually, software will handle scheduling and calendars for individuals, groups, and meeting rooms. And new "front ends" will give users Windows access to interior-wide applications.

**MMS** Counts on the Internet  
<http://www.mms.gov>

### NOAA Archives MMS-Sponsored Information

Gulf of Mexico hydrographic and marine mammal data collected and prepared as part of two MMS-sponsored programs has been archived on CD-ROM by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) of the U.S. Department of Commerce.

MMS supported at-sea participation by Texas A&M University technicians who carried out the Ship of Opportunity Program, which used bottle samples to test salinity, and a 2-year field program that studied the distribution of marine mammals in the north-central and western Gulf of Mexico.

Study results reported by Texas A&M technicians have been archived on CD-ROM and are available through NOAA's National Oceanographic Data Center. For more information, contact Texas A&M, (409) 845-7211.

Cynthia Quarterman



MMS anticipates a 70 to 100 percent increase in deep water oil production in the Gulf of Mexico in the next seven years, requiring the agency to gear up its monitoring and oversight activities.

### '98 Budget Geared to Increased Deep Water Operations in Gulf

The Minerals Management Service is asking for \$205 million for the 1998 fiscal year to manage the nation's natural gas, oil, and other mineral resources on the Outer Continental Shelf, and to collect, account for, and disburse mineral revenues owed from federal and Indian lands. On average, those revenues amount to about \$4 billion each year.

"The request is about \$600,000 above the 1997 level," said MMS Director **Cynthia Quarterman**, "and includes \$164 million in current appropriations and \$41 million in receipts—the same level of offsetting collections authority we had last year. In addition, \$584.6 million in permanent appropriated funds will provide states their statutory shares of mineral leasing revenues generated on federal lands."

Quarterman said the budget proposes an increase of about \$6.3 million in activity on Outer Continental Shelf lands to handle the resurgence of industry interest in the Gulf of Mexico. "The record-breaking results of recent lease sales in the Gulf of Mexico, particularly in deeper waters, have placed a heavy demand on our efforts there," Quarterman said. Those efforts include ensuring the safe and environmentally sound development of the Outer Continental Shelf, servicing the needs of MMS stakeholders in a timely manner, and assuring the public a fair return on the leasing of Outer Continental Shelf minerals.

Deepwater operations are vastly different from conventional operations in shallower waters of the shelf. Deepwater operations also are much farther from shore, encounter different environmental conditions, are technologically more sophisticated, may produce at much higher rates and are subject to different economic determinants.

"These differences will significantly impact MMS's workload and present many technical and regulatory challenges," Quarterman explained. "We cannot afford to skimp on overseeing what promises to be a 70-100 percent increase in oil production in the Gulf of Mexico by the year 2002."

For example, requests for geological and geophysical permits have increased to their highest level ever. This funding increase would cover the costs of

acquiring and converting the geological and geophysical data. "This will give us the means to more accurately evaluate bids and royalty relief applications to ensure that the public receives fair market value on offshore leases," said Quarterman.

"We also need to expand the inspector team and increase our use of helicopters to maintain inspection rates over more offshore facilities and drilling operations," Quarterman explained. Many of these operations are located great distances off shore.

MMS also is receiving more exploration, development, and deep water operating plans as well as pipeline applications for review and action. "This requires us to do more environmental assessments, categorical exclusions, and architectural analysis," said Quarterman. "In order to continue to respond on a timely basis, the increased workload associated with document and application reviews and permitting required in the post-lease process must be addressed."

The environmental studies program also will get an increase to focus on environmental issues and risks associated with deep water operations, according to Quarterman. "As industry moves into deeper areas of the Gulf of Mexico, we need this body of knowledge to evaluate effectively operating plans and permits for deep water facilities."

To offset increases in the Outer Continental Shelf Lands program, MMS is proposing reductions of \$3.7 million in the Royalty Management Program, \$1.6 million in General Administration, and \$322,000 in the Oil Spill Research account. MMS also has identified other more efficient and effective methods of doing business, especially in its royalty management and general administrative programs. "Those efficiencies make it possible for us to shift our limited resources to those areas where we will see a marked uptick in work," Quarterman concluded.

More information on the effects of increased deep water operations on MMS is available on the MMS Website at: <http://www.mms.gov>  
MMS's 24-Hour Fax-on-Demand Service: (202) 219-1703

### Pacific Region's Toast of the Coast

Toast of the Coast has been an extremely active and effective public speaking training tool since it was organized and chartered four years ago. It is the Toastmasters club of the MMS Pacific Outer Continental Shelf Region. Because it's an open club, where membership is encouraged for people outside MMS, Toast of the Coast also serves as an informal community forum, making it a valuable outreach tool for its MMS members, who network with other Toastmasters in the greater Ventura County area.

One of the ways the Toastmasters learn about public speaking techniques is through a guest speaker program. Recently, the club was treated to an

educational speech by Ventura County Superior Court Judge **Colleen Toy White**. Judge White gave the audience an in-depth description of family law.

Although her agenda includes divorce, child custody, and spousal abuse, Judge White is also empowered to perform marriages, which is one of her favorite jobs. In her speech to the Camarillo Toastmasters, Judge White explained that deciding the custody of minors is her most challenging task. If she could change one thing, she said, it would be to make parents more responsible about caring for their children and providing for their children's futures.

### MMS Scientist Lectures in Europe

**Dr. Murray Brown** recently visited the Albanian Institute of Hydrometeorology on behalf of the United Nations to assist the emerging nation's scientists with their oceanographic research capabilities. Brown is with MMS's Gulf of Mexico Outer Continental Shelf Region's Office of Leasing and Environment. During his Albanian visit, though, he represented the UN's Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission Project.

Because a lack of funding precluded sending a formal delegation from the UN Commission to Albania, Dr. Brown donated some of his vacation time to organize a training course in how to use several international software packages. He spent a week with Institute staff showing them how to install and operate about two dozen software packages and major database systems he had collected from various federal and international archives as donations for Albanian researchers.

An unexpected diversion during Dr. Brown's visit to this little-known nation was the Institute's observation of a national custom that honored guests should be taken into the mountains east of the capital, Tirana, to see the pinnacle fortress of Albania's national hero, Skanderbeg. Without warning, Dr. Brown was whisked away in a guarded jeep to a traditional noonday meal (roasted lamb served with bread and beer) in a rural caravansary (caravan resting-place), then up steep mountain ravines to a tiny village with sharply pitched streets leading up to the castle.

Never conquered by the Ottoman Turks, the fortress was headquarters for the Albanian nationalist cause

about 400 years ago. There were no tourists at the site on the day of Dr. Brown's visit, so the party could easily hear the screams of the many eagles that nest on the pinnacle's sides and adjacent cliffs. Albania's eagle population gives the country its official name, *Shqipitar*, meaning Land of the Eagles.

During conversations with Institute staff, Dr. Brown learned that Albania has much in common with coastal Louisiana: enormous oil reserves, heavy pressure to develop the coast for multiple uses, coastal water quality problems due to hypoxia (a deficiency of oxygen), and endangered coastal fisheries. There are even large marshy areas with a thriving frog-leg industry. Tourism is just beginning to develop, because, until recently, the country was closed to foreigners.

Dr. Brown returned to Europe to give an invited set of lectures and laboratory session on digital mapping and charting at the European Union's Advanced Training Course in Marine Data and Information Management, held in Copenhagen. The course was attended by 20 students selected from a dozen countries.

Although the lectures covered a number of popular software systems for generating computer maps and general-purpose bathymetry, topography, and coastline data sets, the labs centered on the use of



Above, the central square in Tirana, Albania, is surrounded by mosques and administrative buildings remaining from the Ottoman Empire. At left, Dr. Murray Brown, second from left, with staff scientists of the Hydrometeorology Institute. Dr. Eglantina Demiraj, center, hosted Brown's recent visit and training course.



the MMS OPCPlot software, which was written by Dr. Brown. One student in the class, **Ms. Neda Skakelja** of Croatia, was already familiar with OPCPlot, as she had recently completed post-doctoral research at Seaworld of Orlando, where she had used the program to plot Gulf of Mexico marine mammal strandings.

### MMS Studies Civil War Shipwreck

Jack B. Irion

Members of the MMS Scientific Diving Team participated in a 4-day joint project on the wreck of the Civil War-era warship USS *Hatteras* with Texas A&M University at Galveston late last summer. **Rik Anuskiewicz**, **Jack Irion**, and **Terry Dempre** represented the Gulf of Mexico Region during the investigation.

Within 45 minutes, the *Hatteras* rested on the bottom of the Gulf of Mexico, her pennant still fluttering from the masthead above the waves.

The iron-hulled wreck of the *Hatteras* still lies about 20 miles off the Texas shore on the Outer Continental Shelf. The 210-foot ship is nearly buried in sand, with only her two paddle wheels and parts of the 18-foot long, 50-inch diameter cylinder of her 500-horsepower steam engine still above the sea floor. The ship, whose decks were last trod 133 years ago, now is home to triggerfish and red snapper.

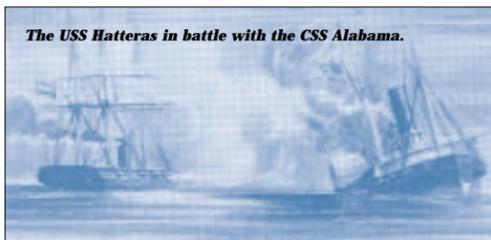
Although the vessel is still owned by the U.S. Navy, MMS has periodically monitored the condition of this significant historic site, the only shipwreck on the Outer Continental Shelf listed in the National Register of Historic Places, an inventory of our country's most significant historic properties.

Because of the site's importance and its proximity to producing oil fields, the U.S. Navy Historical Center in Washington, D.C., requested help from the Gulf Region to assess the wreck's present condition. The director of the Scientific Diving Program at Texas A&M also requested that MMS marine archaeologists take part in a joint project on the *Hatteras* to instruct their students in underwater archaeological methods.

A major focus of this year's expedition involved testing two state-of-the-art remote-sensing instruments for use in identifying hazards and conducting archaeological surveys on the Outer Continental Shelf. Both proved to be highly effective instruments for detecting shipwrecks on the sea floor and offered many advantages over conventional equipment.

Diving operations benefited from three days of perfect weather, although visibility on the bottom was limited to about ten feet. Despite limited visibility, divers succeeded in refining site maps, photographing parts of the wreck exposed above the sea floor, and probing to determine the depth of sediment over the wreck. Divers noted that the wreck is covered with shrimp nets, which suggest that the *Hatteras* is experiencing some damage from shrimp trawlers.

As part of a continuing program by the Environmental Operations Section to explore innovative and cost-effective approaches to meeting MMS's obligation to protect archaeological and environmental resources on the Outer Continental Shelf, the *Hatteras* serves not only as an ideal laboratory but also as a dramatic reminder of the history that lies beneath the sea.



The USS Hatteras in battle with the CSS Alabama.

### Boy Scouts Learn About MMS

A Boy Scout troop from Newbury Park, California recently toured the MMS Pacific Region offices as part of a requirement for earning their merit badges in citizenship and science. After a greeting from Regional Director **Dr. J. Lisle Reed**, the scouts visited MMS program offices to learn how the agency uses a variety of sciences to manage natural gas and oil resources offshore California. Region scientists and engineers outlined various biological, geological, and engineering applications to the scouts, while highlighting current MMS projects and environmental studies.

"The scouts were able to gain a broad understanding of how we conduct our day-to-day business," said **Bobbie Hall**, Pacific Region coordinator of the scout visit. "Not only did they see how a federal regulatory agency operates, they also learned about current science being conducted right off their coast."

In addition to the office tour, the Pacific Region has supported the local Boy Scouts of America program through guest lectures, field trips, and merit badge and science project coaching.

### Correction

Last month's article on hurricanes and artificial reefs stated an incorrect percentage for reefs destroyed by Hurricane Opal in local waters offshore Destin, Florida. The correct figure is 95 percent. We regret the error.



California Dreaming. A trio of California sea lions nap on the mussel-encrusted piling of Exxon's Platform Harmony, located about six miles offshore Santa Barbara, California. An abundance of fish and other marine organisms that live in the reef-like environment of subsurface structural components often attracts marine mammals to natural gas and oil platforms.