

MINERALS MANAGEMENT ADVISORY BOARD
Agenda for the OCS Scientific Committee Meeting
Tuesday, April 23, 2002
Holiday Inn and Suites
Alexandria, Virginia

- 8:30 a.m. - 8:45 a.m. Welcome and Introductions
Dr. William Schroeder, Chair, OCS Scientific Committee
- 8:45 a.m. - 9:15 a.m. Associate Director's Presentation
Mr. Tom Readinger, Associate Director for Offshore Minerals
Management and Executive Director of the OCS SC
- 9:15 a.m. - 9:35 a.m. Ocean Commission Update
Dr. James Coleman, Ocean Commission Member
- 9:35 a.m. - 9:55 a.m. OCS Policy Committee Report
Dr. George Banino, OCS Policy Committee Chair
- 9:55 a.m. - 10:10 a.m. Break
- 10:10 a.m. - 10:40 a.m. Mercury in the Marine Environment
Dr. Jerry Neff, Battelle Ocean Science Laboratory
- 10:40 a.m. - 11:10 a.m. GOOMEX: Experimental Design and What the Data Mean
Dr. Paul Montagna, Marine Science Institute, University of Texas
- 11:10 a.m. - 11:30 a.m. Report on the GOMR ITM Session on Sand and Gravel Studies

Dr. Robert Diaz, Virginia Institute of Marine Science,
Dr. Chuck Marek, Vulcan Materials Company, and
Mr. Barry Drucker, MMS INTERMAR
- 11:30 a.m. - 11:45 a.m. Formation of the Sand and Gravel Committee
- 11:45 a.m. - 12:00 noon Director's Presentation
Ms. R. M. "Johnnie" Burton, Director
- 12:00 noon - 1:30 p.m. Lunch

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(Afternoon Session)

- 1:30 p.m. - 4:45 p.m. Regional Priorities and Environmental Information Needs
- (1:30 - 2:15) National
 Dr. James Kendall, Chief, Environmental Sciences Branch
- (2:15 - 3:00) Alaska OCS Region
 Dr. Cleve Cowles, Chief, Environmental Studies Section
- (3:00 - 3:15) Break
- (3:15 - 4:00) Pacific OCS Region
 Dr. Fred Piltz, Chief, Environmental Studies Section
- (4:00 - 4:45) Gulf of Mexico OCS Region
 Dr. Pat Roscigno, Chief, Environmental Sciences Section
- 4:45 p.m. - 5:15 p.m. Scientific Committee Wrap-Up Discussion
 Dr. William Schroeder, Chair, OCS Scientific Committee
- 5:15 p.m. Adjourn

Director's Presentation

The Scientific Committee advises the Director, MMS, on research studies supported under the Bureau's Environmental Studies Program. During these meetings, the Director tries to meet with the Committee for a dialogue concerning MMS's mission related activities and priorities as they relate to the studies program.

Associate Director's Presentation

As advisor to the Director, MMS, the Committee appreciates the opportunity to have a dialogue with the Associate Director for Offshore Minerals Management on ongoing and future issues, policies, and activities of the Bureau. This exchange not only keeps the Committee apprised of MMS direction but also offers an opportunity for the Committee to provide direct advice and guidance on matters as they relate to the Environmental Studies Program.

Ocean Commission Update

Established by the Oceans Act of 2000, the U.S. Commission on Ocean Policy is charged with reviewing federal ocean-related programs and laws and making recommendations to the President and Congress for a coordinated and comprehensive National Ocean policy. During its 18-month investigation, the Commission will examine such issues as responsible stewardship of living and non-living resources; protection of the marine environment; impact of, and protection against, natural and manmade hazards, the role of oceans in climate change, and enhancement of oceanographic science, to name but a few.

Dr. James Coleman, a member of the Commission, will report on recent Commission activities.

OCS Policy Committee Report

Officers of the OCS Scientific Committee and the OCS Policy Committee routinely attend each other's meetings and give brief presentations on the various OCS issues they are involved with. Mr. George Banino will present the key discussion items from the OCS Policy Committee's October 2001 meeting.

Mercury in the Marine Environment

Mercury, particularly in the form of methylmercury, is extremely toxic to marine organisms, wildlife, and man. The main pathway for human exposure to methylmercury is through consumption of freshwater and marine fishery products. There is considerable concern throughout the US, including the Gulf of Mexico states, about mercury contamination of commercial and recreational freshwater and marine fishery products. Recent newspaper editorials identified offshore oil and gas operations as a

possible source of mercury in marine fish and shellfish in the Gulf of Mexico. The American Petroleum Institute commissioned Dr. Neff to prepare a review on the possible contribution of offshore oil and gas facilities to mercury contamination of marine fishery products. He found that the contribution of offshore oil and gas activities to the flux of mercury to the Gulf of Mexico was very small. Fish and shellfish collected near offshore platforms do not contain higher concentrations of mercury in edible tissues than the same species from elsewhere in the Gulf of Mexico.

GOOMEX: Experimental Design and What the Data Mean

The Gulf of Mexico Offshore Operations Monitoring Experiment (GOOMEX) was performed to develop and recommend sensitive and appropriate techniques for monitoring activities of offshore oil and gas production. To accomplish this goal, a broad range of biological, biochemical and chemical methodologies were tested to detect and assess potential chronic, sublethal, and long-term effects of offshore oil and gas production. GOOMEX study components included measurements of abiotic characteristics to indicate environmental state (e.g., chemical patterns in sediments and water, geological patterns, and physical patterns) and biotic responses (e.g., tissue body burdens, detoxification response by fish and invertebrates to contaminant exposure, sediment toxicity to invertebrates, meiofaunal, macrofaunal and megaepifaunal community structure, harpacticoid reproduction and population genetic structure, megaepifaunal reproduction). In general, results indicate that effects were limited to 100 m from platforms. Relative to background (i.e., = 200 m), the zone near platforms had sediments with higher levels of contaminants and toxicity; reduced levels of abundance, species diversity, genetic diversity, and reproductive success; and feeding guilds dominated by deposit feeders. The HI-A389A platform had much higher levels of contaminants and concordant biotic responses than other platforms, apparently because of near-bottom shunting to avoid dispersal to the nearby Flower Gardens.

Report on the GOMR ITM Session on Sand and Gravel Studies

In January 2002, the MMS International Activities and Marine Minerals Division (INTERMAR) convened a sand and gravel session at the Gulf of Mexico Information Transfer Meeting. Covering both the morning and the afternoon, a series of speakers provided the results of several major and recently completed MMS-funded environmental sand and gravel studies. This included site-specific and generic-oriented efforts. In addition, there were talks on related studies and activities of interest from the Army Corps of Engineers' New York and New Orleans District offices. Several of the sessions' speakers are presently preparing papers for inclusion in a special MMS sand and gravel issue of the Journal of Coastal Research. Barry Drucker (MMS sand and gravel program), in consultation with SC members Bob Diaz and Charles Marek, will present an overview of the ITM session.

Formation of the Sand and Gravel Subcommittee

It is recognized that sooner or later leases of sand and gravel offshore will be offered. At the last meeting, it was recommended that the protocols that went into the original leasing of offshore oil, gas, etc., be looked at to determine the best way to proceed and that the MMS begin consideration of impacts on budget and planning caused by possible substantial increased in leasing and operation in the sand and gravel program.

Regional Priorities and Environmental Information Needs

MMS Headquarters and Regional Studies presentations will outline the overall research needs and priorities of the National and Regional Studies Programs. Presentations will address current issues; information/knowledge gaps; the most pressing research needs; how the various disciplines fit together in the overall picture; and future Studies efforts, in terms of expenditures and prioritization

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Wednesday, April 24, 2002
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8:15 a.m. - 8:30 a.m. Charge to the Discipline Subcommittees
 Dr. William Schroeder, Chair, OCS Scientific Committee

Physical Sciences, Biology and Socioeconomic Subcommittees meet separately to discuss national and regional studies plans.

	Ecology/Biology Marshall Salon	Physical Oceanography Pendleton Salon	Socioeconomics Wythe Salon
8:30 – 9:45	Alaska Region	Gulf of Mexico Region	Pacific Region
9:45 – 10:00	Break	Break	Break
10:00 – 11:15	Headquarters	Alaska Region	Gulf of Mexico Region
11:15 - 12:30	Lunch	Lunch	Lunch
12:30 - 1:45	Pacific Region	Headquarters	Alaska Region
1:45 - 3:00	Break	Break	Break
3:00 - 4:15	Gulf of Mexico	Pacific Region	Headquarters

4:15 p.m. - 4:45 p.m. Subcommittees Chairs and MMS Recorder Finalize
 Recommendations

4:45 p.m. Adjourn

MINERALS MANAGEMENT ADVISORY BOARD
Agenda for the OCS Scientific Committee Meeting
Thursday, April 25, 2002
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- 8:00 a.m. - 8:30 a.m. Plenary Session
Dr. William Schroeder; Chair, OCS Scientific Committee
- 8:30 a.m. - 9:30 a.m. Discipline Subcommittee Reports (20 minutes each)
- Biology
 - Physical Oceanography
 - Socioeconomics
- 9:30 a.m. - 10:00a.m. Open Discussion
- 10:00 a.m. - 10:15 a.m. Break
- 10:15 a.m. - 12:00 p.m. Committee Business
- Election of Chair and Vice-chair for FY 2003
 - Discussion of Subcommittee Reports
 - Items for Letter to the Director
 - Emerging Issues/Topics of Interest
 - NMFS Regulations/Explosive Removals
Ms. Judy Wilson, MMS Environmental Assessment Branch
 - Other Business
 - Dates and locations for the next meeting
- 12:00 p.m. Adjourn the meeting

Discipline Subcommittee Reports

Each Subcommittee will report on the national and regional studies plans that were discussed during the breakout sessions yesterday.

Committee Business

- A new Chair will be appointed to the OCS SC. In the event that the Vice Chair, Dr. Lynda Shapiro, is elected Chair, an election of a Vice-Chair will be held.
- The Committee will discuss and comment on the Subcommittee Reports.
- Items for the Letter to the Director will be submitted.
- Emerging Issues/Topics of Interest
 - NMFS Regulations/Explosive Removals. Production declines in mature oil and gas fields of the U.S. Gulf of Mexico will accelerate as reserves continue to be depleted in the years to come. MMS regulations and leases require lessees to remove surplus structures such as platform jackets, caissons and casings within one year after lease expiration. Explosive charges are often favored for severing structural and production members, and exploratory wells to allow structure removal. Explosives are often safer than other methods; they are cost-effective; and they are frequently the only practical method of removing certain types of structures.
- Other business will be discussed.
- Possible dates and locations will be discussed for the next SC meeting. At the previous meeting, it was decided that the month of April would be ideal for the SC meetings to be held.