

Public Comments Solicited

We solicit written comments on the recovery plan described. We will consider all comments received by the date specified above prior to final approval of the plan.

Please submit electronic comments as an ASCII file format and avoid the use of special characters and encryption. Please also include your name and return address in your e-mail message. If you do not receive a confirmation from the system that we have received your e-mail message, contact us directly by calling our Panama City Field Office (see **ADDRESSES** section).

Our practice is to make all comments, including names and home addresses of respondents, available for public review during regular business hours. Individual respondents may request that we withhold their home address from the record, which we will honor to the extent allowable by law. In some circumstances, we would withhold also from the record a respondent's identity, as allowable by law. If you wish for us to withhold your name and/or address, you must state this prominently at the beginning of your comments. However, we will not consider anonymous comments. We will make all submissions from organizations or businesses, and from individuals identifying themselves as representatives or officials of organizations or businesses, available for public inspection in their entirety.

Authority

The authority for this action is section 4(f) of the Endangered Species Act, 16 U.S.C. 1533 (f).

Dated: July 3, 2003.

J. Mitch King,

*Acting Regional Director, Southeast Region,
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.*

[FR Doc. 03-18081 Filed 7-16-03; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 4310-55-P

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR**Minerals Management Service****Notice of Proposed Intent To Reduce Minimum Bid Requirements and Set Sliding-Scale Rentals for Proposed Beaufort Sea Outer Continental Shelf (OCS) Oil and Gas Lease Sale 186**

AGENCY: Minerals Management Service (MMS), Interior.

ACTION: Notice of proposed intent to reduce minimum bid levels and set sliding-scale rentals for OCS sale 186.

SUMMARY: On February 20, 2003, the MMS published a Notice of Availability

(68 FR 8306) of the proposed Notice of Sale for Sale 186, which included lease terms and conditions providing for a minimum bid amount of \$62 per hectare and a rental rate of \$13 per hectare, consistent with past OCS sales in the Alaska Region. After further consideration, the MMS has tentatively determined that the minimum bid levels for Sale 186 should be reduced and rentals set on a sliding scale. The MMS is announcing this proposed action at this time to give potential bidders and other interested parties ample time to consider these changes in preparing for the lease sale. This proposed change in the financial terms and conditions of the proposed sale does not affect minimum royalty requirements, royalty suspension volumes, size, timing, location, or potential impacts of the sale. The final Notice of Sale will establish all terms and conditions for Sale 186 and will be issued at least 30 days before the sale is held. Anyone wishing to comment should send comments by August 1, 2003 to the Alaska OCS Region, 949 East 36th Avenue, 3rd Floor, Anchorage, Alaska 99508-4302.

DATES: Beaufort Sea OCS Lease Sale 186 is scheduled for September 24, 2003.

ADDRESSES: The proposed Notice of Sale and associated documents are available at: Alaska OCS Region, Information Resource Center, Minerals Management Service, 949 East 36th Avenue, Room 330, Anchorage, Alaska 99508-4302, Telephone: (907) 271-6438 or 1-800-764-2627.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The MMS proposes to apply the minimum bid amounts and rental rates in the table presented below for Sale 186. Refer to the February 2003 proposed Notice of Sale for descriptions of Zones A and B.

TABLE OF MINIMUM BIDS AND RENTAL RATES

Terms (values per hectare)	Zone A	Zone B
Minimum Bid	\$37.50	\$25.00
Rental Rates:		
Year 1	\$7.50	\$2.50
Year 2	7.50	3.75
Year 3	7.50	5.00
Year 4	7.50	6.25
Year 5	7.50	7.50
Year 6	12.00	10.00
Year 7	17.00	12.00
Year 8	22.00	15.00
Year 9	30.00	17.00
Year 10	30.00	20.00

The new bidding requirements outlined above are designed in part to provide potential bidders the incentive to acquire sufficient acreage to support

a timely seismic data acquisition program. The revised sliding-scale rental terms are intended to encourage expeditious exploration of domestic energy resources. In Zone A, which we believe holds the most promise for near term development and production of oil resources, the minimum bid and rentals are set slightly above those for Zone B. We set the terms in Zone B similar to those used by the State of Alaska for some leases in the northern portion of the state as well as to the terms used by the Bureau of Land Management for the leasing of less prospective acreage in the National Petroleum Reserve—Alaska. Hence, the revised terms presented here will allow the Federal offshore lease offering to be comparable to other sales in this area. We have determined that these new proposed terms will not increase the level or range of oil and gas development activities contemplated and addressed in the Final Environmental Impact Statement or the Coastal Zone Management Act consistency determination.

The MMS is required to assure that fair market value is received for all OCS lands leased and rights conveyed. Although we are proposing to change the minimum bid and rental requirements, all bids received in Sale 186 will undergo an extensive evaluation to determine if they represent fair market value. Thus, regardless of the minimum bid level, the high bid received for any block must satisfy the bid adequacy criteria established by the MMS for a lease to be awarded. Note that this change in terms is intended to apply only to Sale 186 and does not necessarily represent a general policy change for future Alaska or other OCS lease sales. In accordance with the 5-Year OCS Oil and Gas Leasing Program for 2002-2007, minimum bids and rental rates are considered on a sale-by-sale basis.

Johnnie Burton,

Director, Minerals Management Service.

[FR Doc. 03-18139 Filed 7-16-03; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 4310-MR-P

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR**Minerals Management Service****Notice of Availability of the Proposed Notice of Sale for Outer Continental Shelf (OCS) Oil and Gas Lease Sale 189 in the Eastern Gulf of Mexico (GOM)**

AGENCY: Minerals Management Service, Interior.

ACTION: Notice of availability of the proposed notice of sale for proposed sale 189.

SUMMARY: The MMS announces the availability of the proposed Notice of Sale for proposed Sale 189 in the Eastern GOM OCS. This Notice is published pursuant to 30 CFR 256.29(c) as a matter of information to the public. With regard to oil and gas leasing on the OCS, the Secretary of the Interior, pursuant to section 19 of the OCS Lands Act, provides the affected States the opportunity to review the proposed Notice. The proposed Notice sets forth the proposed terms and conditions of the sale, including minimum bids, royalty rates, and rentals.

DATES: Comments on the size, timing, or location of proposed Sale 189 are due from the affected States within 60 days following their receipt of the proposed Notice. The final Notice of Sale will be published in the **Federal Register** at least 30 days prior to the date of bid opening. Bid opening is currently scheduled for December 10, 2003.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The proposed Notice of Sale for Sale 189 and a "Proposed Sale Notice Package" containing information essential to potential bidders may be obtained from the Public Information Unit, Gulf of Mexico Region, Minerals Management Service, 1201 Elmwood Park Boulevard, New Orleans, Louisiana 70123-2394. Telephone: (504) 736-2519.

Dated: June 26, 2003.

R.M. "Johnnie" Burton,

Director, Minerals Management Service.

[FR Doc. 03-18138 Filed 7-16-03; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 4310-MR-P

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

Minerals Management Service

Outer Continental Shelf (OCS) Western Gulf of Mexico (GOM) Oil and Gas Lease Sale 187

AGENCY: Minerals Management Service (MMS), Interior.

ACTION: Final notice of sale 187.

SUMMARY: On August 20, 2003, MMS will open and publicly announce bids received for blocks offered in Western GOM Oil and Gas Lease Sale 187, pursuant to the OCS Lands Act (43 U.S.C. 1331-1356, as amended) and the regulations issued thereunder (30 CFR part 256).

The Final Notice of Sale 187 Package (FNOS 187 Package) contains information essential to bidders, and bidders are charged with the knowledge

of the documents contained in the Package.

DATES: Public bid reading will begin at 9 a.m., Wednesday, August 20, 2003, in Grand Ballroom C (5th floor) at the Sheraton New Orleans Hotel, 500 Canal Street, New Orleans, Louisiana. All times referred to in this document are local New Orleans times, unless otherwise specified.

ADDRESSES: Bidders can obtain a FNOS 187 Package containing this Notice of Sale and several supporting and essential documents referenced herein from the MMS Gulf of Mexico Region Public Information Unit, 1201 Elmwood Park Boulevard, New Orleans, Louisiana 70123-2394, (504) 736-2519 or (800) 200-GULF.

Filing of Bids: Bidders must submit sealed bids to the Regional Director (RD), MMS Gulf of Mexico Region, 1201 Elmwood Park Boulevard, New Orleans, Louisiana 70123-2394, between 8 a.m. and 4 p.m. on normal working days, and from 8 a.m. to the Bid Submission Deadline of 10 a.m. on Tuesday, August 19, 2003. If bids are mailed, please address the envelop containing all of the sealed bids as follows:

Attention: Mr. John L. Rodi, MMS Gulf of Mexico Region, Contains Sealed Bids for Sale 187.

If the RD receives bids later than the time and date specified above, he will return those bids unopened to bidders. Bidders may not modify or withdraw their bids unless the RD receives a written modification or written withdrawal request prior to 10 a.m. on Tuesday, August 19, 2003. Should an unexpected event such as flooding or travel restrictions be significantly disruptive to bid submission, the MMS Gulf of Mexico Region may extend the Bid Submission Deadline. Bidders may call (504) 736-0557 for information about the possible extension of the Bid Submission Deadline due to such an event.

Areas Offered for Leasing: The MMS is offering for leasing all blocks and partial blocks listed in the document "Blocks Available for Leasing in Western GOM Oil and Gas Lease Sale 187" included in the FNOS 187 Package. All of these blocks are shown on the following Leasing Maps and Official Protraction Diagrams (which may be purchased from the MMS Gulf of Mexico Region Public Information Unit):

Outer Continental Shelf Leasing Maps—Texas Map Numbers 1 through 8

(These 16 maps sell for \$2.00 each)

TX1 South Padre Island Area (revised November 1, 2000)
TX1A South Padre Island Area, East Addition (revised November 1, 2000)
TX2 North Padre Island Area (revised November 1, 2000)
TX2A North Padre Island Area, East Addition (revised November 1, 2000)
TX3 Mustang Island Area (revised November 1, 2000)
TX3A Mustang Island Area, East Addition (revised September 3, 2002)
TX4 Matagorda Island Area (revised November 1, 2000)
TX5 Brazos Area (revised November 1, 2000)
TX5B Brazos Area, South Addition (revised November 1, 2000)
TX6 Galveston Area (revised November 1, 2000)
TX6A Galveston Area, South Addition (revised November 1, 2000)
TX7 High Island Area (revised November 1, 2000)
TX7A High Island Area, East Addition (revised November 1, 2000)
TX7B High Island Area, South Addition (revised November 1, 2000)
TX7C High Island Area, East Addition, South Extension (revised November 1, 2000)
TX8 Sabine Pass Area (revised November 1, 2000)

Outer Continental Shelf Official Protraction Diagrams

(These 7 diagrams sell for \$2.00 each)

NG14-03 Corpus Christi (revised November 1, 2000)
NG14-06 Port Isabel (revised November 1, 2000)
NG15-01 East Breaks (revised November 1, 2000)
NG15-02 Garden Banks (revised November 1, 2000)
NG15-04 Alaminos Canyon (revised November 1, 2000)
NG15-05 Keathley Canyon (revised November 1, 2000)
NG15-08 Sigsbee Escarpment (revised November 1, 2000)

Please Note: A CD-ROM (in ARC/INFO and Acrobat (.pdf) format) containing all of the GOM Leasing Maps and Official Protraction Diagrams, except for those not yet converted to digital format, is available from the MMS Gulf of Mexico Region Public Information Unit for a price of \$15.00. For the current status of all Western GOM Leasing Maps and Official Protraction Diagrams, please refer to 66 FR 28002 (published May 21, 2001) and 67 FR 60701 (published September 26, 2002). In addition, Supplemental Official OCS Block Diagrams (SOBDs) for these blocks are available for blocks which contain the "U.S. 200 Nautical Mile Limit" line and the "U.S.-Mexico Maritime Boundary" line. These SOBDs are also available from the MMS Gulf of Mexico Region Public Information Unit. For