

**U.S. Department of the Interior  
Minerals Management Service  
Atlantic OCS Region**

***SPECIAL INFORMATION***

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**Atlantic Geological and Geophysical Survey Regulatory Authority**

The Minerals Management Service (MMS) is responsible for overseeing all activities associated with mineral resource development on the Federal Outer Continental Shelf (OCS), including assessment, leasing, exploration, development, production, and royalty management. Geological and geophysical (G&G) activities aimed at mineral exploration are subject to a complex series of permits and notices. The MMS Resource Evaluation Program oversees G&G data acquisition and permitting activities, pursuant to regulations at 30 CFR 250, 251, and 281. Specifically, these regulations include (1) Part 251 – regulating prelease G&G exploratory operations for oil, gas, and sulfur resources; and (2) Part 280 – regulating prelease prospecting activities. Postlease G&G activities are governed by regulations at 30 CFR 250 and by applicable Notices to Lessees and Operators (NTL's). Other regulations also pertain to one or more of the issues considered in this analysis (e.g., the President's Council on Environmental Quality, guidelines for implementation of the National Environmental Policy Act, and pertinent regulations administered by the National Marine Fisheries Service).

The purpose of the MMS regulatory program is to ensure that the G&G data needed by industry and government are obtained in a technically safe and environmentally sound manner. The MMS regulations at 30 CFR 251 mandate that G&G activities may not interfere with or endanger operations under any lease. Operations overseen and permitted by MMS must comply with various environmental laws (e.g., Endangered Species Act, Marine Mammal Protection Act, and Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act).

For additional information on the regulatory framework for G&G activity, refer to Section I.C. and Section I of Appendix B in *Geological and Geophysical Exploration for Mineral Resources on the Gulf of Mexico Outer Continental Shelf – Final Programmatic Environmental Assessment* (OCS EIS/EA MMS 2004-054), which can be found at the following MMS website:

<http://www.gomr.mms.gov/PDFs/2004/2004-054.pdf>.

