



April 10, 2006

Ms. Renee Orr  
5-Year Program Manager  
Minerals Management Service (MS-4010)  
Room 3120  
381 Elden Street  
Herndon, Virginia 20170

RE: Comments in support of expanded offshore access in the 2007-2012 program

Dear Ms. Orr:

The Offshore Marine Service Association is the national trade association representing the American owners and operators of vessels working in the offshore oil and gas sector. Our members urge MMS to expand leasing on the U.S. Outer Continental Shelf (OCS) during the 5-year plan covering 2007 – 2012.

By now MMS has received many comment letters supporting increasing the acreage available for lease and eventual production. Rather than repeat those arguments, OMSA simply wishes to echo the letters of support and to spend the body of this letter elaborating on one specific benefit of expanding areas open for offshore exploration and production.

The offshore energy infrastructure in the Gulf of Mexico has proven to be a boon for local communities on the Gulf Coast, largely because of the vessels that work in these areas. Under U.S. law, most of the boats that support offshore drilling and production must be built in America, owned by Americans and crewed by Americans. Consequently, these offshore vessels contribute to the local economy by putting local shipyard personnel and vessel crewmembers to work. Because these vessels rely on local terminals for supplies and cargo, they also provide a significant and stable source of revenue for local merchants.

Additionally, U.S.-flag vessels commonly pay property taxes to the states in which they work. For example, OMSA members are the largest property taxpaying group in Lafourche Parish, Louisiana and represent a large percentage of the property tax base in all of the coastal parishes of Louisiana. At a time when state and local budgets are strained, this has proven to be an important source of revenue.

We point this out in order to stress that the benefits which would accrue to any state that opens its waters to energy exploration and production go beyond simple revenue formulas.

Again, we urge MMS to expand the acreage available for leasing. We appreciate having had this opportunity to comment.

Sincerely,

*Ken Wells*

Ken Wells  
President