

HD BP Busy With Bids on Gulf of Mexico Blocks -- Market Talk**WC** 1,433 words**PD** 21 August 2014**ET** 01:38**SN** Dow Jones Institutional News**SC** DJDN**LA** English**CY** Copyright © 2014, Dow Jones & Company, Inc.**LP**

11:38 EDT - BP was the most active bidder in the auction of offshore oil and gas leases in the western Gulf of Mexico. According to preliminary statistics issued by the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management, BP submitted bids on 32 offshore blocks. The next highest number of bids was BHP Billiton's (BHP) 17 bids and 11 from ConocoPhillips (COP). Venari Offshore and Focus Exploration were also active. Details of the winning bids will be released shortly. BP down 0.5% at \$48.05. (russell.gold@wsj.com)

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11:32 EDT - Looking for the next big idea in big data? Hilary Mason has one for you. The data scientist-turned venture capitalist has launched a consultancy called Fast Forward Labs. Every three months, the **company** publishes a newsletter detailing the most cutting edge big data technologies -- and the startups or academics making forays in those areas. For example, a recent newsletter was about automated content, software algorithms that can generate media content such as news stories. Mason's team then showed how the technology could be used in new ways -- for example, to generate copy for online real **estate** listings and other ads. Mason's newsletter is a good first read for anyone interested in data science, a fast-growing area of the economy that still baffles most corporations. (elizabeth.dwoskin@wsj.com)

11:24 EDT - E&P investors might be worried about weaker oil-and-gas prices, but producers aren't. WTI crude has dropped \$13/barrel the past 2 months and a cool summer has stalled out the natural-gas rally, causing nervousness among investors. But at EnerCom Consulting's industry conference in Denver this week, there's very little discussion of the commodity environment, says Tudor Pickering's Matthew Portillo. Why? E&P firms tend to budget projects at \$90/barrel, and WTI remains above that. For gas, continuing efficiency gains as producers keep experimenting with drilling-and-completion techniques are driving down break-even prices to closer to \$4/MMBtu than the \$4.50 which used to be the threshold. Gas is "truly a commoditized business," says Portillo--good news for consumers, some comfort to gas-stock investors and less so for those making straight bets on a renewed gas rally. (laim.denning@wsj.com; @liamdenning)

11:24 EDT - The US Bureau of Ocean Energy Management auctioned 79,700 acres offshore Maryland for wind-energy development. The area, about 10 miles off the coast of Ocean City, was split into two parcels; US Wind Inc. submitted the winning bids on both parcels. The government said a fully developed area could provide 850-1,450 megawatts, enough power for 300,000 homes. The winning bids totaled \$8.7M. This is the sixth **commercial** wind lease awarded by the government. The others are off the coasts of Massachusetts, Delaware, Rhode **Island** and Virginia. (russell.gold@wsj.com; @russellgold)

11:23 EDT - Despite its various forays into things like driverless cars and wearable computers, Google (GOOGL) is no less committed to search, it's profit machine. Search executive Amit Singhal said in a post on Google+ that the **company** has made 890 changes to its search algorithms in the past year. He also highlighted 10 of the most important changes to the service in the past decade, including autocomplete, search for mobile devices and voice search. GOOGL off a fraction at \$594.74. (alistair.barr@wsj.com)

11:19 EDT - Morgan Stanley is getting more bullish on the lodging industry, saying, "Fundamentals appear better than what we had originally forecasted." Strong 2Q RevPAR and improving growth prospects overseas leads the investment bank to raise its sectorwide 2015 RevPAR growth estimate to 6.3% from 5.9%. Its favorite stocks include Hilton (HLT) for its **hotel** pipeline and earnings growth from

further debt reduction, and La Quinta (LQ), which is trading at a discount to other lodging REITs. (craig.karmin@wsj.com)

11:16 EDT - Intellectual Ventures, granddaddy of all the patent-holding companies, is laying off about 20% of its staff, or about 140 of its 700 current workforce. Founded in 2000 by former Microsoft (MSFT) chief technology officer Nathan Myhrvold, it made money buying up patents and aggressively licensing them to enterprising technology companies and others. In late 2010, IV changed course, and decided for the first time to make use of the courts. Payouts have gone more slowly than usual. A spokesman said the cuts would enable it to "maintain and expand" leadership in the "market for invention." (ashby.jones@wsj.com)

11:15 EDT - Dismal sales of construction excavators continue in **China**, as industry-wide unit sales during July slipped 28% from year ago, says William Blair. July is typically a slow month for excavators, but Blair isn't expecting improvement, predicting 30%-plus declines for the rest of the year against tougher comparison figures. The **firm** forecasts total unit sales at about 90K this year, a long way from the market peak of about 180K excavators in 2011 that was fueled by overheated construction activity. Caterpillar (CAT) continues to pick up share in a down market with an 11.7% excavator stake in July, up 2.6 percentage points from a year ago. (robert.tita@wsj.com)

11:13 EDT - Shares of the nation's biggest **apartment** landlords are trading at all-time highs as construction of multifamily **residential** buildings surges. AvalonBay (AVB) and Equity **Residential** (EQR), the 2 largest **apartment** REITs, recently topped the prior highs set in 2012 and have continued to see its shares climb while the likes of Essex (ESS) and Post Properties (PPS) are also at new peaks today. The Commerce Department reported Tuesday **apartment** construction last month was at its strongest pace in 8 1/2 years. But some sector executives, including AVB CEO Tim Naughton, have cautioned of late that demand, as well as new construction, may be leveling off. (robbie.whelan@wsj.com; @RWhelanWSJ)

11:09 EDT - Tech-stock analyst Brian Marshall is leaving ISI **Group** for a gig with an as-yet unnamed private software **company**, he says in a note today. And he's giving up a payout to do so, according to regulatory filings. He was among the equity-holders in Evercore's (EVR) all-stock deal to **purchase** ISI, and the first chunk of shares will vest upon the deal's closing, expected in the fourth quarter, according to the filings. His departure is at least the second since the deal was announced August 4--the first was former Evercore bank analyst Andrew Marquardt, who wasn't an equity holder. (alexandra.scaggs@wsj.com)

11:02 EDT - The agreement between Bristol (BMY) and Celgene (CELG) to collaborate on a cancer trial illustrates how quickly companies are moving to test new immunotherapy agents in combination with other treatments. BMS' nivolumab is among an emerging class of agents called checkpoint inhibitors which unleash the immune system to attack cancer. They've shown the most promise against melanoma. Nivo isn't yet FDA-approved, but the plan to test it with CELG's Abraxane against Her-2 negative metastatic breast cancer and other tumors reflects hope that such drug cocktails will help broaden immunotherapy's benefits to a variety of cancers. CELG climbs 1.7%, hitting a fresh record high, while BMY is off 0.2%. (ron.winslow@wsj.com)

11:02 EDT - GE is establishing a new beachhead for its life sciences unit in Massachusetts. A decade ago, GE moved its global healthcare headquarters to the UK as part of its acquisition of Amersham. The **company** plans to invest \$21M in a new life sciences headquarters in Marlborough, Mass., promising 220 new jobs. GE has been moving around its business units of late; last year it moved the oil & gas headquarters to London from Florence, Italy, and its transportation HQ moved to Chicago from Erie, Pa., in 2012. GE sees growth in its \$4B life sciences unit. Earlier this year, it bought several life sciences businesses from Thermo Fisher Scientific (TMO) for \$1.06B. (kate.linebaugh@wsj.com)

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CO boeym : Bureau of Ocean Energy Management | philp : ConocoPhillips | bp : BP PLC

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