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Obama letter

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United States Department of the Interior

MINERALS MANAGEMENT SERVICE

The Honorable Jerry Moran
House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Congressman Moran:

Thank you for your letter dated February 3, 2009, to President Obama, cosigned by 69 other Members of Congress, urging that areas of the Outer Continental Shelf (OCS) be left open for oil and gas exploration and development while the Administration reviews the 5-year offshore drilling plan. As Acting Director of the Minerals Management Service (MMS), I have been asked to respond. A similar letter is being sent to each signer of your letter.

The Administration and the Department of the Interior have made developing a comprehensive energy strategy for the Nation a top priority. In fact, as a result of the decision by Congress not to renew the OCS moratorium last year, we are exploring offshore oil and gas development in more areas than ever before. Let me assure you that Secretary Ken Salazar's decision to extend the comment period on the Draft Proposed OCS Oil and Gas Leasing Program for 2010-2015 does not affect the current leasing program. In fact, to date, seven sales have been held under this program. The most recent sale was Central Gulf Sale 208, which received over \$700 million in high bids. Fourteen lease sales remain on the schedule under the current program. We recognize that the OCS continues to play a major role in the energy mix for our country and provides 27 percent of the oil and 14 percent of the natural gas produced domestically.

The recent decision of the 10th Circuit Court, which found that the current offshore leasing plan is deficient, is a major concern. Consequently, the Department is working hard to clarify the implications of that decision and to remedy the situation with as little impact as possible.

If any Member of Congress has particular suggestions or comments related to the new 5-year plan now in progress, please be aware that we are accepting comments until September 21, 2009. We welcome any suggestions or comments you may have regarding the development of a comprehensive energy program for the OCS and the Nation.

Thank you for your interest in the offshore energy program. We look forward to working with you on this issue. If you have any questions, please contact me at (202) 208-3500, or Ms. Lyn Herdt, Chief, MMS Office of Congressional Affairs, at (202) 208-3502.

Sincerely,

Walter D. Condit