

efforts; progress report on Standards and Guidelines Statewide Plan Amendment; reports by the Recreation and Public Relations Working Groups; and a report on BLM Law Enforcement Program and BLM Field Presence. A public comment period will take place at 11:30 a.m. February 25, 1997 for any interested publics who wish to address the Council.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:**

Deborah Stevens or Ken Mahoney, Bureau of Land Management, Arizona State Office, 222 North Central Avenue, Phoenix, Arizona 85004-2203, (602) 417-9512.

Michael A. Ferguson,

*Deputy State Director, Resource Planning, Use and Protection Division.*

[FR Doc. 97-1723 Filed 1-23-97; 8:45 am]

**BILLING CODE 4310-32-M**

**[CA-942-5700-00]**

**Filing of Plats of Survey; California**

**AGENCY:** Bureau of Land Management, Interior.

**ACTION:** Notice.

**SUMMARY:** The purpose of this notice is to inform the public and interested state and local government officials of the latest filing of Plats of Survey in California.

**EFFECTIVE DATE:** Unless otherwise noted, filing was effective at 10:00 a.m. on the next federal work day following the plat acceptance date.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:**

Clifford A. Robinson, Chief, Branch of Cadastral Survey, Bureau of Land Management (BLM), California State Office, 2135 Butano Drive, Sacramento, CA 95825-0451, (916) 979-2890.

**SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:** The plats of Survey of lands described below have been officially filed at the California State Office of the Bureau of Land Management in Sacramento, CA.

Mount Diablo Meridian, California

*T. 23 N., R. 14 E.*—Dependent resurvey, and subdivision of section 15 (Group 1085), accepted December 9, 1996, to meet certain administrative needs of the BLM, Surprise Resource Area.

*T. 45 N., R. 7 W.*—Supplemental plat of portions of sections 11 and 14, accepted December 9, 1996, to meet certain administrative needs of the BLM, Redding Resource Area.

*T. 17 N., R. 7 W.*—Dependent resurvey and corrective dependent resurvey, subdivision of sections 31, 33, and 34 (Group 1195), accepted December 17, 1996, to meet certain administrative needs of the US Forest Service, Mendocino National Forest.

*T. 16 N., R. 9 W.*—Dependent resurvey and metes-and-bounds survey of Tracts 37 through 42 (Group 935), accepted December

24, 1996, to meet certain administrative needs of the US Forest Service, Mendocino National Forest.

San Bernardino Meridian, California

*T. 17 S., R. 4 W.*—Metes-and-bounds survey of Tract 39 (Group 1249), accepted December 9, 1996, to meet certain administrative needs of the BLM, California Desert District, Palm Springs/South Coast Resource Area.

*T. 8 N., R. 2 W.*—Supplemental plat of section 4, accepted December 16, 1996, to meet certain administrative needs of the BLM, California Desert District, Barstow Resource Area.

All of the above listed survey plats are now the basic record for describing the lands for all authorized purposes. The survey plats have been placed in the open files in the BLM, California State Office, and are available to the public as a matter of information. Copies of the survey plats and related field notes will be furnished to the public upon payment of the appropriate fee.

Dated: January 13, 1997.

Clifford A. Robinson,

*Chief, Branch of Cadastral Survey.*

[FR Doc. 97-1715 Filed 1-23-97; 8:45 am]

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**Minerals Management Service**

**Discretionary Authority for Royalty Relief on Nonproducing Leases on the Outer Continental Shelf**

**AGENCY:** Minerals Management Service (MMS), Interior.

**ACTION:** Notice.

**SUMMARY:** The Outer Continental Shelf (OCS) Deep Water Royalty Relief Act of 1995 (Act) granted the Secretary of the Interior (Secretary) the authority to reduce or eliminate royalties in order to promote development, increase production, or encourage the production of marginal resources on producing and nonproducing leases in any water depth in certain areas of the Gulf of Mexico. This Notice seeks public input on whether and how MMS should implement this new authority for nonproducing leases.

**DATES:** We will consider all comments we receive by March 25, 1997. We will begin review of comments at that time and may not fully consider comments we receive after March 25, 1997.

**ADDRESSES:** Mail or hand-carry comments to the Department of the Interior; Minerals Management Service; Mail Stop 4230; 1849 C Street, NW; Washington, D.C. 20240; Attention: Chief, Washington Division, Office of Policy and Management Improvement.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:**

Dr. Walter Cruickshank, Washington Division, at the above address or by telephone: (202) 208-3822.

**SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:**

**Legislative Background**

The Act (Pub. L. 104-58) authorizes the Secretary to modify the royalty terms of certain existing leases and to offer new leases subject to royalty suspension volumes in water depths of 200 meters or more in parts of the Gulf of Mexico. Most of the Act addresses mandatory royalty relief programs for leases in water depths of 200 meters or more. These provisions have been implemented in interim rules covering new leases (61 FR 12022, March 25, 1996) and existing leases (61 FR 27263, May 31, 1996).

We are now considering whether and how to implement new authority provided by the Act for a discretionary royalty relief program. In part, section 302 of the Act amends section 8(a) of the OCS Lands Act by adding subparagraph (3)(B), which applies to all leases in the Gulf of Mexico west of 87 degrees, 30 minutes West longitude (i.e., the Central and Western Gulf of Mexico Planning Areas and the portion of the Eastern Gulf of Mexico Planning Area lying offshore Alabama). In this area, the Secretary may reduce or eliminate any royalty or net profit share in order to promote development, increase production, or encourage production of marginal resources on producing or nonproducing leases. With the lessee's consent, the Secretary may make other modifications to the royalty or net profit share terms of leases in order to achieve these purposes. This provision applies to active leases, not to the terms under which new leases are offered.

We already have a royalty relief program in place for producing leases, as well as the mandated program for nonproducing leases in at least 200 meters of water in the specified areas of the Gulf of Mexico. This Notice seeks input on whether and how we should consider royalty relief for nonproducing leases in any water depth.

We welcome comments and recommendations on all issues relevant to this Notice. In particular, please address the issues and questions raised below.

**Issues**

***I. Should MMS Consider Royalty Relief on Nonproducing Leases?***

(1) Currently, the Gulf of Mexico OCS program is very healthy, with record setting lease sales in 1996 and vigorous drilling and development activities.

What additional net benefits would an expanded royalty relief program create?

(2) We have established royalty relief programs for producing lessons throughout the OCS and for nonproducing leases in greater than 200 meters of water in the Gulf of Mexico, west of 87 degrees, 30 minutes West longitude. What types of situations warranting royalty relief arise which cannot be addressed through these programs? Please be as specific as possible; MMS will protect any confidential information that you submit.

(3) Under the OCS Lands Act, we have an obligation to insure a fair and equitable return on the resources of the OCS. Important components of meeting this mandate are our lease sale and bid adequacy review processes.

a. Will these processes still insure a fair return where the least-stipulated royalty rate may be modified prior to production?

b. How should we incorporate the potential for royalty relief on future production in determining whether a high bid for a lease is adequate?

c. Should such royalty relief be available to current leases, where an expectation of royalty relief prior to production did not exist at the time of the lease sale and bid adequacy review?

d. Would such a royalty relief program be fair to companies that submitted losing bids but which might have been willing to produce at the lease stipulated royalty rate?

(4) Many companies, especially some smaller companies, rely on the turnover of undeveloped leases for a significant portion of their offshore activities. This turnover takes the form of bidding on previously relinquished tracts in lease sales or acquiring an interest in leases through the lease assignment process. How would the availability of royalty relief on nonproducing leases affect the rate at which leases change hands?

## *II. Under What Circumstances Should MMS Consider Relief for Nonproducing Leases?*

(1) If the Secretary chooses to establish a royalty relief program for nonproducing leases, what criteria should we use in evaluating applications? Are there special circumstances that warrant relief, such as costs substantially higher than normal or the introduction of a new technology? Please be as specific as possible.

(2) How should we define "marginal resources"?

(3) At present, when a lease is relinquished, we offer the tract for lease in the next round of scheduled sales,

which are held annually in the Central and Western Gulf of Mexico. Tracts that have undeveloped discoveries are usually acquired by another company in a subsequent sale. Granting royalty relief to the initial lessee could preclude the Treasury from receiving the additional bonus and a subsequent lessee from testing alternative concepts and possibly producing at the lease-stipulated royalty rate. How should we consider this tradeoff in evaluating a request for royalty relief?

(4) Prospect economics in the Gulf of Mexico change very rapidly along with changes in technologies, availability of infrastructure, costs, and geologic information. How could we structure a royalty relief program to ensure that a decision to grant relief isn't rapidly overtaken by such changes?

## *III. Design of a Royalty Relief Program for Nonproducing Leases*

Our only experience with royalty relief on nonproducing leases is in the deep water Gulf of Mexico. However, many of the elements of that program arise from the specific mandates of the Act for such leases. These mandates, and thus the design elements of the deep water program, do not necessarily apply to a more generally applicable program. Please comment on how and why an additional royalty relief program might vary from current programs, including the following questions:

(1) Current OCS programs provide royalty relief in the form of royalty suspension volumes for deep water leases in the Gulf of Mexico and in the form of net revenue sharing for producing leases elsewhere. What form of royalty relief should we use for nonproducing leases not subject to the deep water royalty relief programs?

(2) For nonproducing leases in deep water, we require a discovery capable of producing in paying quantities and design of the engineering concept as minimum precursors to an application.

a. When during the exploration and development process should a lessee be allowed to apply for relief?

b. When in this process would sufficient data be available to allow us to evaluate the need for royalty relief?

c. How would we assure that projections of the amount and timing of production, costs, and revenues are reasonable?

(3) What type of information is needed, and how should it be evaluated, to ensure that royalty relief is necessary to promote development, increase production, or encourage production of marginal resources on nonproducing leases?

(4) Should we establish safeguards to remove or modify relief when the factors on which relief was granted change significantly before production starts? If so, what types of safeguards are appropriate?

## *IV. General Issues*

(1) For any particular royalty relief program you recommend, please provide specific information on its anticipated effects, including any effects on the levels and costs of exploration, development, and production, and the volume of additional resources that may be recovered.

(2) The current royalty relief regulation at 30 CFR 203.51(b) restates the statutory authority for granting royalty relief for nonproducing leases in the Gulf of Mexico, but the regulations provide no additional guidance on how to apply or how MMS will evaluate applications. Are additional regulations needed to provide this detail, or should MMS operate the program under the existing regulation? Is the existing regulation adequate until such time as we become more familiar with the types of situations that will lead to applications and the accompanying evaluation issues?

(3) In addition to authority to grant royalty relief for nonproducing leases, the Act gives the Secretary the authority to grant relief to categories of producing and nonproducing leases, rather than just on a case-by-case basis. Given that prospect economics change rapidly and depend on site-specific characteristics, we were unable to identify any additional categories of leases that warrant across-the-board relief. However, we welcome comments on categories deserving relief, the type of relief that's appropriate, and what criteria we should use to determine when across-the-board relief is preferable to case-specific relief.

Dated: January 16, 1997.

Cynthia Quartermann,  
Director.

[FR Doc. 97-1705 Filed 1-24-97; 8:45 am]

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## **DEPARTMENT OF LABOR**

### **Employment Standards Administration Wage and Hour Division**

### **Minimum Wages for Federal and Federally Assisted Construction; General Wage Determination Decisions**

General wage determination decisions of the Secretary of Labor are issued in accordance with applicable law and are