

**UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
MINERALS MANAGEMENT SERVICE  
GULF OF MEXICO OCS REGION**

NTL No. 2002-G07 (Addendum 1)

Effective Date: October 15, 2002

**NOTICE TO LESSEES AND OPERATORS OF FEDERAL OIL, GAS, AND SULPHUR  
LEASES IN THE OUTER CONTINENTAL SHELF, GULF OF MEXICO OCS REGION**

**Implementation of Seismic Survey Mitigation Measures**

The Minerals Management Service (MMS) issued NTL No. 2002-G07 on August 22, 2002, pursuant to 30 CFR 250.103 to explain how you must implement seismic survey mitigation measures. That NTL applies to all seismic operations throughout the Gulf of Mexico (GOM) Outer Continental Shelf (OCS) in waters greater than 200 m (656 ft) in depth. The measures apply to all on-lease seismic surveys you conduct under 30 CFR 250.201 and all off-lease seismic surveys you conduct under 30 CFR 251. This Addendum 1 modifies the Visual Observers section of NTL No. 2002-G07.

**Background**

In July 2002, the MMS completed a formal Section 7 consultation under the ESA with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Fisheries Service (NOAA Fisheries) on lease sale activities. The NOAA Fisheries issued new mitigation measures in a Biological Opinion (BO) for GOM OCS Lease Sale 184. The BO specifically required seismic operators to use ramp-up and visual monitoring procedures. Procedures for ramp-up, visual monitoring, and reporting sperm whale sightings are described in detail in NTL 2002-G07. You are required to perform these mitigation measures during all seismic survey operations using airgun arrays and conducted in waters deeper than 200 m (656 ft) throughout the GOM.

The MMS currently is conducting a formal Section 7 consultation under the ESA with NOAA Fisheries for GOM OCS Lease Sale 185 and NOAA Fisheries has issued a draft BO for Sale 185. The draft Sale 185 BO contains Conservation Recommendations to the Seismic Observer Plan that, in the MMS' discretion, may be implemented as modifications of the mitigation measures discussed in NTL No. 2002-G07. Consistent with these Conservation Recommendations to the Seismic Observer Plan, the MMS is issuing this Addendum 1 to NTL 2002-G07 which modifies the Visual Observers section of NTL 2002-G07. This Addendum 1 does not affect the other seismic survey mitigation measures (ramp-up procedures and marine mammal reporting requirements) outlined in NTL 2002-G07 which remain in full force and effect.

**Visual Observers**

NTL 2002-G07 specified within two months of the effective date (or by October 22, 2002), that you use trained visual observers on all seismic vessels in the GOM OCS who have successfully completed a NOAA Fisheries approved training program. However, since approved training programs are still under development and will not be available to meet that October 22, 2002, deadline, you may continue to use

crew members to function as visual observers until trained visual observers can replace them. The MMS will provide the visual observer training requirements as soon as they are available. We expect that it will take several more months to put the visual observer training program in place.

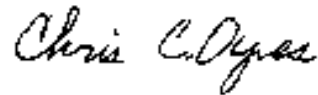
In the interim, crew members must continue to monitor waters (with the assistance of binoculars) for sperm whales within and adjacent to the exclusion zone for 30 minutes prior to initiating the airgun ramp-up procedures. Observers must monitor the exclusion zone and adjacent waters during seismic operations, unless atmospheric conditions reduce visibility to zero or during hours of darkness (i.e., night). When sperm whales are observed entering or within the exclusion zone, observers must call for the shut down of the airgun array; seismic operators must shut down the array when instructed by an observer. You may reinitiate ramp-up and seismic survey activities only when the observer has: (a) determined that the sperm whale(s) has departed the exclusion zone, and (b) visually monitored the exclusion zone for at least 30 minutes since the last sperm whale sighting within the exclusion zone.

### **Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995 (PRA) Statement**

This Addendum 1 to NTL 2002-G07 does not impose any information collection requirements subject to PRA compliance. We are requesting Office of Management and Budget approval under emergency processing and approval is pending for the "sperm whale sightings reporting" requirement referred to in this NTL.

### **Contact**

Please contact Carol Roden at (504) 736-2877 if you have any questions regarding NTL 2002-G07.



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