

ENERGY DEVELOPMENT ON THE U.S. OUTER CONTINENTAL SHELF: CHALLENGES IN LOCATING, STUDYING, AND PROTECTING UNDERWATER CULTURAL HERITAGE

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The Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (BOEM) is charged with the environmentally responsible and safe development of energy and mineral resources on the Outer Continental Shelf (OCS) of the United States. To assist in fulfilling this mandate, BOEM's Environmental Studies Program funds research and synthesizes available environmental and social and economic science information to support decision-making related to development of offshore energy and mineral resources. Studies focused on underwater cultural heritage are an essential part of BOEM's on-going research. BOEM has funded several studies in recent years to assist the bureau in characterizing where cultural and archaeological resources are located on the OCS and how they might be affected by offshore oil and gas, wind energy, and mineral development. The results from these peer-reviewed studies, in conjunction with required archaeological assessments for specific development projects, provide critical information necessary to inform decision-making processes for the siting of energy development projects, as well as developing the appropriate mitigation and compliance to ensure that significant cultural and archaeological resources remained unharmed.