

Minerals Management Service tells of lease sales schedule

The Interior Department's Minerals Management Service has announced an updated schedule for 11 offshore oil and gas lease sales between April 1987 and November 1988.

Five sales are planned in the gulf of Mexico, three in Alaska and one in the North Atlantic. In addition, two supplemental sales offering drainage, development and rejected bid blocks outside the Central and Western Gulf of Mexico are planned.

"With international oil market forces besetting our domestic oil and gas industry, it is critical that we make our intentions known," said MMS Director William D. Bettenberg. "We are committed to doing everything possible to maintain the integrity of this schedule."

Bettenberg said the Interior Depart-

ment is very concerned that the current abundant supply of oil had reduced domestic exploration.

"It's short-sighted," Bettenberg said. "Consumption is up to about 16.2 million barrels a day, and production is down and decreasing at an accelerating rate."

"Imports now constitute about 38 percent of our oil supply, up from about 27 percent a year ago," he said. "Exploration is the key to the production that we will need for the rest of this century and well into the next."

Battenberg said that of the schedule announced, all but Sale 110 Central Gulf of Mexico will be part of the next 5-Year Outer Continental Shelf Oil and Gas Leasing Program scheduled to go to the Congress and the president early next year.