

## Environmental Studies Program: Ongoing Study

Field	Study Information
Title	Of National Significance: The Gulf's 19th-Century Shipwrecks (GM-21-02)
Administered by	New Orleans Office
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Procurement Type(s)	Contract
Conducting Organization(s)	Southeastern Archaeological Research
Total BOEM Cost	\$299,975
Performance Period	FY 2021–2024
Final Report Due	February 2025
Date Revised	October 19, 2023
Problem	BOEM's regulation 30 CFR 550.194 implementing the requirements of Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act requires establishing a "reason to believe" archaeological resources may exist in a given lease prior to requiring the operator to conduct an archaeological survey and submit a report of findings. Previous efforts at developing a "high probability" model based on historically reported losses to guide the decision-making proved insufficient owing to an incomplete historic record and inaccurately reported loss locations. Instead, it is believed that a "landscape" model based on a more thorough understanding of the development, extent, and frequency of maritime transportation in the Gulf of Mexico would be a more effective approach. At the same time, this information will help to support the nomination to the National Register of Historic Places of a backlog of NRHP-eligible properties that have been subject to archaeological analysis but not yet nominated. National Register listed properties would provide additional support for the Regional Director's "reason to believe."
Intervention	Develop a detailed historic context encompassing the range of 19th century shipwrecks that have been or may be discovered on the Gulf of Mexico O.C.S. The 19th century was selected as the period of the highest frequency of shipping losses. Using this historic context as supporting documentation, as well as existing BOEM archaeological data, complete and submit NRHP nominations for up to 12 individual shipwreck sites to support a better understanding of the period of most frequent wreck events in the Gulf.
Comparison	Requirements will be compared against the criteria for evaluation for listing in the NRHP set forth by the National Park Service.
Outcome	BOEM has numerous shipwrecks falling under the umbrella of 19th-Century Seafaring in the Gulf of Mexico that must be nominated to the NRHP, therefore this effort fulfills of BOEM's obligations under Sec. 110 of the NHPA to nominate eligible properties within its jurisdiction to the NRHP. In addition, it will support the Regional Director's informed determination of whether there is a reason to believe archaeological resources could be found in an operator's lease.

Context	All GOM planning areas.
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BOEM Information Need(s): The Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (BOEM) regulation 30 CFR 550.194 implementing the requirements of Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act depends upon establishing a "reason to believe" archaeological resources may exist in a given lease prior to requiring the operator to conduct an archaeological survey and submit a report. Previous efforts at developing a "high probability" model based on historically reported losses proved insufficient owing to an incomplete historic record and inaccurately reported loss locations. Instead, it is believed that a "landscape" model based on a more thorough understanding of the development of maritime transportation in the Gulf of Mexico would be a more effective approach.

Background: BOEM has served as the primary Federal Steward of the cultural heritage found on the Gulf of Mexico Outer Continental Shelf (O.C.S.): protecting or mitigating effects to known sites from energy development and mineral extraction through the establishment of avoidance requirements; studying important sites in conjunction with Federal, State, and Tribal partners; and nominating significant historic properties to the NRHP. Nominating sites in the deep sea (sometimes exceeding 10,000 feet) requires additional coordination best performed by specialists who have experience successfully nominating submerged properties to the NRHP, and who can advise BOEM through the development of a best practices document on finding ways to fulfill our statutory obligations.

BOEM has become internationally recognized for the vast array of 19th-Century shipwrecks discovered during industry archaeological surveys before or during exploration of the O.C.S., and which have been further documented through BOEM-sponsored archaeological investigations and environmental studies (Atauz et al. 2006; Church and Warren 2008; Ford et al. 2008; Brooks et al. 2016). At least 12 potentially NRHP eligible 19th-century shipwrecks have been discovered to date. We are confident these are likely eligible for the Register and have sufficient data available for a contractor to prepare nominations. Due to the extent of maritime activity during that time period, the Gulf of Mexico is a hotspot for these historically significant cultural resources and BOEM needs to fulfill its responsibility to have these sites nominated to the NRHP in support of the Department of the Interior's mission to "conserve and manage the Nation's natural resources and cultural heritage for the benefit and enjoyment of the American people..." (N.P.S., 1997).

The protection of historical sites as significant symbols of our American heritage became a national policy through the enactment of the 1906 Antiquities Act, the 1935 Historic Sites Act, and the 1966 National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA), as amended. Congress empowered the Secretary of the Interior to manage the Nation's preservation program with the mission to recognize significant properties of archaeological and historical nature that may be in the form of districts, sites, buildings, structures, and objects significant in history or prehistory. Nominating eligible properties to the National Register is a crucial step and obligation within all Federal preservation programs (N.P.S., 1997).

Objective(s):

- Develop a historic context document to support the Regional Director's "reason to believe" determination and NR nominations, either individually or as multiple properties, of the range of eligible 19th-century shipwrecks in the Gulf of Mexico that have been or that may yet be discovered. This document is intended to contextualize, augment, and supplement current in-house efforts at mapping historic sailing routes in the Gulf.

- Develop a best-practices document to facilitate the efficient creation of future nomination packages by BOEM subject matter experts. Develop nomination packages for twelve shipwrecks that are likely eligible to fulfill BOEM's requirements under Section 110 of the NHPA.
- In the spirit of sharing this heritage with the American Public, professionally produce 5-minute video documentaries of each of the twelve sites using photographs, ROV footage, and interviews with scientists to be hosted on the BOEM website.

Methods: The contractor will use guidance provided in National Register Bulletins 12, 15, 16A, 16B, 20, 21, 28, and 36, combined with previous site investigation data and site reports on file with BOEM, to produce national register nominations for the below listed sites. The contractor will also produce a comprehensive historic context document for 19th-century shipwrecks in the Gulf of Mexico and incorporate that information into NRHP nomination forms and a multi-property listing.

The twelve sites selected as potentially eligible for nomination are:

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| 1. 7,000 Foot Wreck: Vessel ID 15373        | 2. 15377 Shipwreck: Vessel ID 15377          |
| 3. Ewing Bank Shipwreck: Vessel ID 15401    | 4. Green Lantern Shipwreck: Vessel ID 337    |
| 5. Mardi Gras Shipwreck: Vessel ID 15321    | 6. Mica Shipwreck: Vessel ID 15169           |
| 7. Monterrey A Shipwreck: Vessel ID 15577   | 8. Monterrey B Shipwreck: Vessel ID 15578    |
| 9. Monterrey C Shipwreck: Vessel ID 15583   | 10. New York: Vessel ID 344                  |
| 11. Viosca Knoll Shipwreck: Vessel ID 15303 | 12. Vernon Basin 2109 Wreck: Vessel ID 15831 |

Specific Research Question(s): What information best supports the Regional Director's decision to require an archaeological report? How do these twelve shipwrecks demonstrate the critical elements for eligibility themselves and for others not yet discovered? Overall, how do these resources contribute to our understanding of our Nation's 19th-century heritage? Are any of the sites not included eligible under the multi-property listing? How does each site individually meet the criterion for listing in the NRHP?

Current Status: All deliverables have been completed ahead of schedule. Last remaining deliverable is in production. Contract work will be fulfilled by February 2025, but will likely be completed in early 2024.

Publications Completed: [Study BOEM 2022-019. Nominating Historic Shipwrecks to the National Register of Historic Places: A Best Practices Guide for the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management.](#)

Affiliated WWW Sites: None

References:

- Atauz, A.D., W. Bryant, T. Jones, and B. Phaneuf. 2006. Mica shipwreck project: Deepwater archaeological investigation of a 19th Century shipwreck in the Gulf of Mexico. U.S. Dept. of the Interior, Minerals Management Service, Gulf of Mexico O.C.S. Region, New Orleans, LA. O.C.S. Study MMS 2006-072. 116 pp.
- Brooks, J.M., C. Fisher, H. Roberts, E. Cordes, I. Baums, B. Bernard, R. Church, P. Etnoyer, C. German, E. Goehring, I. McDonald, Harry Roberts, T. Shank, D. Warren, S. Welsh, G. Wolff, D. Weaver. 2015. Exploration and research of northern Gulf of Mexico deepwater natural and artificial hard-bottom habitats with emphasis on coral communities: Reefs, rigs, and wrecks—"Lophelia II" Final report. U.S. Dept. of the Interior, Bureau of Ocean Energy Management, Gulf of Mexico O.C.S. Region, New Orleans, LA. O.C.S. Study BOEM 2016-021. 628 p.

- Church, R.A. and D.J. Warren. 2008. Viosca Knoll Wreck: Discovery and investigation of an early nineteenth-century sailing ship in 2,000 feet of water. U.S. Dept. of the Interior, Minerals Management Service, Gulf of Mexico O.C.S. Region, New Orleans, LA. O.C.S. Study MMS 2008-018. 41 pp.
- Ford, B., A. Borgens, W. Bryant, D. Marshall, P. Hitchcock, C. Arias, and D. Hamilton. 2008. Archaeological excavation of the Mardi Gras Shipwreck (16GM01), Gulf of Mexico continental slope. Prepared by Texas A&M University. U.S. Department of the Interior, Minerals Management Service, Gulf of Mexico O.C.S. Region, New Orleans, LA. O.C.S. Report MMS 2008-037. 313 pp.
- National Parks Service, U.S. Department of Interior. Revised 1997. How to Apply the National Register Criteria for Evaluation. By P.W. Andrus, R.H. Shrimpton, B.L. Savage, S.D. Pope, A.J. Lee, T. Gossett, and K. Badamo. Washington: Government Printing Office, February 1990. (National Register Bulletin no. 15).