

ACCESS NUMBER: 20030

STUDY TITLE: Year 2008 Investigation for Potential Spanish Shipwrecks in Ultra-Deep Water

REPORT TITLE: Archival Investigations for Potential Colonial-Era Shipwrecks in Ultra-Deep Water within the Gulf of Mexico

CONTRACT NUMBER: M08PC20030

SPONSORING OCS REGION: Gulf of Mexico

APPLICABLE PLANNING AREA: Gulfwide

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KEY WORDS: Ultra-Deep Water (UDW); Gulf of Mexico Region (GOMR); shipwrecks; 16th to 18th century; Spanish; French; English; archival; repositories, sailing routes; hurricanes; historic ports.

BACKGROUND: The Bureau of Ocean Energy Management, Regulation and Enforcement (BOEMRE), as an agency of the U.S. Department of the Interior, is charged with the responsibility of considering the effects of its actions on significant submerged cultural resources on the Outer Continental Shelf (OCS) of the United States, from State waters to the limit of the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ). In an effort to protect submerged cultural resources from potential effects of oil and gas activity within the Gulf of Mexico Region (GOMR), the BOEMRE seeks to amass and assess primary archival material relative to early vessel losses (ca. 16th–18th century) in Ultra-Deep Water (UDW) (< 5,000 feet) within the GOMR.

OBJECTIVES: To achieve project goals, BOEMRE requested that various repositories (international and national) be identified and visited in an effort to gather primary archival resources. Relevant documents were to be transcribed and translated to

English by a professional paleographer in PDF format. Historical data and imagery acquired under this contract was to be analyzed to identify each vessel casualty and establish its type, date of construction, nationality, ownership (past and present), use history, mission, and cargo (if any) at time of loss, as well as factors contributing to its loss. One of the goals of the analysis is to determine each vessel's likely location and potential present condition. Ultimately, a greater understanding of the likelihood and presence of historic shipwrecks within the UDW of the GOMR will enable the BOEMRE to anticipate and protect these sites.

DESCRIPTION: Archival repositories considered most relevant to the current investigation were identified by SEARCH. From October 2008 through September 2009 SEARCH successfully completed archival research at a variety of repositories thought to contain primary documents and materials relative to early-colonial-period (16th- to 18th-century) vessel losses within UDW of the GOMR. The repositories visited during this investigation included the Archivo General de Indias (AGI) located in Seville, Spain, the Archives Nationales in Paris, France, the Centre des Archives d'Outre-Mer (CAOM) (Colonial Archives) in Aix-en-Provence, France, the St. Augustine Foundation Center for Historic Research in St. Augustine, Florida, and the P.K. Yonge Library of Florida History at the University of Florida in Gainesville, Florida.

SIGNIFICANT CONCLUSIONS: Results of the current investigation successfully identified previously unknown, early-colonial-period (16th- to 18th-century) vessel losses within UDW of the GOMR. A total of nine potential Spanish vessel losses (within the GOMR) were identified at the AGI, in Seville, Spain. In France, a total of seven vessels (six French vessels and one English vessel) were found at the CAOM (in Aix-en-Provence, France) that may have been lost within the GOMR. Results of archival research at the archives within the United States failed to identify any potential candidates (although a number of shallow water wrecks were identified).

STUDY RESULTS: Results of the current investigation indicate that previously unidentified early-colonial-period vessel losses certainly exist within UDW of the GOMR. However, determining where these vessel losses may have occurred within the GOMR is complex considering that many occurred away from land and with a total loss of life. Therefore, attempting to decipher where a wreck may have occurred along a sailing route can be difficult. One must consider estimated sailing times between ports, vessel type and speed, weather patterns, currents, and a variety of other variables that ultimately affect where and when a specific vessel may have been lost. Coupled with limitations of primary documents (including vague locational information relative to a given vessel loss), estimating the location of a given shipwreck within UDW is nearly impossible. It has been found that primary documents do not necessarily strengthen the location of loss of shipwrecks. In fact, the majority of documents found during the current investigation contained no reference to where a vessel may have wrecked other than it simply did not arrive at its intended destination.

While this investigation has been successful in identifying additional vessel losses within the GOMR that were previously unknown, it may not be economically feasible to conduct similar research efforts in the future. Simply stated, this is an idealistic task considering the sheer amount of primary documentation available to researchers in numerous repositories in various countries. While this investigation confirmed that primary documents relative to such vessel losses can be found in appropriate international and national repositories, time may be better spent relying on remote-sensing surveys to identify undocumented wreck sites within the GOMR, followed by archival research specific to that site. Analysis of hull remains and cargo can certainly narrow the scope of research relative to a specific site, allowing researchers to focus more on a specific time period and nationality. Future archival research should be directed to specific repositories based on data collected from remote-sensing surveys and/or archaeological investigations within UDW of the GOMR. Data presented within this report may help to identify the nationality and temporal period of shipwrecks within the GOMR.

STUDY PRODUCT: Krivor, Michael C., John de Bry, Nicholas J. Linville, and Debra J. Wells. 2011. Archival investigations for potential Colonial-Era shipwrecks in Ultra-Deep Water within the Gulf of Mexico. final report by Southeastern Archaeological Research, Inc. (SEARCH) for the U.S. Department of the Interior, Bureau of Ocean Energy Management, Regulation and Enforcement, Gulf of Mexico OCS Region, New Orleans, LA. OCS Study BOEMRE 2011-004. 290 pp.

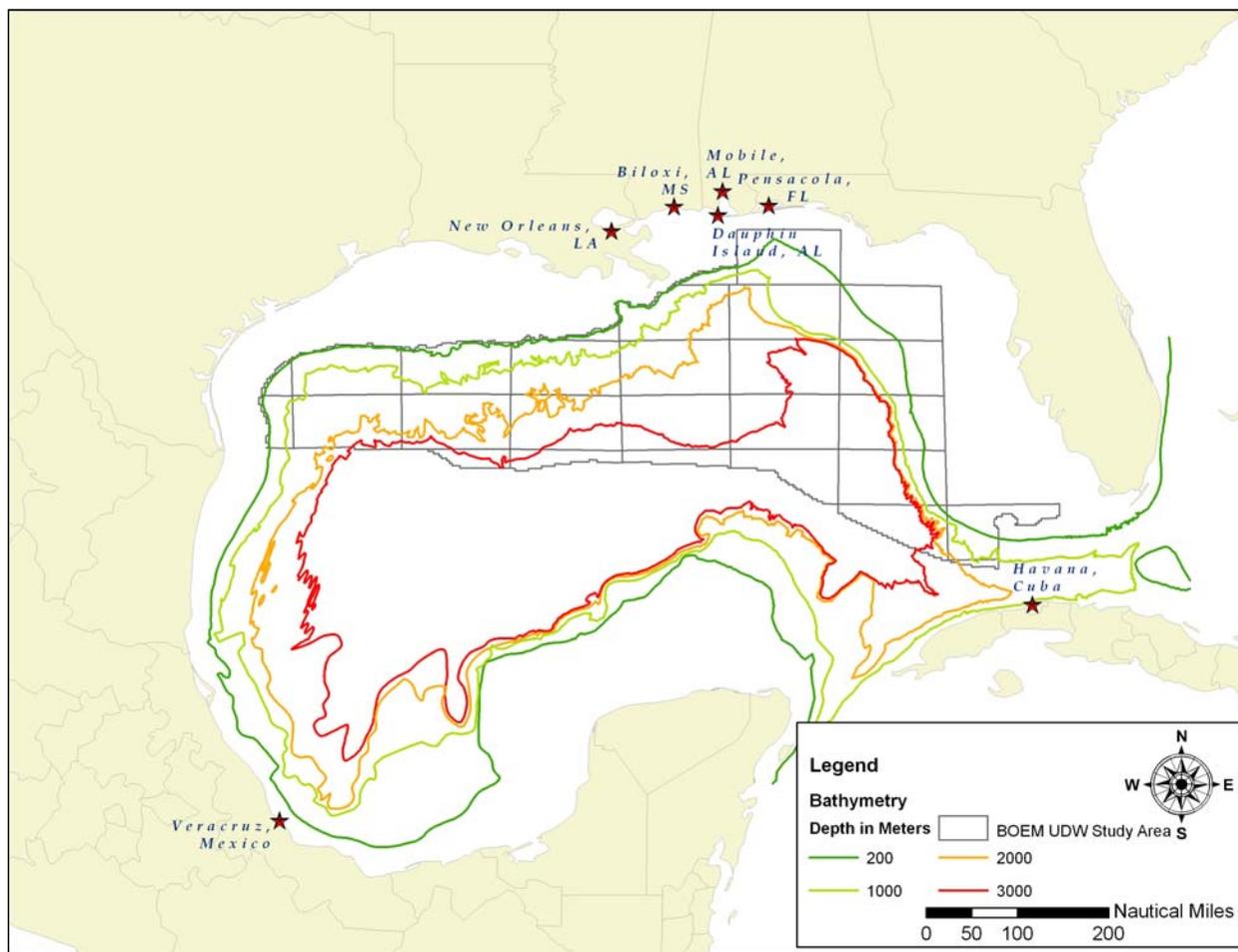


Figure 1-1. BOEMRE UDW study area including bathymetry.