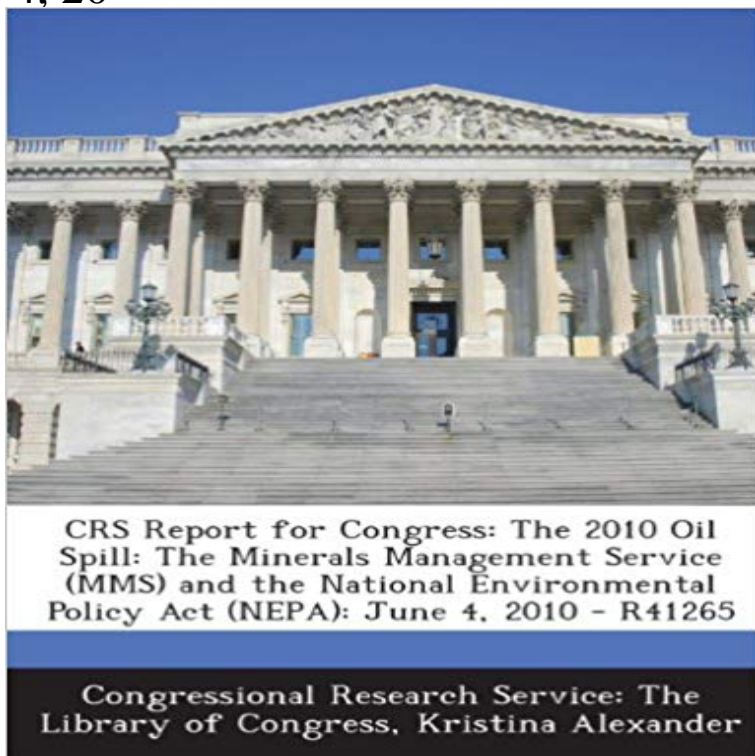


## CrS Report for Congress: The 2010 Oil Spill: The Minerals Management Service (Mms) and the National Environmental Policy ACT (Nepa): June 4, 20



On April 20, 2010, an exploratory oil well in the Gulf of Mexico exploded, killing 11 people and causing an oil spill that a group of federal experts has said is the worst in American history. The oil well was on a tract leased by British Petroleum (BP), having obtained a lease and the relevant permits from the federal government. Under relevant federal law, federal actions that may have adverse environmental effects are required to be reviewed for potential environmental harm under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). This report will review those environmental procedures. While there are additional environmental obligations imposed on Outer Continental Shelf (OCS) drilling by other acts, this report will not review those requirements. Multiple environmental reviews were conducted by the Minerals Management Service (MMS) at each stage of OCS development. For the particular well in question, MMS addressed the environmental impacts on four occasions, including two full environmental impact statements, an environmental assessment, and a categorical exclusion. The fact that MMS categorically excluded the exploration plan from a NEPA analysis is controversial, since that is the first step in which drilling would be conducted. It appears MMS followed its internal procedure for NEPA reviews in ...

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