

FLOWER GARDENS OCEAN RESEARCH PROJECT: CONVERSION OF AN OFFSHORE PRODUCTION PLATFORM TO A FULL TIME TRAINING AND RESEARCH STATION IN THE GULF OF MEXICO

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The Flower Gardens Ocean Research Project (FGORP), a cooperative program between Mobil Exploration and Producing U.S. Inc. and several academic and resource management agencies in Texas and Louisiana, is investigating the feasibility of converting Mobil platform High Island-A389A to a full time training/research station.

A full time offshore training/research station could be utilized to instruct students and scientists in underwater research technologies such as the use of remote operated vehicles, manned submersibles, advanced SCUBA technology, surface supplied diving, hyperbaric chamber operations, and survey techniques. Training programs meeting certification requirements of state and federal agencies, the American Academy of Underwater Science, and academic research institutions could be conducted in a safe and cost effective training environment.

HI-A389A (25°54'30" N, 93°35'06", 161 km south of Cameron, Louisiana, 185 km east of Freeport, Texas, and 1.5 km east of the East Flower Garden Bank) is located in a water depth of 125 m, with the nearby reefs of the Flower Garden Banks National Marine Sanctuary cresting at 17 m. The surrounding water mass is tropical with surface temperatures ranging from 19° C to 30° C and visibility ranging from 20 to 60 m. Normal conditions should allow for in-water training for at least 300 days/year.