For the US Gulf of Mexico, the top 40 operators are as follows:

- Chevron holds over 6.7% of all acreage on the continental shelf, more than half of which is already under production. The firm ranks fifth in producible acreage.
- Zilka Energy occupies the second position (6.3% overall, but has a very high 94% of its shelf leaseholdings under primary term lease and holds the first position in that category. Of the firm’s total leaseholdings in all water depths, over 96% are on the continental shelf.
- Shell Oil, which recently established a new internal group to pursue oil and gas on the US Gulf continental shelf, holds the third position in gross leaseholdings, but has first position in producible acreage. The latter is an indicator of additional growth expected by Shell in the future.
- Mobil, Unocal, Amerada Hess, Oryx all have much of their acreage already in production, but very little in the producible category, suggesting downsizing in terms of presence on the continental shelf...
- CNG Producing, Newfield, Texaco, and Enron all have substantial portions of their gross leaseholdings on the shelf in the producible category, suggesting an emphasis on boosting gas production in the future.

Drilling activity

Next after leasing, drilling activity provides an insight into operators are deploying now-scarce resources, meaning drilling units. The highlights of US Gulf of Mexico exco wells drilled in federal and state waters in all water depths by 98 operators are as follows:

- While Shell Oil continued to set the pace in 1996 as it did in 1995 on the continental shelf and in deepwater, it has pulled back on exploration to put funds into field development. Shell reduced the number of wells by one-third in deepwater and by one half on the continental shelf in 1996 from 1995.
- Other major drillers pulling back on wells drilled in 1996 compared with 1995 include Mobil, Amoco, Kerr-McGee, Marathon, and Seagull.

Production by depth

The highlights of bbl oil equivalent (BOE) production, which includes oil, gas, and gas liquids, by 115 operators in the US Gulf of Mexico are as follows:

- Shell Oil was leading all producers in 1996 (10’96 YTD) with 13.9% of all BOE production in the US Gulf, but produced over 82% of all BOE production in water depths beyond 1,500 ft and 18.4% of all BOE in the 601-1,500 ft water depth range.
- Texaco took over the second ranking of BOE production in 1,500 ft plus water depths in 1996, replacing Conoco, which was second in 1995.