

**BHP BILLITON LTD**

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BHP BILLITON ANNOUNCES HYDROCARBON DISCOVERY WITH VORTEX-1 WELL  
IN DEEPWATER GULF OF MEXICO

BHP Billiton today announced that it has made a natural gas discovery at the exploratory well on its Vortex prospect in the deepwater Gulf of Mexico.

Drilling on Vortex-1 began September 9, 2002, in Atwater Valley Block 261 in water depths of approximately 8,344 feet using the drillship Deepwater Millennium. In addition to the initial well, a sidetrack was drilled 2,900 feet west of the #1 well to a total depth of 19,330 feet. BHP Billiton holds a one-third interest and is operator of the Vortex prospect, with partners Kerr-McGee Corp. and Ocean Energy, Inc. each also holding a one-third interest.

Further information can be found on our Internet site:  
<http://www.bhpbilliton.com>

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