The studies reported in this special issue of Deep-Sea Research are largely derived from data collected as part of programs supported by the U.S. Department of the Interior, Minerals Management Service (MMS) in response to concerns about the effect of oil and gas exploration on the largely unknown continental slope environment. Results of the MMS U.S. South Atlantic continental slope and rise program conducted off the Carolinas from Cape Hatteras to off Charleston in depths ranging from 600–3500 m identified the importance of the slope off Cape Hatteras in cycling of materials from the shelf to the deep sea. Other more detailed investigations followed which filled numerous gaps in our knowledge of the role played by such special regions of the continental slope in the global cycling of carbon and other materials.

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