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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.

Blake James A. and Robert J. Diaz -- Input, accumulation and cycling of materials on the continental slope off Cape Hatteras: An introduction -- 707-710

Mellor Colin A. and Charles K. Paull -- Sea beam bathymetry of the Manteo 467 lease block off Cape Hatteras, North Carolina -- 711-718

Diaz Robert J., G. Randy Cutter and Donald C. Rhoads -- The importance of bioturbation to continental slope sediment structure and benthic processes off Cape Hatteras, North Carolina - - 719-734

DeMaster David J., Robert H. Pope, Lisa A. Levin and Neal E. Blair -- Biological mixing intensity and rates of organic carbon accumulation in North Carolina slope sediments -- 735-753

Blair Neal E., Gayle R. Plaia, Susan E. Boehme, David J. DeMaster and Lisa A. Levin -- The remineralization of organic carbon on the North Carolina continental slope -- 755-766

Cahoon Lawrence B., Richard A. Laws and Carrie J. Thomas -- Viable diatoms and chlorophyll a in continental slope sediments off Cape Hatteras, North Carolina -- 767-782

Harvey H. Rodger -- Fatty acids and sterols as source markers of organic matter in sediments of the North Carolina continental slope -- 783-796

Milliman John D. -- Organic matter content in U.S. Atlantic continental slope sediments: Decoupling the grain-size factor -- 797-808

Hecker Barbara -- Unusual megafaunal assemblages on the continental slope off Cape Hatteras -- 809-834

Blake James A. and J. Frederick Grassle -- Benthic community structure on the U.S. South Atlantic slope off the Carolinas: Spatial heterogeneity in a current-dominated system -- 835-874

Blake James A. and Brigitte Hilbig -- Dense infaunal assemblages on the continental slope off Cape Hatteras, North Carolina -- 875-899

Schaff T. R. and L. A. Levin -- Schaff T. R. and L. A. Levin
Spatial heterogeneity of benthos associated with biogenic structures on the North Carolina continental slope -- 901-918

Blake James A. -- Vertical distribution of benthic infauna in continental slope sediments off Cape Lookout, North Carolina -- 919-927

Hilbig Brigitte -- Faunistic and zoogeographical characterization of the benthic infauna on the Carolina continental slope -- 929-950

Cutter G. Randy Jr , Robert J. Diaz and John Lee -- Foraminifera from the continental slope off Cape Hatteras, North Carolina -- 951-963

Rhoads Donald C. and Barbara Hecker -- Processes on the continental slope off North Carolina with special reference to the Cape Hatteras region -- 965-980

Cutter G. R. Jr., R. J. Diaz and J. A. Blake -- Deep-Sea Research II: CD-ROM appendix -- 981-982