



# NEWS

## U.S. Department of the Interior

Office of the Secretary  
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
November 5, 2007

Contact: Shane Wolfe, 202-208-6416  
Nicolette Nye, 703-787-1011  
Gary Strasburg, 202-208-3985

### **Secretary Kempthorne Details New Frontier for Offshore Alternative Energy Development**

**WASHINGTON** – Secretary of the Interior Dirk Kempthorne today announced a Departmental initiative that is laying the groundwork to develop alternative energy resources in federal waters off the coasts of the United States.

“Offshore wind, wave, and ocean current energy is a new and highly anticipated frontier for the nation as well as a new regulatory program for the Department’s Minerals Management Service,” Kempthorne said. “This is an important step in fostering a new offshore industry that can diversify our Nation’s power supplies by developing new sources of secure, clean and renewable energy.”

The initiative is detailed by Interior’s Minerals Management Service in its Final Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement for the Outer Continental Shelf Alternative Energy and Alternate Use Program. Kempthorne also announced an interim policy that would allow new facilities to test and collect data on alternative energy in federal offshore waters. A Notice of Availability of the EIS and Request for Information and Nominations related to the interim policy are available in today’s *Federal Register* reading room.

The EIS examines the potential environmental effects of the program on the Outer Continental Shelf over the next 5-7 years and identifies policies and best management practices that may be adopted for the program. It assesses potential impacts from developing, operating, and decommissioning alternative energy or alternate use facilities and identifies key issues and mitigation measures that should be considered by subsequent site-specific reviews.

The Energy Policy Act of 2005 authorized MMS to establish the alternative energy program in federal waters. Alternative energy includes wind, wave, solar, underwater current and generation of hydrogen. The program also includes alternate uses of existing oil and gas platforms on the Outer Continental Shelf for activities such as aquaculture, research, education, recreation or support for offshore operations and facilities.

MMS issued a Notice of Intent to prepare the EIS in May 2006, held scoping meetings in Spring 2006, issued a draft EIS for comment in March 2007, held public hearings in Spring 2007, filed the final EIS with the Environmental Protection Agency on November 2, 2007, and plans to issue a Record of Decision by the end of 2007. MMS issued an Advance Notice of Proposed Rulemaking in December 2005 and plans to publish a Notice of Proposed Rulemaking for the program in Spring of 2008.

The EIS is available online at [ocsenergy.anl.gov](http://ocsenergy.anl.gov). A single printed or CD-ROM copy of the final programmatic EIS may also be obtained from: Minerals Management Service, Environmental Assessment Branch (MS 4042), 381 Elden Street, Herndon, VA 20170.

Regarding the interim policy document, MMS will accept public comments and project nominations for the next 60 days related to the approval of meteorological or marine data collection facilities on the Outer Continental Shelf that will be used to assess alternative energy resources or test alternative energy technology.

After the 60-day period, MMS will begin the process of evaluating nominated areas for leasing for data collection and testing technology under this interim policy. MMS will continue to accept nominations under this interim policy until the final program regulations are in place.

“There’s a lot of interest in the program,” Kempthorne said. “Many stakeholders -- individuals, governmental, and nongovernmental organizations as well -- have recommended to MMS that we be expeditious in authorizing Outer Continental Shelf alternative energy resource assessment activities.”

“Expediting our resource data acquisition and technology testing results will benefit stakeholders through expanded knowledge of this developing energy frontier,” Kempthorne noted. “It will also help to inform future decision-making on the program.”

To assist the nomination process, a forthcoming prototype web mapping viewer is being developed and is anticipated to be operational in mid-November 2007 at: <http://www.mms.gov/offshore/RenewableEnergy/WebMappingViewer.htm>. This web mapping server will display specific features in areas, such as boundaries and fairways.

MMS will accept comments and nominations electronically until Jan. 7, 2008 through the MMS Public Connect online commenting system (<https://ocsconnect.mms.gov>), or by mail to: Minerals Management Service, Alternative Energy and Alternate Use Team (MS 4080), 381 Elden Street, Herndon, VA 20170.

The interim policy will be in effect until MMS issues final rules for the program, which will regulate all program activities from that point forward. Under this interim policy the MMS may issue limited-term leases, authorizing data collection and technology testing subject to compliance with relevant federal statutes.

Requestors must also obtain necessary approvals for the construction and placement of associated structures on the lease area. Such leases will confer no priority rights to subsequently develop an alternative energy facility on the Outer Continental Shelf for generating electricity or other produced energy for commercial sale or distribution. MMS is developing a lease form to be issued for public comment at a later date.

MMS intends to prepare a separate National Environmental Policy Act analysis, tiered from the programmatic EIS, to evaluate the environmental impacts of the proposed regulatory framework for alternative energy and alternate use activities on the OCS.

– [www.doi.gov](http://www.doi.gov) –