ENVIRONMENTAL STUDIES PROGRAM: Studies Proposed for FY 2008

Region: Gulf of Mexico/Pacific

Planning Area(s): North Atlantic, Mid-Atlantic, South Atlantic, Southern California, Northern California, and Washington-Oregon

Title: OCS Alternative Energy and Space-Use Conflicts and Related Mitigation

MMS Information Need(s) to be Addressed: Siting issues are extremely important in determining areas of possible alternative energy development. The MMS decisions on lease sales must consider potential space-use conflicts on the Outer Continental Shelf (OCS) and consider how these conflicts differ during construction and operations. The MMS needs to identify potential space-use conflicts of OCS alternative energy development with other activities (e.g., fishing, navigation, sand and gravel extraction), develop criteria for evaluating those conflicts, and identify mechanisms to mitigate existing conflicts and avoid future ones. This study will engage other Federal and state agencies to promote institutional and cross-cutting thinking about multiple uses. Information from the study will be used in MMS decision making on siting and monitoring alternative energy development.

Cost Range: (in thousands) $500-$750 **Period of Performance:** FY 2008-2010

Description:

Background: The ocean accommodates a variety of uses that are separated by time of day, season, location, and/or zones set aside for specific users. Alternative energy development offers the potential for new use space conflicts with other existing uses of the OCS. Management of ocean space and resources has been addressed by a number of state, regional, and federal organizations – fisheries management councils, state task forces, and coastal zone management agencies, for example, but information on the various uses of these spaces and the potential conflicts as they pertain to alternative energy development are not well documented nor are they understood in terms of type of activity, duration, and timing. Space-use conflicts were identified as a social, economic, and cultural concern in the synthesis of existing information on the environmental effects of alternative energy development on the OCS (Michel et al., 2007). Avoidance and mitigation measures have not been fully developed for space use conflicts of alternative energy development with other uses, but need to be.

Objectives: The purpose of the study is to identify space use conflicts on the OCS between alternative energy development and existing and potential other uses of the OCS and ways to mitigate those conflicts.

Methods: The study will develop a geospatial database that is compatible with the MMS mapping system to assist in determining multiple uses offshore. Through a literature search and key informant discussions, including lessons learned from the European experience, the study

will develop a comprehensive list of detailed mitigation measures that can be applied to avoid adverse impacts between alternative energy and other uses that may be present in OCS and identify, develop, and evaluate specific proposals to mitigate or resolve potential spatial conflicts between these multiple uses. In addition, the study will explore the possibilities for creating or revising institutional linkages that might facilitate communication and cooperation between the various entities involved and establish a collaborative of key individuals that will develop techniques of co-existence.

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