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**MMS** Alaska OCS Region

# News Release

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## **Draft EIS for Proposed OCS Beaufort Sea Sale 170 Available for Comment**

The draft environmental impact statement for proposed OCS Lease Sale 170, Beaufort Sea, is available for public comment. The draft EIS was issued by the Minerals Management Service (MMS) on May 16, 1997. The comment period extends until July 18, 1997.

MMS will hold public hearings in Kaktovik, Nuiqsut, Barrow and Anchorage, beginning in late June.

The area under consideration focuses on near shore blocks from east of the Colville River to west of Barter Island and includes 363 blocks encompassing about 1.7 million acres. The area is located 3 to 25 miles off Alaska's arctic coast in the central Beaufort Sea. Water depths in the area range from 25 to 120 feet.

The sale follows closely after Sale 144, held in September 1996. Sale 170 focuses on a smaller area in the central Beaufort Sea. The area is considered to hold substantial reserves of oil. MMS retained for consideration the nearshore area which includes active leases, and which is adjacent to areas where future State natural gas and oil leases are anticipated.

The MMS has conducted 281 environmental, social, and economic studies about the effects of offshore petroleum exploration on the human and marine environment. Of these, 62 are exclusive to the Beaufort Sea Planning Area. MMS has spent more than \$16 million on studies exclusive to the area since the mid-1970s.

There have been six Federal sales conducted in the Beaufort Sea planning area since 1979. The MMS has issued 660 leases in the Beaufort Sea; 78 remain as active leases. Lessees have drilled 17 exploratory wells in the Sale 170 area. Nine leases were determined by MMS to be producible including the Northstar and Liberty prospects.

For more information about the public hearings, or to request a copy of the draft EIS write to the Minerals Management Service at 949 East 36th Avenue, Anchorage, Alaska, 99508-4302. Copies may also be obtained by calling 1-(800) 764-2627 or via e:mail at [akwebmaster@smtp.mms.gov](mailto:akwebmaster@smtp.mms.gov).

The MMS is the federal agency that manages and regulates the nation's natural gas, oil and other mineral resources on the Outer Continental Shelf, and collects, verifies, and disburses about \$4 billion each year in revenues from offshore federal mineral leases and from onshore mineral leases on federal and Indian lands.

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