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**MMS** Alaska OCS Region

# News Release

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For Immediate Release  
October 1, 1997

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## **MMS to Assist BLM With Environmental Plan For National Petroleum Reserve-Alaska Cook Inlet Lease Sale 173 Delayed**

The Department of the Interior's Minerals Management Service announced today that the pre-sale work for proposed Outer Continental Shelf Lease Sale 173 will be delayed until 1999. The delay will allow MMS to assist the Bureau of Land Management with the geologic resource evaluation and the environmental impact evaluation including review of the environmental consequences on air and water quality, birds, fish, marine and terrestrial mammals, threatened and endangered species, oil spill risk, prevention and response, sociocultural systems, subsistence, and the economy for an area within the National Petroleum Reserve-Alaska (NPRA).

"MMS is pleased to be working closely with the Bureau of Land Management on the NPRA project," said MMS Director Cynthia Quarterman. "In order to complete this high priority project, we have reallocated resources and delayed the start of our pre-sale work for Cook Inlet Lease Sale 173 until 1999." The pre-sale process takes approximately two and one-half years to complete and includes opportunities for public comment, consultation with local, state, and tribal governments and other interested groups. The sale will be proposed for 2001, which remains within the context of the current 5-year OCS leasing plan.

In February 1997, MMS began assisting the BLM in the preparation of an environmental impact evaluation. BLM's Alaska Director, Tom Allen noted that "MMS is known for its expertise in environmental analysis, particularly for Alaska's North Slope. Their participation is essential for the success of this project." The draft EIS is scheduled to be available for public comment by November 1997.

MMS is the federal agency that manages the Nation's natural gas, oil and other mineral resources on the OCS, and collects, accounts for, and disburses about \$4 billion yearly in revenues from offshore federal mineral leases and onshore mineral leases on federal and Indian lands.

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