



NEWS RELEASE

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Minerals Management Service Adds Florida to Public Meetings Schedule for Development of OCS Oil and Gas Leasing Program Environmental Impact Statement

WASHINGTON, D.C. - The Minerals Management Service (MMS) has added a meeting in Tallahassee, Florida to its schedule of public scoping meetings on the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the 2007-2012 Proposed 5-Year OCS Oil and Gas Leasing Program. The purpose of this meeting is to solicit comments on the scope of both the overall 5-year plan EIS as well as a separate EIS for the tentatively scheduled 2007-2012 oil and gas leasing proposals in the Western and Central Gulf of Mexico off the States of Texas, Louisiana, Mississippi, and Alabama.

"MMS wishes to elicit the views of the public on the environmental issues associated with the 5-year oil and gas leasing program," said MMS Director Johnnie Burton. "This meeting, in addition to those already scheduled, will help us expand the opportunity for input from all interested parties in the Gulf of Mexico area."

The public scoping meeting will be held from 1-3 p.m. on April 6, 2006 at the Tallahassee-Leon County Civic Center at 505 West Pensacola Street in Tallahassee, Florida. The meeting is in addition to public scoping meetings in Alaska, Virginia, Texas, Louisiana and Alabama previously announced by MMS in the Federal Register on March 3, 2006 and March 7, 2006.

The lease sales in the draft proposed program will constitute a significant element of the national energy strategy. The MMS requests comments on information regarding issues and alternatives that should be evaluated in the EIS, including significant environmental issues concerning OCS oil and gas leasing, exploration, and development. The comments will be reviewed by the MMS to help determine the scope of the EIS.

Current presidential withdrawals or congressional moratoria have placed more than 85 percent of the Outer Continental Shelf around the lower 48 states off limits to energy development. The Administration has indicated support for the moratorium, but will give great weight to the comments from adjacent coastal states.

The Sale 181 area, which has significant potential oil and gas resources, is not under moratorium. Nevertheless, the MMS has no intention of offering for leasing areas within 100 miles of the Florida coast that used to be part of the Eastern Gulf Planning Area.

MMS will accept written comments on the scope of the EIS's for the proposed 2007-2012 OCS Oil and Gas Leasing Program through April 11, 2006. Those interested may submit comments electronically through MMS's Public Connect on-line commenting system at <https://ocsconnect.mms.gov>, or by mail to Mr. James Bennett, Chief, Branch of Environmental Assessment, Minerals Management Service, 381 Elden Street, Mail Stop 4042, Herndon, Virginia 20170.

The public scoping meetings for the development of the proposed 5-year OCS leasing program EIS are scheduled as follows:

Alaska

March 6, 2006 – Inupiat Heritage Center, Barrow, Alaska, 7:00 p.m.

March 7, 2006 – Qargi Center, Kaktovik, Alaska, 7:00 p.m.

March 8, 2006 – Kisik Community Center, Nuiqsut, Alaska, 6:00 p.m.

March 9, 2006 – Arctic Slope Native Association Building, Wainwright, Alaska, 3:00 p.m.

March 13, 2006 – City of Dillingham Council Chambers, Dillingham, Alaska, 7:00 p.m.

March 21, 2006 – King Salmon Civic Center, King Salmon, Alaska, 7:00 p.m.

March 22, 2006 – City of Sand Point Council Chambers, Sand Point, Alaska, 7:00 p.m.

March 23, 2006 – Cold Bay Community Center, Cold Bay, Alaska, 7:00 p.m.

April 5, 2006 – Suite 101, 3801 Centerpoint Dr., Anchorage, Alaska, 5:00 p.m.

Gulf of Mexico

March 28, 2006 – Wyndham Greenspoint, 12400 Greenspoint Drive, Houston, Texas, 1:00 p.m.

March 29, 2006 – Hampton Inn and Suites, New Orleans-Elmwood, 5150 Mounes Street, Harahan, Louisiana, 1:00 p.m.

March 30, 2006 – Riverview Plaza Hotel, 64 South Water Street, Mobile, Alabama, 7:00 p.m.

April 6, 2006 - Tallahassee-Leon County Civic Center, 505 West Pensacola Street, Tallahassee, Florida, 1:00 p.m.

Mid-Atlantic

April 4, 2006 – Doubletree Hotel, 880 Military Hwy., Norfolk, Virginia, 3:00 p.m. and 7:00 p.m.

MMS Main Website: www.mms.gov
MMS: Securing Ocean Energy and Economic Value for America