



U.S. Department of the Interior
Minerals Management Service
Office of Public Affairs

NEWS RELEASE

For Release July 26, 2004
Release # 3104

Contact: Robin Cacy
(907) 271-6070

No New Effects Identified for Next Federal Beaufort Sea Sale

No new significant environmental impacts exist for a planned Beaufort Sea Sale in March 2005; concludes a Minerals Management Service environmental review. The review evaluated new information available since its earlier analysis for the September 2003 Beaufort Sea sale. The Environmental Assessment for the next federal oil and gas lease sale in the Beaufort Sea, Sale 195, is available from the MMS for public review through August 25, 2004. Sale 195 is tentatively scheduled for March 30, 2005.

In February 2003, MMS completed a comprehensive multiple-sale environmental impact statement which evaluated potential environmental effects of three proposed sales in the Beaufort Sea—Sale 186, held in September 2003, Sale 195, scheduled for March 30, 2005, and Sale 202, scheduled for March 2007. MMS prepared an EA for proposed Sale 195 that examined the new information and data that became available since the EIS was completed. The MMS found that the potential effects of proposed Sale 195 fall within the ranges evaluated in the EIS, and found no new significant impacts.

“This approach is used by other Federal agencies and the State of Alaska to determine the level of effects for a series of sales on issues which rarely change,” said MMS Regional Director John Goll. “We and the public can more easily key in on any new information or issues. Our proposed sale still includes a series of requirements that we have used successfully in the past to safeguard the bowhead whale subsistence hunt that occurs annually in the Beaufort.”

After the 30-day review period, the next step in the Sale 195 process will be the issuance of a proposed Notice of Sale in October 2004. At the same time, MMS will seek the Governor’s recommendations on the sale, and will submit a Coastal Zone Consistency Determination to the State. The final Notice of Sale is scheduled for early in 2005 with the sale tentatively scheduled for March 30, 2005.

The area evaluated covers 1,875 blocks from the Canadian Border to Barrow, Alaska, and seaward from the State of Alaska boundary. The EA evaluates the removal of four areas from the sale, primarily areas in which the bowhead whale is hunted by the villages of Barrow, Nuiqsut, and Kaktovik.

Since 1979, MMS has written eight EIS's and held eight lease sales in the Beaufort Sea. MMS oversees an extensive environmental, social, and economic studies program that evaluates the impacts of offshore oil and gas development in the arctic. Some of the ongoing Beaufort Sea studies include monitoring of the Northstar and Liberty development project areas, under-ice currents, oil spill risk from oil production and transportation in the arctic, and changes in trace metal concentrations.

Copies of the assessment are available in paper or CD-ROM from MMS Alaska OCS Region, Office of Public Information, 949 East 36th Avenue, Room 308, Anchorage, AK 99508-4363. Requests for copies also may be submitted via email at akwebmaster@mms.gov or by phone at 1-800-764-2627. The document is available on the internet www.mms.gov/alaska.

The Minerals Management Service is the federal agency in the U.S. Department of the Interior that manages the nation's oil, natural gas, and other mineral resources on the Outer Continental Shelf in Federal offshore waters. The agency also collects, accounts for, and disburses mineral revenues from Federal and American Indian lands. MMS disbursed more than \$8 billion in FY 2003 and more than \$135 billion since the agency was created in 1982. Nearly \$1 billion from those revenues go into the Land and Water Conservation Fund annually for the acquisition and development of state and Federal park and recreation lands.

*** * * MMS: Securing Ocean Energy and Economic Value for America * * ***