

**Alaska Outer Continental
Shelf Region**

**Alaska Annual Studies Plan
Final FY 2008**

**U.S. Department of the Interior
Minerals Management Service
Alaska Outer Continental Shelf Region
Anchorage, Alaska**

September 2007

Prepared by
U.S. Department of the Interior
Minerals Management Service
Alaska Outer Continental Shelf Region
3801 Centerpoint Drive, Room 500
Anchorage, Alaska 99503-5823

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This document may be accessed electronically at <http://www.mms.gov/alaska/ess/index.htm>. To request a hard copy, please contact Dr. Lisa M. Rotterman at (907) 334-5245 or by email at Lisa.Rotterman@mms.gov.

The inclusion of studies proposed in this document does not constitute a commitment by the U.S. Department of the Interior, Minerals Management Service, to conduct or fund any or all of the studies. The scope of the studies is subject to change prior to initiation of any work.

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United States Department of the Interior



MINERALS MANAGEMENT SERVICE
Alaska Outer Continental Shelf Region
3801 Centerpoint Drive, Suite 500
Anchorage, Alaska 99503-5823

Dear Stakeholder:

Thank you for your interest in the Environmental Studies Program of the Minerals Management Service. The agency assesses its information needs and develops new study proposals on an annual basis. We follow a well established process that involves a role for both stakeholder input and scientific peer review.

We are interested in knowing your perspectives and receiving any suggestions or comments you may have for the *MMS Alaska Annual Studies Plan, Fiscal Year (FY) 2009*, which we are now beginning to formulate. For your convenient reference, we have enclosed the *Final Alaska Annual Studies Plan (ASP), FY 2008*.

To assist us in processing any suggestions for new studies, we ask that you follow the formatting guidance for a Study Profile as shown on the next page. Please keep in mind that studies proposed for our consideration must address specific MMS mission and decision needs. Comments or suggestions need to be received by us no later than November 15, 2007, to assure consideration for the 2009 fiscal year. Following revisions to the plan, we will issue a Final FY 2009 Alaska ASP.

We sincerely appreciate your participation in this process and we look forward to your response. If you have any questions, you are urged to contact Dr. Lisa M. Rotterman, ASP Coordinator, at (907) 334-5245.

Sincerely,

Dee Williams, Ph.D.
Chief, Environmental Studies Section

Minerals Management Service Alaska Environmental Studies Program

Proposed Study for FY 2009

We recommend studies profile be less than 2 pages. Please do not try to make this a detailed scope of work. If the study is selected for further consideration, MMS will prepare a more detailed scope of work.

Region: Alaska [Standard for all.]

Planning Area(s): [e.g., Beaufort Sea, Chukchi Sea, North Aleutian Basin as applicable. See Fig.1 of the Plan.]

Title: [Fill in concise title.]

MMS Information Need(s) to be Addressed: *Provide brief and conclusive reason(s) why MMS needs the information. For example, identify how the study relates to analysis under the National Environmental Policy Act and/or specific MMS decision(s), such as formulation of a mitigation measure. Please be as specific as possible.*

Period of Performance: FY 2009-200X

Description:

Background *Please provide 1 to 2 paragraphs on relevant issues. Explain what information is required and provide pertinent background. Include details about whether this study ties in with other efforts, and if so, how. Include a description of the current status of information. That is, what is the level of adequacy of existing information, does any exist, does it need to be more geographically specific?*

Objectives *Clearly and succinctly state the objective(s) of the study. Explain what hypothesis will be tested or what questions will be answered by this study. We encourage the use of lists (1, 2, 3, etc.) for multiple, related objectives.*

Methods *Provide brief detail on what information, techniques or methods are available that could be used. Explain how the objectives of the study will be accomplished. We encourage the use of lists (1, 2, 3, etc.).*

Date information is required: *Provide dates when products would be most useful, such as “Final report is needed by December 2010.” If the product of the study is something additional to the scientific report (e.g. database, model, bibliography), explain in this section.*

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ACRONYMS, INITIALISMS, ABBREVIATIONS, AND SYMBOLS

ACS	Alaska Clean Seas
ADCP	acoustic Doppler current profiler
ADF&G	Alaska Department of Fish and Game
AEPS	Arctic Environmental Protection Strategy
AEWC	Alaska Eskimo Whaling Commission
AK	Alaska
AMMTAP	Alaska Marine Mammal Tissue Archival Project
ANIMIDA	Arctic Nearshore Impact Monitoring in Development Area
AOOS	Alaska Ocean Observing System
ARGOS	Advanced Research and Global Observation Satellite
ASP	Annual Studies Plan (Alaska OCS Region)
baci	before/after, control/independent [evaluation]
Bbl	barrel
BIA	Bureau of Indian Affairs
BLM	Bureau of Land Management
BRD	Biological Resources Division (USGS)
C	Celsius
cANIMIDA	Continuation of Arctic Nearshore Impact Monitoring in Development Area
CD-ROM	Compact Disk Read Only Memory
C.F.R.	Code of Federal Regulations
CIRCAC	Cook Inlet Regional Citizens' Advisory Council
cm	centimeter
CMI	Coastal Marine Institute
CODAR	Coastal Ocean Dynamics Application Radar
COMIDA	Chukchi Offshore Monitoring in Drilling Area
CP	Comprehensive Program
CRREL	Cold Regions Research Engineering Laboratory (US Army Corps of Engineers)
DEW	Defense Early Warning
DOI	Department of Interior
DPP	Development and Production Plan
EA	Environmental Assessment
EAS	Environmental Assessment Section
Ed.	Editor
Eds.	Editors
e.g.	for example
EIS	Environmental Impact Statement
EPA	Environmental Protection Agency
ESA	Endangered Species Act
ESP	Environmental Studies Program
EVOS	<i>Exxon Valdez</i> Oil Spill

Fig.	Figure
FLIR	Forward Looking Infra-Red (FLIR) Imagery
FY	Fiscal Year
GIS	Geographical Information Systems
GPS	Global Positioning System
GSA	General Services Administration
GUI	Graphical User Interface
IA	Interagency Agreement
IBR	Information Base Review
i.e.	that is
IOOS	Integrated Ocean Observing System
IPY	International Polar Year
IR	infrared
ITM	Information Transfer Meeting
IUM	Information Update Meeting
kHz	kiloHertz
km	kilometer
m	meter
ml	milliliter
MMPA	Marine Mammal Protection Act
MMS	Minerals Management Service
MODIS	Moderate Resolution Imaging Spectroradiometer
NAB	Northwest Arctic Borough
NASA	National Aeronautics and Space Administration
NEPA	National Environmental Policy Act
NMFS	National Marine Fisheries Service
NMML	National Marine Mammal Laboratory
NOAA	National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
NODC	National Oceanographic Data Center
NOPP	National Oceanic Partnership Program
NPDES	National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System
NPR-A	National Petroleum Reserve-Alaska
NRC	National Research Council
NSB	North Slope Borough
NSF	National Science Foundation
NSP	National Strategic Plan (MMS)
NTIS	National Technical Information Service
OCS	Outer Continental Shelf
OCSEAP	Outer Continental Shelf Environmental Assessment Program
OCSLAA	Outer Continental Shelf Lands Act as Amended
OCSLA	Outer Continental Shelf Lands Act
OSCR	Ocean Surface Current Radar

ODPCP	Oil Discharge Prevention and Contingency Plan
OMPA	Office of Marine Pollution Assessment
OPTP	Oil Prevention and Technical Plan
OSRA	Oil-Spill Risk Analysis
OWM	Oil-Weathering Model
PAH	polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons
PC	personal computer
PDF	portable document file
ppm	parts per million
RFIC	Request for Information and Comments
ROMS	Regional Ocean Model System
SAR	Synthetic Aperture Radar
Sea WIFS	Sea-viewing Wide Field-of-View Sensor
SINTEF	[Norwegian acronym in English meaning] The Foundation for Scientific and Industrial Resources of the Norwegian Institute of Technology
SIOMS	Sea Ice-Ocean-Oil Spill Modeling System
SPSS	Scientific Package for the Social Sciences
SRB	Scientific Review Board
TBD	To Be Determined
UAA	University of Alaska Anchorage
UAF	University of Alaska Fairbanks
U.S.	United States
USDOC	U.S. Department of Commerce
USDOD	U.S. Department of Defense
USDOI	U.S. Department of the Interior
USFWS	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
USGS	U.S. Geological Survey

μm micrometre

Symbols

> greater than
< less than

SECTION 1.0 PROGRAMMATIC OVERVIEW

1.1 Introduction to the Region

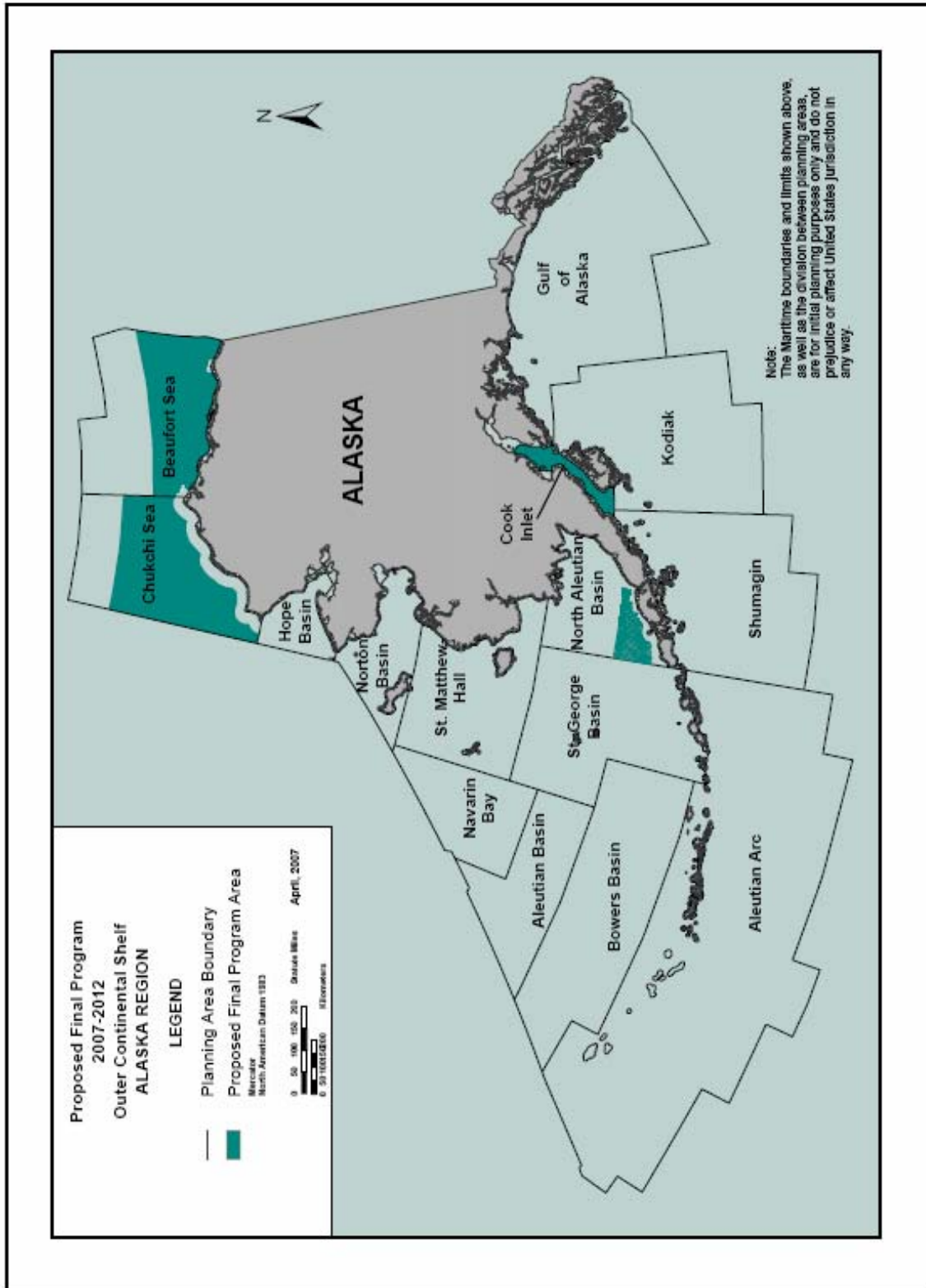
1.1.1 Background

The Environmental Studies Program (ESP) in Alaska was initiated by the U.S. Department of the Interior (USDOI) in 1974 in response to the Federal Government's decision to propose areas of Alaska for offshore oil and gas development. Federal management of the Outer Continental Shelf (OCS) is guided by several legislative acts. Regulations implementing the OCS Lands Act of 1953, as amended in 1978, designated the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) as the administrative agency responsible for leasing and the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) as responsible for supervising classification, evaluation, development, and production of mineral resources on submerged Federal lands. The offices under BLM and USGS responsible for offshore leasing were reorganized as the Minerals Management Service (MMS) in 1982. One of the goals of the OCS Lands Act was to provide for protection of the environment concomitant with mineral-resource development. The Act requires the Secretary of the Interior to conduct environmental studies to obtain information pertinent to sound leasing decisions as well as to monitor the human, marine, and coastal environments (OCS Land Act as amended, 1978 [Public Law 95-372, Section 20]). Also, the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969 requires that all Federal Agencies use a systematic, interdisciplinary approach that will ensure the integrated use of the natural and social sciences in any planning and decision making that may have effects on the environment. Federal laws impose additional requirements on the offshore leasing process, including the Coastal Zone Management Act; Federal Water Pollution Control Act Amendments; Marine Mammal Protection Act (MMPA); Endangered Species Act (ESA); and Marine Protection, Research, and Sanctuaries Act.

The purpose of the ESP is to define information needs and implement studies to assist in predicting, projecting, assessing, and managing potential effects on the human, marine, and coastal environments of the OCS that may be affected by oil and gas development. Lease-management decisions are enhanced when current, pertinent, and timely information is available. To attain program goals, scientific results on specific environmental, social, and economic questions arising from offshore leasing are required. The ESP is the largest, single-agency, mission-oriented, marine-studies program in the Federal Government. Since the ESP inception through Fiscal Year (FY) 2007, more than \$790 million have been spent on the ESP nationally. Approximately \$300 million of this amount has funded Alaskan studies in 15 planning areas in the Arctic, Bering Sea, and Gulf of Alaska Subregions (see Figure 1).

Early in the development of the program, the focus was on obtaining baseline information on the vast biological resources and physical characteristics of the Alaskan environment for pre-lease decision making. These studies included biological surveys of marine species, basic oceanography and meteorology, and geologic and sea-ice phenomena. As a broader base of information was established, it became possible to focus on more topical studies in smaller areas to answer specific questions and fill identified information needs. In addition, a number of generic studies were initiated on the potential effects of oil spills on biological resources and on

Figure 1 Proposed Final Program 2007-2012 OCS Alaska Region



the probable transport and dispersion of oil that might be spilled in the marine environment.

The use of computer-modeling techniques has been implemented to aid in the assessment of potential oil spill and other pollutant risks to the environment and to key species such as fur seals, sea otters, and endangered whales. Modeling also has been used in the ecosystem studies, especially where extrapolation to other areas seemed warranted.

As more disciplinary data were collected and analyzed, the importance of taking an integrated, interdisciplinary look at complete ecosystems in sensitive areas became apparent. During this time, the offshore leasing program was maturing. As a number of sales were held and exploration activities began, post lease studies to monitor some of the possible effects of oil and gas activities on the environment and resources of these areas were initiated. The ESP provides information that is useful for development of the 5-year leasing schedule and for pre-lease and lease-related decisions, and develops monitoring information useful in post lease management.

As studies information has been amassed, improved focus has required greater integration of various scientific disciplines. The MMS has initiated Synthesis Meetings, Information Transfer Meetings (ITMs), and Information Update Meetings (IUMs) to gather maximum expertise and assess the status of existing information, and to plan the best possible approach to a study within the constraints of time and resources. As the MMS and other Federal and State agencies collect more pertinent information, the MMS funds studies to search and evaluate existing literature and data prior to initiation of field efforts. This prevents duplication of effort and saves valuable resources by focusing later study efforts on the areas of greatest information need and highest usefulness to MMS decision needs.

As noted by the National Research Council (NRC, 1994), the MMS Alaska ESP is “extensive, substantive and high quality.” However, the Alaska ESP has been challenged to meet its mission in an increasingly conservative fiscal environment. Despite this challenging situation, the ESP, at the national level and in all the regions including Alaska, remains committed to attaining quality environmental information.

The *Final Alaska Annual Studies Plan FY 2008* complements and reinforces the *Environmental Studies Program National Strategic Plan 1998-2002* (USDO, MMS, ESP, 1998). The NSP has several broad themes, which include the following:

- Monitoring Marine Environments
- Seismic and Acoustic Impacts
- Understanding Social and Economic Impacts
- Oil-Spill Research Techniques
- Efficient and Effective Information Management

To be responsive to ongoing leasing plans and changing offshore technologies, the Alaska OCS Region continually proposes new studies and pursues information needs in conjunction with the *National Strategic Plan*. Due to the great differences that exist between Alaskan environments and other OCS areas, the Environmental Studies Program remains especially flexible in planning and implementing needed studies.

1.1.2 Issues To Be Addressed

At each step of the offshore leasing and development process, a variety of potential issues or resource-use conflicts may be encountered. This section “Issues to Be Addressed” forms a framework for the section titled “Identification of Information Needs.” As a result of issues characterized by uncertain information, we identify specific Information Needs. Two questions are fundamental:

- What is the expected change in the human, marine, and coastal environment due to offshore activity?
- Can undesirable change be minimized by mitigating measures?

Environmental studies are the primary means to provide information on these questions for use by decision makers. Currently the Alaska ESP has primary focus on upcoming developments, possible lease sales, exploration activities, and existing leases in the Beaufort Sea, Chukchi Sea, and North Aleutian Basin Planning Areas.

Current offshore oil- and gas-related issues for which studies are proposed in the Beaufort Sea and the Chukchi Sea include, but are not limited to:

- What long-term changes in heavy metal and hydrocarbon levels may occur near Beaufort Sea development prospects such as Liberty or regionally along the Beaufort Sea coast?
- What role will currents play in distribution of anthropogenic pollutants near development prospects?
- What are the current spatial and temporal use patterns of these planning areas by species that are potentially sensitive, such as bowhead whales, other marine mammals, seabirds and other birds, or fish?
- What changes might occur in habitat use, distribution, abundance, movement, or health of key, potentially sensitive species such as bowhead whales, waterfowl, polar bears, other marine mammals, or fish?
- What interactions between human activities and the physical environment have affected potentially sensitive species?
- What is the extent of endangered whale feeding in future proposed or potential lease sale areas?
- What changes might occur in socioeconomics and subsistence lifestyles of coastal Alaska communities?
- What are current subsistence harvest patterns and what changes might occur in key social indicators as a result of offshore exploration and development?

- What changes might occur in sensitive benthic communities such as the Stefansson Sound “Boulder Patch,” other Beaufort Sea kelp communities or fish habitats?
- What refinements are there to our knowledge of major oceanographic and meteorological processes and how do they influence the human, marine, and coastal environment?
- How do we improve our projection of the fate of potential oil spills?
- If oil is spilled in broken ice, what will its fate be?
- What effects might pipeline construction have on nearby marine communities or organisms?
- How can we better integrate local and/or traditional knowledge into conducting studies related to the Alaska ESP?

Similarly, current offshore oil-and gas-related issues for which studies are proposed in the North Aleutian Basin and the Cook Inlet /Shelikof Strait Planning Areas include, but are not limited to:

- What long-term change in anthropogenic hydrocarbon compounds has occurred in water and sediment?
- What refinements are there to our knowledge of major oceanographic and meteorological processes in Cook Inlet and Shelikof Strait and how do they influence the human, marine, and coastal environment?
- How do we improve our prediction of the fate of potential oil spills?
- What long term changes related to past or future activities have occurred in marine food webs, especially regarding key fish, seabirds and sensitive marine mammals?
- What are the effects of offshore oil and gas exploration and development on important socioeconomic activities such as commercial fishing or existing community infrastructures?
- What are the near-term and long-term effects on key economic activities such as sport fisheries?
- What are current subsistence harvest patterns and what changes might occur in key social indicators as a result of offshore exploration and development?
- How can we better integrate local or traditional knowledge into conducting studies related to the Alaska ESP?

1.1.3 Planning Involvement

As proposals for exploration and development continue to evolve, Alaska's coastal communities are expecting increased involvement in project reviews and decisions that may affect their subsistence lifestyle. Since the people of Alaska's remote arctic and subarctic communities rely so heavily on subsistence resources of the marine environment, they are especially concerned about industrial activities that may directly or indirectly affect hunting success or the habitats of the species important to subsistence. The people of Cook Inlet also have concerns about potential effects of OCS activities on commercial fishing, sport fishing, and tourism. The people proximate to the North Aleutian Basin are concerned about the potential effects of OCS activities on commercial fishing, marine subsistence resources, and migratory waterfowl which use coastal lagoons. Many other related issues are of concern that potentially could be affected by OCS activities, such as marine mammals and threatened and endangered species. Coastal residents of Alaska have concerns about these resources as do State and Federal agencies responsible for their management by law.

Over the years, the MMS ESP continues to involve Alaskans, State and Federal agencies and others in its research planning and execution in a number of ways. Solicitation of comments on the Alaska Annual Studies Plan has been practiced for years. The MMS ESP has sought out and included the knowledge of coastal community residents in planning. Another key source of input is discussion and advice of the OCS Scientific Committee, which occurs on an annual basis. Other public involvement, such as that on study project-management-review boards has assisted the MMS. In MMS field-oriented studies, researchers typically coordinate directly with local communities to discuss their plans, seek advice, and assure that interested individuals learn about the project and its results. The MMS has incorporated local and traditional knowledge of Alaskan residents directly in the preparation of its Environmental Impact Statements (EISs) and decision documents.

The MMS sponsored a Social and Economic Planning Conference in 1999. For the Alaska Region, discussions of major issues focused on impact assessment, monitoring key indicators, local and traditional knowledge, and stakeholder involvement. The Alaska Region has taken the results of this conference into consideration in preparing study profiles for proposed studies and scopes of work for studies to be contracted. Further information on this conference is available at <http://www.mms.gov/eppd/socecon/conference.htm>.

The ESP utilizes a continuing process to synthesize information from many projects into a broader, multi-disciplinary view of research results. Of particular importance is the sharing of information among scientific fields. Past efforts such as MMS ITMs also have helped the Alaska Region guide the design of future studies toward a more encompassing involvement of local and traditional information with scientific activities. Local and traditional knowledge has been incorporated into specific study planning, fieldwork, and interpretation of results over the years of the ESP. The process of melding local and traditional knowledge varies from project to project, but the outcome of better information for decision making is a common goal.

1.1.4 Coordination and Cooperation

The Alaska ESP through its day-to-day operations and studies planning process:

- Coordinates plans and ongoing studies with other ongoing programs and research projects to assure optimal studies management and to manage budget resources efficiently.
- Enhances utilization of existing information.
- Shares logistics and equipment.
- Enhances team approaches to interdisciplinary projects.

Currently a major portion of the Alaska ESP is conducted on a cooperative basis. In 1993, to take advantage of scientific expertise at the local level in addressing issues of mutual concern, the MMS developed the Coastal Marine Institute (CMI). Under an initial 5-year Cooperative Agreement with CMI, the MMS committed \$1,000,000 per year with a dollar-for-dollar match arrangement of Federal and State funds. The University of Alaska Fairbanks (UAF) School of Fisheries and Ocean Sciences nationally recognized for its coastal and marine expertise, administers the Alaskan CMI. The cooperative agreement was renewed for another 5 years in 2002. In addition to funding CMI scientific research, a substantial portion of the MMS contribution supports education in Alaska by funding tuition and travel for UAF graduate-student research related to CMI projects.

The Alaska ESP also coordinates with other U.S. and local research entities such as the: National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) Alaska Fisheries Science Center; Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G); North Slope Borough (NSB) Department of Wildlife Management; Alaska Eskimo Whaling Commission (AEWC); National Science Foundation (NSF); National Aeronautics Space Administration (NASA); Arctic Research Commission; USGS- Biological Resources Division (BRD); Cold Regions Research Engineering Laboratory (CRREL); *Exxon Valdez* Oil Spill Trustee Council research program; North Pacific Research Board; NRC; BLM; North Slope Science Initiative (NSSI); U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS); National Oceanographic Partnership Program (NOPP); National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA); Integrated Ocean Observing System (IOOS); Alaska Ocean Observing System (AOOS); Polar Research Board; Cook Inlet Regional Citizens Advisory Council (CIRCAC); industry programs; and others.

Additional international linkages with other arctic nation's research and regulatory entities have been established. Recently, the U.S., and seven other Arctic nations voluntarily agreed to cooperate on an Arctic Environmental Protection Strategy which has evolved into the formation of the Arctic Council in 1996. The Alaska ESP maintains contacts and coordination with Arctic Council activities, such as the Arctic Monitoring and Assessment Program, Conservation of Arctic Flora and Fauna, Arctic Climate Impact Assessment, and others. The ESP provides information to these working groups through review of reports and plans, and helps to inform participants of available information sponsored by MMS. Further, specific studies that can coordinate and integrate with working group activities are identified and beneficial linkages facilitated.

The polar regions play key roles in our global environment. Many important broad and

interlinked research challenges involving both polar regions exist today. At its most fundamental level, the International Polar Year 2007-2008 is a coordinated campaign of polar observations, research, and analysis that will be multi-disciplinary in scope and global in its reach. The International Polar Year, see <http://www.ipy.org>, will use today's research tools to better understand the key roles of the polar regions in global processes. MMS has several proposed studies which are expected to link with the International Polar Year activities.

1.2 Projected OCS Activities

1.2.1 Pre-lease Considerations

This *Final Alaska Annual Studies Plan FY 2008* reflects consideration of the proposed lease sales in the *Final Outer Continental Shelf Oil and Gas Leasing Program 2002-2007*, (USDOJ, MMS, 2002) and the *Final Proposed Program Outer Continental Shelf Oil and Gas Leasing Program 2007-2012* (US DOI, MMS, 2006) (see Figure 1). In a frontier region such as the Alaskan Arctic with large and remote planning areas, potential environmental hazards associated with offshore activities, and still-evolving technology required for hydrocarbon extraction, maximum lead-time is necessary to conduct adequate environmental studies.

As of September 2007, three lease sales were held under the *Final Outer Continental Shelf Oil and Gas Leasing Program 2002-2007*, all of them in the Beaufort Sea Planning Area (see Figure 2). The last of these sales was held in 2007. Other lease sales in that *Program* were already held or were cancelled due to a lack of industry interest. MMS issued a *Proposed Final Program Outer Continental Shelf Oil and Gas Leasing Program 2007-2012* (USDOJ, MMS, 2007) in April 2007. The *Proposed Final Program* proposes the following lease sales: two in the Beaufort Sea (2009 and 2011); three in the Chukchi Sea (2008, 2010, and 2012) (see Figures 1 and 3); one in the North Aleutian Basin (2011) subject to restrictions (see Figures 1 and 4); and two in Cook Inlet (2009 and 2011) as special interest sales (see Figure 5). The Cook Inlet special interest sale or sales would be held only if industry shows interest in response to a request for nominations and comment. The public had an opportunity to review and comment on the *Draft Proposed Program* and an EIS for it in 2006 and 2007. Studies proposed for FY 2007 are for related NEPA analysis for these possible lease sales, and post-lease NEPA analysis.

Preparation of the EIS is an essential part of the pre-lease process that requires environmental information. In particular, information is needed in time to prepare draft EISs for proposed lease sales. Although much information exists for certain Alaska OCS lease areas, changing conditions and environments often lead to the need to update past studies so that EIS information is current and accurate.

1.2.2 Post-lease Considerations

Prior to FY 1982, most studies of the Alaskan offshore were planned, conducted, and concluded before a sale was held to provide decision information for EISs. However, not all information needs can be obtained prior to a sale. In accordance with mandates of Section 20 of the OCS Lands Act, as amended, post-lease studies are needed to address environmental concerns and

monitoring related to specific developments. The MMS acquires additional information for environmental analyses related to development and production in the post-lease phase environmental analyses. Thus, an increasing number of studies have become more closely related to development schedules and monitoring and evaluation in addition to those broader studies related to the pre-lease phase. As with the pre-lease phase, the wide range of environmental conditions from Cook Inlet to the Arctic and planning lead times are accounted for in the process of formulating new studies. Post-lease activities that raise issues and require environmental data and assessment are:

- Geophysical surveys.
- Exploration plans (EPs).
- Exploration drilling.
- Development and production plan's (DPPs).
- Development, construction, and production activity.
- Oil transportation, including pipelines and tankers.
- Lease termination or expiration (platform abandonment).

In the Beaufort Planning Area, there have been 929 tracts leased in ten OCS Lease Sales. Industry has drilled thirty-one exploratory wells and determined 11 to be producible. As of September 2007, there are 261 active leases (see Figure 2) on the Beaufort Federal offshore. Lease Sale 195 in March 2005 accounts for 117 of the active Beaufort Sea leases. Lease Sale 202 in 2007 accounts for 90 of the 261 active Beaufort Sea leases.

The British Petroleum Exploration Alaska (BPXA) Northstar development project is located about 10 miles north of Prudhoe Bay (see Figure 6). This is the first development project to have production from the Alaska OCS. While the Northstar Island is in State waters, 6 to 7 wells will be drilled into the Federal OCS. The project was approved by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers May 1999 and by MMS September 1999. Construction started in the winter of 2000. Production started the last day of October 2001. Recoverable reserves are estimated at 158 million barrels of oil. Production for the Northstar State-Federal Unit has been 1, 18, 23, 25 and 22 million barrels per year for the years 2001 through 2005 respectively. Daily production averages on an annualized basis for 2006 January through May have dropped 17% from the 2003-2005 average.

A BPXA proposed project is the Liberty Unit in Foggy Island Bay, about 6 miles east of the State Endicott Project. MMS released the *Draft Environmental Impact Statement for the Liberty Development and Production Plan* (USDO, MMS, Alaska OCS Region, 2001.) In January 2002 BPXA put the Liberty project on hold. MMS issued the *Final Environmental Impact Statement for the Liberty Development and Production Plan* (USDO, MMS, Alaska OCS Region, 2002a.) in May 2002. Recoverable reserves are estimated at 120 million barrels of oil. In April of 2007, BPXA submitted a "DEVELOPMENT PROJECT: Development and Production Plan" to MMS on the Liberty Project. This document is available at: http://www.mms.gov/alaska/cproject/liberty/07LibertyProject/Liberty_DPP.pdf. On page 1-1, the document explains that "The Liberty Development Project design and scope have evolved from an offshore standalone development in the Outer Continental Shelf (production/drilling island and subsea pipeline) ... to use of existing infrastructure involving an expansion of the Endicott Satellite Drilling Island (SDI)...As result, BPXA believes Liberty can be developed with

relatively few wells (up to six) and less environmental footprint and impacts of the originally proposed offshore development.”

The only other active leases are in the Cook Inlet/Shelikof Strait Planning Area. Cook Inlet Lease Sale 149 was held in June 1997 and generated two leases (see Figure 6). Neither of the Cook Inlet Lease Sales in the 2002-2007 5-Year Program received any bids.

There are no active leases from previous lease sales in the Chukchi Sea or Hope Basin portions of the Arctic Subregion, or in the Bering Sea or Gulf of Alaska Subregions (see Figure 1).

Figure 2 Beaufort Sea Oil and Gas Leasing Activity

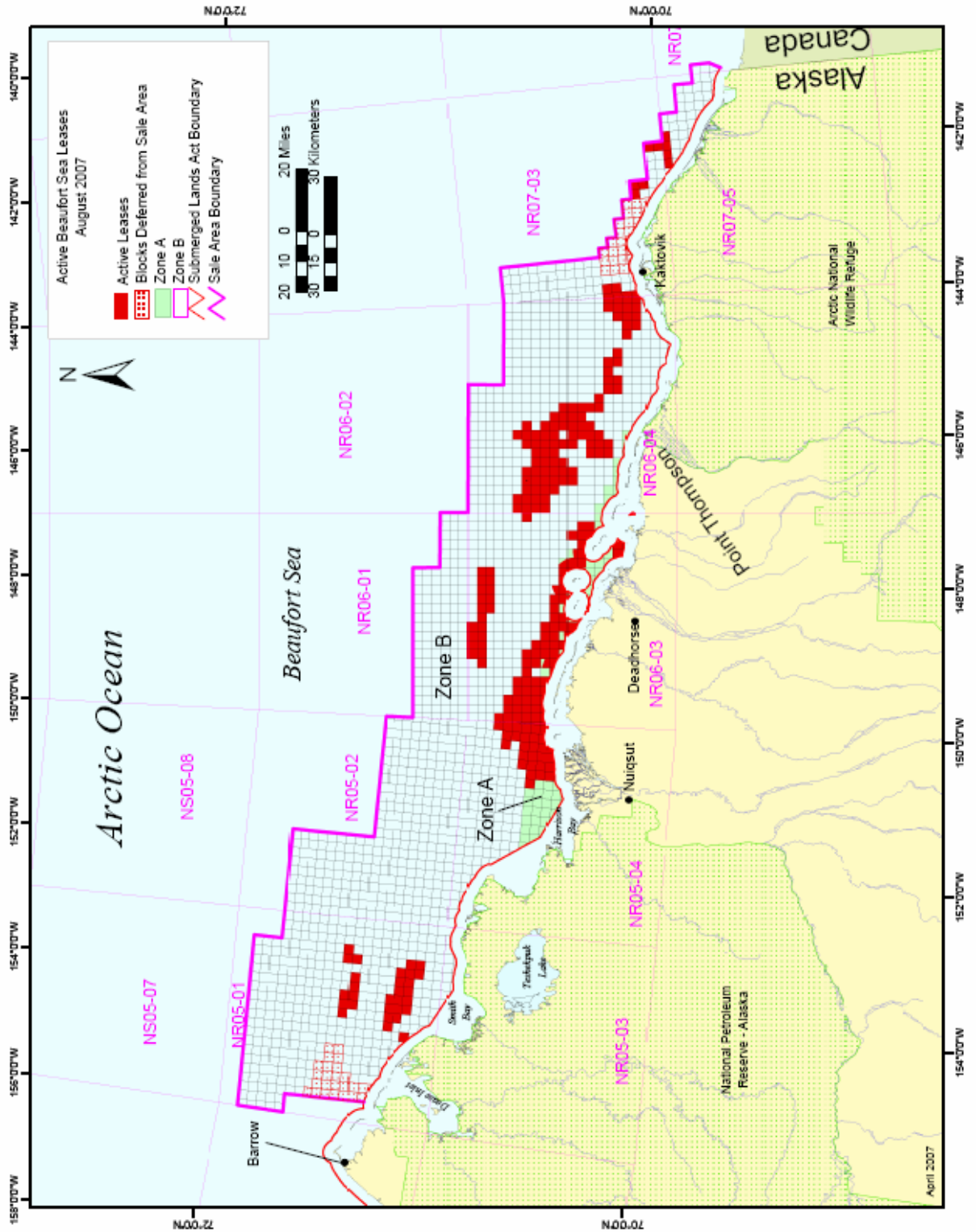


Figure 3 Chukchi Sea Planning and Program Areas

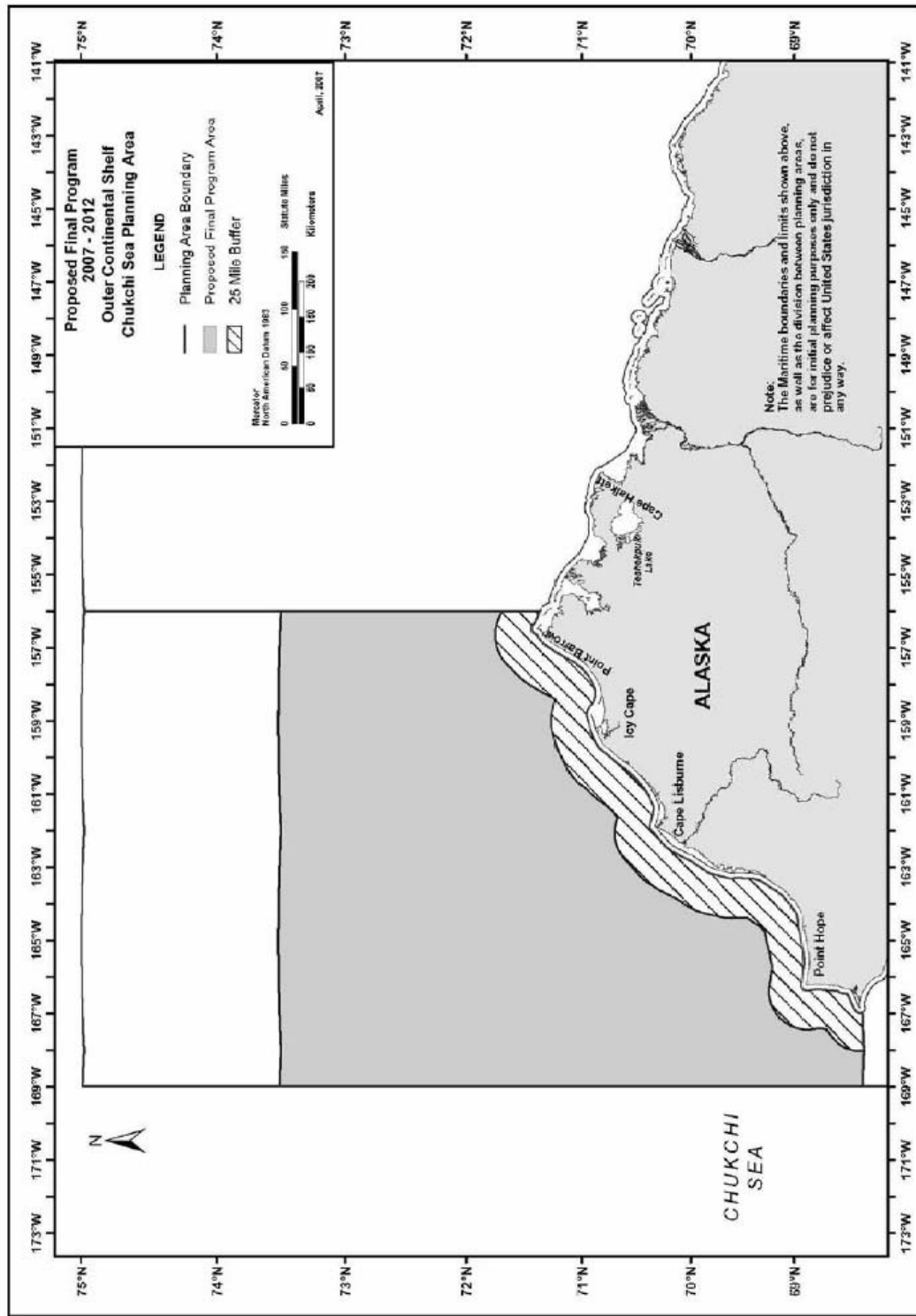


Figure 4 North Aleutian Basin Planning Area

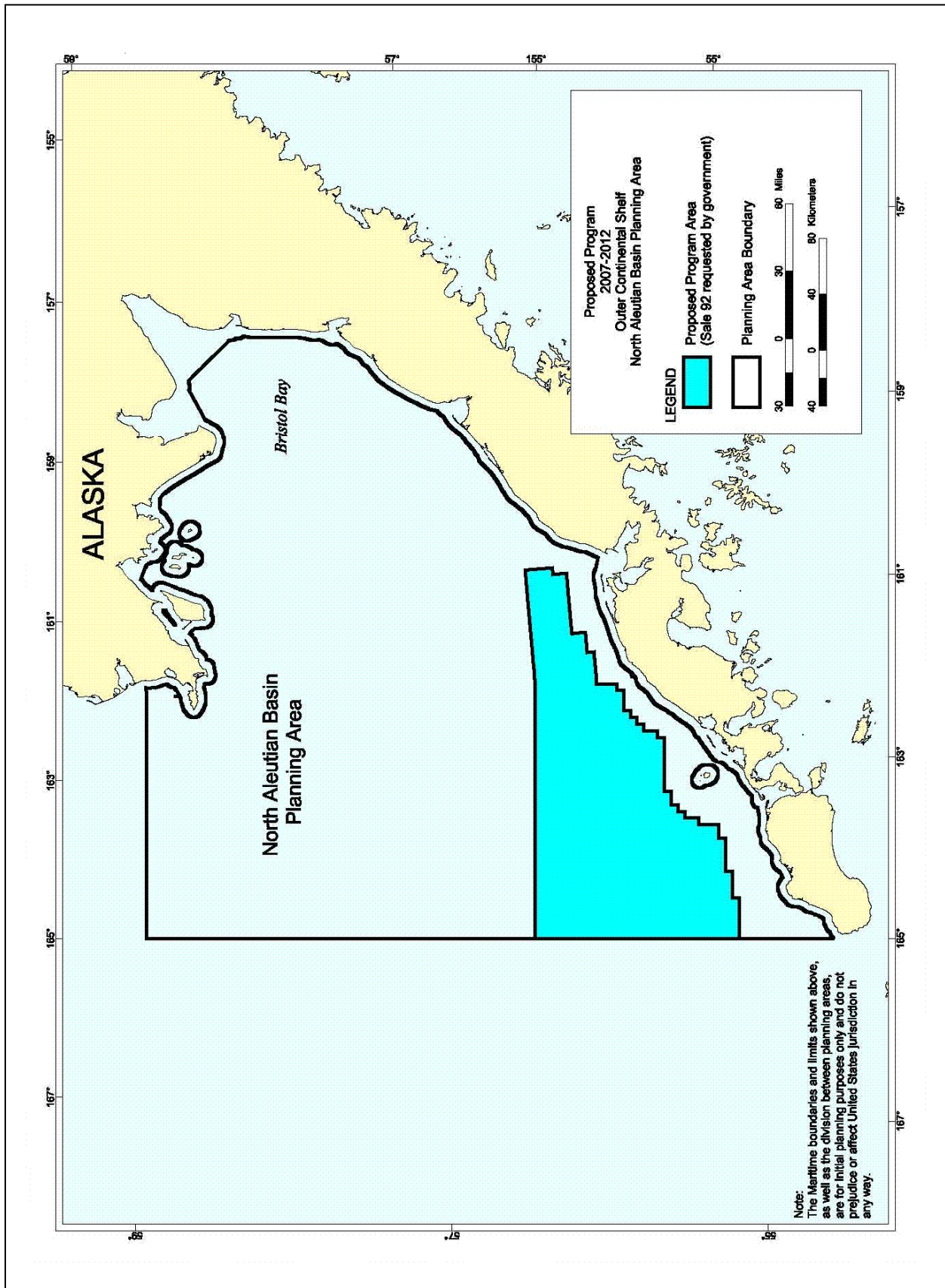


Figure 5 Cook Inlet Oil-and Gas-Leasing Activity

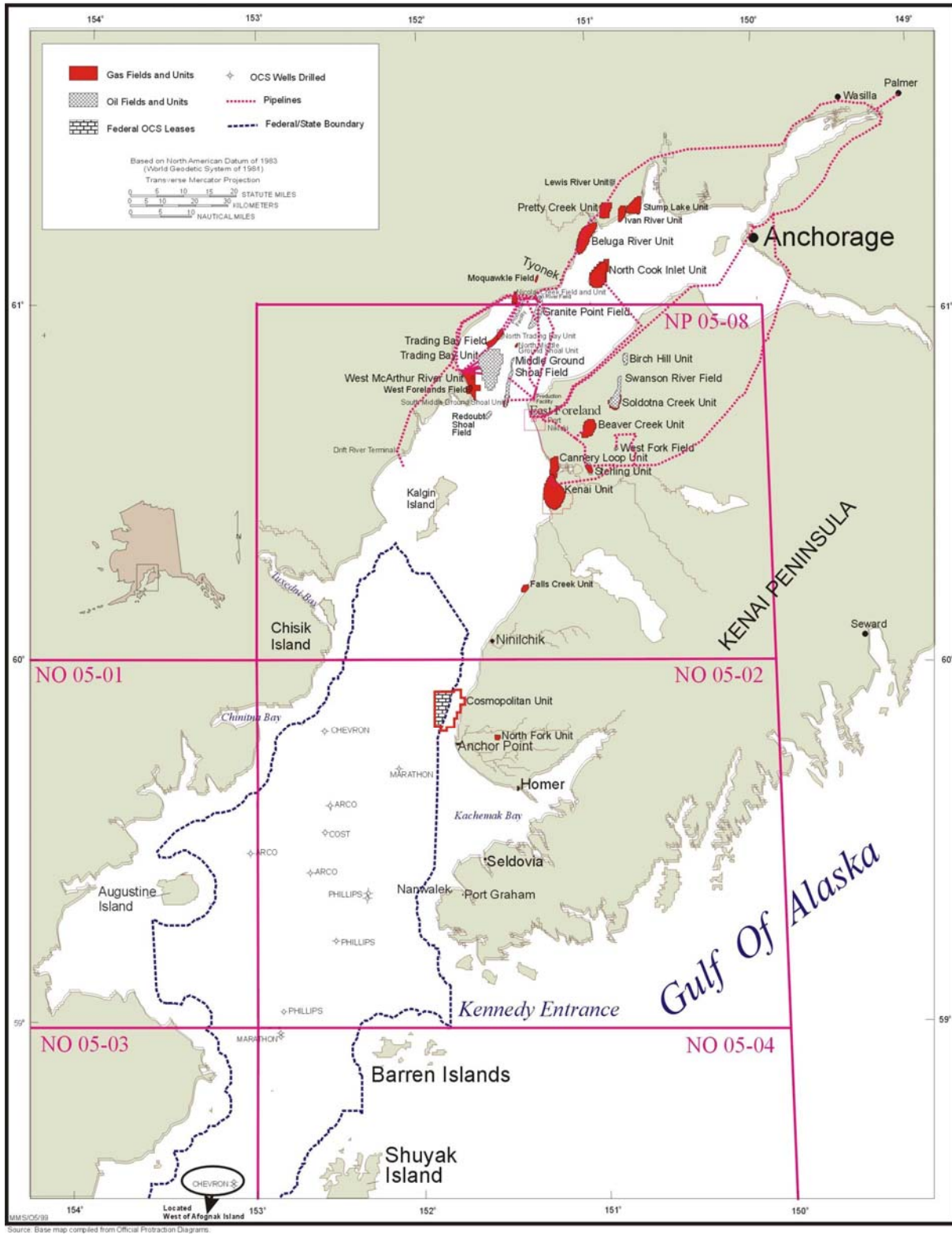


Figure 6 Northstar Island August 2000



1.3 Identification of Information Needs

We distributed the *Final Alaska Annual Studies Plan FY 2007* (USDOI, MMS, Alaska OCS Region, 2006) to approximately 200 Federal, State, local, environmental, Native, industry, international, and other stakeholders in September 2006. We also distributed a letter to the same stakeholders requesting suggestions for new studies for the FY 2008 in September 2006. We considered comments in response to that request and previous program reviews. In addition, we requested suggestions for new studies from all components of the Alaska OCS Region staff and considered their comments.

The ESP also relies heavily on information needs identified through solicitation of public comment and suggestions on how to enhance our information base at ITMs and other meetings. For example MMS held an ITM in March 2005 and sent invitations throughout Alaska to: State and Federal Agencies; borough, city, tribal, and village leaders; oil and fishing industry personnel; environmental groups; scientists; contractors; and others. Approximately 100 people, including about 30 MMS personnel, attended various sessions. Also, in March 2005, MMS held a third Beaufort Sea IUM in Barrow, with 11 presentations. At both the ITM and the IUM, MMS provided updates on the status of the Alaska environmental study plans. At each of these meetings session chairs encouraged attendees to comment on the information available, either through oral involvement in the question-and-answer periods or afterward.

MMS sponsored a 2.5 day workshop on physical oceanography in the Beaufort Sea in February 2003 in Fairbanks, Alaska. The workshop started with presentations by 15 experts on various aspects of physical oceanography. Another 20 individuals participated. After discussion of the topic areas, the group recommended physical oceanography studies to support the MMS mission with respect to industrial development on this shelf or along the coast.

MMS sponsored a 3 day workshop on Arctic cisco in the Beaufort Sea in November 2003 in Nuiqsut, Alaska. The workshop involved local residents (including Village elders) and scientists. After discussion of topic areas, the group generated a ranked list of questions and issues about Arctic cisco to help identify possible studies.

MMS sponsored a 1.5 day research sponsorship meeting on mapping of surface currents from high frequency radar in Cook Inlet and the Beaufort Sea in March and April 2004 in Anchorage, Alaska. After discussion of the topic areas, the meetings recommended that MMS study the central Beaufort Sea OCS and the lower Cook Inlet OCS to measure surface currents from high frequency radar.

Several of the approved and proposed studies address recommendations from Cook Inlet communities and the Cook Inlet Regional Citizens Advisory Council; and a few of the proposed studies also were highlighted in previous ESP plans.

In preparation for possible oil and gas exploration in the Chukchi Sea (see 1.3.6), Minerals Management Service Alaska OCS Region conducted a three day "Chukchi Offshore Monitoring in Drilling Area (COMIDA) Chukchi Sea" planning workshop November 1-3, 2006, in Anchorage. The purpose of the workshop was to identify potential monitoring tasks for a FY

2008 COMIDA field effort to meet MMS needs. Invitations were sent to over 150 scientists and stakeholders, including local and regional governments, tribes, native associations, oil industry, and environmental groups. Over a hundred scientists and stakeholders attended with 77 registering. Thirteen monitoring study profiles were developed by four working groups, presented to and discussed by the workshop, and submitted to MMS for prioritization for inclusion in the COMIDA field effort. In total, the agency received 15 study profiles on the various topics discussed. The workshop report was published in April 2007 and is available at <http://www.mms.gov/alaska/reports/2007rpts/COMIDA.htm>

MMS conducted a four day North Aleutian Basin (NAB) planning workshop November 28-December 1, 2006, in Anchorage, AK. As part of this effort, the research planning meeting included participants from local, tribal, state, and federal stakeholders and scientific experts to discuss potential studies focusing on: Physical Oceanography/Fate and Effects of Oil Spills, Marine Mammals, Biology/Birds, Fish and Commercial Fisheries, Socioeconomics and Subsistence Activities of the North Aleutian Basin Area (see 1.3.7). In total, the agency received 31 study profiles on the various topics discussed. The workshop report was published in June 2007 and is available at http://www.mms.gov/alaska/reports/2007rpts/2007_031/2007_031a.pdf.

Studies also address recommendations from programmatic reviews. A review entitled *Environmental Information for Outer Continental Shelf Oil and Gas Decisions in Alaska* (NRC, 1994) was conducted in response to a request from the U.S. House of Representatives that MMS seek NRC advice about the adequacy of environmental information for Beaufort Sea lease sales. The NRC committee concluded that the environmental information currently available for the Beaufort Sea OCS area is generally adequate for leasing and exploration decisions, except with regard to effects on the human environment (NRC, 1994). Since that time the MMS has enhanced research components on the human environment. The Alaska ESP has also considered a series of reviews of the national ESP by the NRC. The reviews are titled *Assessment of the U.S. Outer Continental Shelf Environmental Studies Program: Volume I Physical Oceanography* (NRC, 1990); *Volume II Ecology* (NRC, 1992a); *Volume III Social and Economic Sciences* (NRC, 1992b); and *Volume IV Lessons and Opportunities* (NRC, 1993).

MMS works with affected Federal, State, local agencies, and tribes in a variety of ways to continue to address the many useful recommendations in *Cumulative Environmental Effects of Oil and Gas Activities on Alaska's North Slope* (NRC, 2003).

1.3.1 Beaufort Sea General Information Needs

Long-Range Monitoring of Interdependent Physical, Biological, and Social Processes:

Both offshore and onshore oil and gas development and production activities are increasing across Alaska's North Slope. Residents of Nuiqsut, Kaktovik and Barrow are particularly concerned about long-term effects of offshore developments at Northstar and other possible developments as well as long-term and cumulative effects of any exploration from OCS Beaufort Sea lease sales. Interagency reviews of related EISs, EPs and DPPs are expected to lead to additional recommendations for monitoring impacts of Northstar and other possible developments. Key constituents have identified the need to monitor under ice currents,

sedimentation, and potential effects on social systems/subsistence in the vicinity of Northstar and Liberty. Related questions that need to be addressed are the characteristics of major oceanographic and meteorological processes and how they influence the human, marine and coastal environment. One method of collecting oceanographic data that has improved significantly in recent years is through radar mapping and this method is being tested for the Beaufort Sea.

Information on Bowhead Whales and Other Wildlife:

Inupiat whale hunters rely heavily on bowhead whales for subsistence. The bowhead whale is central to village cultural and spiritual life. Whale hunters have reported that migrating bowhead whales deflect from their normal migratory route well upstream of active industry vessels and may divert their migration route. A concern is that deflection around oil- and gas-industry activity (including drilling activity and associated icebreaker support) makes whales harder and more difficult to hunt. Bowhead whales also feed along the fall migration route and information about bowhead feeding and habitat use is needed. Noise from industrial activity is a central concern. Additionally, Inupiat whale hunters and the scientific community have raised concerns about potential cumulative impacts on bowhead whales.

These concerns are addressed in part by ongoing studies such as the MMS Bowhead Whale Aerial Survey Project, the completed study, *Bowhead Whale Feeding in the Eastern Alaskan Beaufort Sea: Update of Scientific and Traditional Information* (USDOJ, MMS, Alaska OCS Region, 2002b), and other ongoing studies. It is important to assess the factors that may be affecting the habitat use, health, population status, and migration routes of bowhead whales. The populations of bowhead whales, polar bears, beluga whales, spectacled eiders, and other endangered species are an ongoing concern of environmental groups, Federal agencies, and others. North Slope villages are particularly concerned about potential disturbance of ringed seals, waterfowl, and other subsistence-wildlife species by oil-industry activities such as helicopter overflights.

Native Culture: The Inupiat believe that their culture is vulnerable to short-term, long-term, and cumulative effects from OCS activities. There are concerns that OCS activities might lead to:

- Social disruption and a change in cultural values through population shifts (immigration of large numbers of non-Inupiat to the North Slope).
- Employment changes (potential effects on subsistence lifestyle by a cash economy).
- Cumulative effects of multiple industrial activities, alteration of subsistence-harvest patterns and displacement of hunters and subsistence resources.

The Inupiat rely on a wide variety of marine resources as significant sources of food. In addition, the harvesting, sharing, and consuming of subsistence resources form an important part of the traditional Inupiaq culture and spiritual life. People are concerned that a temporary or permanent elimination of primary subsistence foods would cause North Slope residents either to shift to less desired subsistence resources or to replace subsistence foods with expensive Western foods. The Inupiat are concerned about mitigation, including compensation, for potential losses. An anticipated decline in oil revenues to the NSB is an issue of concern also. There is a need to

monitor potential key indicators of socioeconomic and cultural changes on the North Slope.

Another concern is the use of local and traditional knowledge in analysis of potential environmental effects; mitigation measures to protect environmental resources; and general offshore planning, leasing, and regulation of industry activity. We continue to seek and include firsthand knowledge of local subsistence hunters to augment the scientific knowledge base.

Pollutants: North Slope villagers are concerned about potential effects on their food supply. In the Beaufort Sea, such foods include bowhead whales, seals, waterfowl, and fish. Of particular concern are the fate, behavior, and cleanup of a major oil spill and the potential mortality to marine wildlife in open water or effects resulting from entrainment of oil in sea ice. Related to these concerns, additional information is needed regarding currents that might carry oil under ice. Additional information on ocean currents and sea ice is important to addressing these concerns. Where possible through national or international-level coordination or joint industry efforts, additional information on fate (weathering) of oil spills would also be useful – for example, field experiments on the weathering of oil in broken ice.

Small portions of the Beaufort Sea floor near the Liberty development unit have a special benthic environment referred to as the “kelp community” or the “Boulder Patch.” Sediments, pollutants, or disturbance associated with oil- and gas-industry activities could negatively affect this unique environment.

1.3.2 Chukchi Sea General Information Needs

Native culture relying on subsistence, particularly on marine resources, predominates in these regions. The fundamental issues in the Chukchi Sea are very similar to the Beaufort Sea (see Section 1.4.1), although there are many species that regularly occur within the Chukchi Sea that do not typically occur within the Beaufort Sea. One major difference is that the last OCS activity in the Chukchi Sea was in the early 1990's. MMS has previously conducted studies in the Chukchi Sea, but with less emphasis since the early 1990's, compared to the Beaufort Sea. The status of many animal populations may have changed since those studies were conducted. Global warming may have resulted in many spatial and temporal changes in the distribution of a variety of species. This *Plan* includes studies to address some of the environmental information needs in the Chukchi Sea. Note particularly the study *Chukchi Offshore Monitoring in Drilling Area (COMIDA)* proposed for FY 2007 in Section 2.2 of this *Plan*.

1.3.3 Cook Inlet General Information Needs

Physical Oceanography: The MMS Oil Spill Risk Analysis (OSRA) Model needs additional validation in Alaskan waters. One method of collecting oceanographic data that has improved significantly in recent years is through radar mapping and this method will be further investigated for the Cook Inlet. Recent studies have been performed on surface currents in Cook Inlet. But more extensive information on surface currents is needed, particularly in middle and upper Cook Inlet.

Protected Species: A variety of protected species including, but not limited to, Steller's eiders,

Kittlitz's murrelets, sea otters, harbor seals, beluga whales and humpback whales inhabit lower Cook Inlet and are potentially vulnerable to spilled oil and disturbance from oil development in the OCS. Updated information is generally needed on the distribution and habitat use patterns of these species for OSRA, to evaluate the effects of disturbance and to facilitate planning for potential mitigation. For most of these species, information on distribution and abundance is most complete for the summer season when conditions are most suitable for observation. However, individuals of these species are likely to be locally abundant during all months of the year. Emphasis needs to be placed on surveys and studies of the status of lower Cook Inlet populations that are undertaken during the late-fall, early-spring and winter months.

Social Science and Economics: MMS plans to collect and maintain reliable information on the harvest and sharing of subsistence resources in coastal Alaska.

1.3.4 North Aleutian Basin General Information Needs

This *Plan* includes a study *North Aleutian Basin Information Status and Research Planning Meeting*. It is to evaluate study concepts needed for describing the existing environment and forming a basis for assessing potential environmental effects or needed monitoring in the North Aleutian Basin Proposed Program Area (see Figure 5). See the study profile in Section 2.1 of this *Plan*. Based on this meeting, MMS rapidly funded a multi-faceted study of North Pacific right whales in the North Aleutian Basin and adjacent areas which began in the summer of 2007. Following that meeting, MMS also funded a study entitled "Modeling of Circulation in the North Aleutian Basin". More studies derived from the Planning Meeting are scheduled to begin in 2008 and beyond.

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Section 2: Study Profiles

Section 2.1: Study Profiles for Ongoing Studies

We provide information about ongoing MMS-funded studies at:

www.mms.gov/eppd/sciences/esp/profiles/alaska.htm.

At this website, MMS provides the following information about each ongoing study:

- An updated status of each study.
- Report due dates.
- Related publications.
- Affiliated websites.

We update the information on this website three times each year.

For all completed ESP Studies go to:

www.mms.gov/alaska/ref/AKPUBS.HTM

An alternative site is <http://www.gomr.mms.gov/homepg/espis/espisfront.asp>. This website has the Environmental Studies Program Information System (ESPIS). ESPIS provides access to completed study products. It is a searchable, web-based, text retrieval system allowing users to view or download reports.

ENVIRONMENTAL STUDIES PROGRAM: ANNUAL STUDIES PLAN 2008

Region: Alaska

Planning Area: North Aleutian Basin

Title: Modeling of Circulation in the North Aleutian Basin

MMS Need for Information: Oil spill trajectory analysis for impact assessment is needed for the North Aleutian Basin (NAB) Planning Area. The Dept. of Interior's Proposed OCS Oil and Gas Leasing Program 2007-2012 considers a North Aleutian Basin (NAB) oil and gas lease sale for 2011. Oil Spill Risk Analysis (OSRA) is a cornerstone foundation for evaluating alternatives in OCS oil and gas leasing EIS preparation and for evaluating mitigation, such as oil spill contingency plans. Development and application of an up-to-date circulation model is essential to future OSRA-based EIS analyses

Total Cost : In procurement, tbd

Period of Performance: FY 2007-2009

Description

Background MMS proposes to lease within the North Aleutian Planning Area (NAB). Although MMS expects the leasing process to result in primarily exploration and production of gas for local use, this expectation does not preclude the need for oil spill risk analysis tools. MMS does not have a functional oil spill trajectory model for the North Aleutian Basin Planning Area. Previous MMS contractors (RAND Corporation and Applied Science Associates) did develop circulation and oil spill trajectory models for the northern Bering Sea in the late 1970's through the late 1980's, but these models are no longer functional, available to MMS, or state-of-the-art. A phased effort is envisioned in which this study would be a first phase to provide needed-EIS-applicable products prior to the next Oil and Gas Lease Sale. A more comprehensive post-sale model development and application would occur as a future second phase.

Objectives Adapt and maximize the skill of an existing, coupled ice-ocean circulation model which includes the Southeastern Bering Sea to represent the physical processes, especially circulation, within the North Aleutian Basin Planning Area. Provide MMS with 10-20 years, gridded wind, surface water, and ice velocity, ice cover; and limited other modeled fields as agreed on between contractor and MMS.

Methods

1. Modify existing coupled ice-ocean circulation model to maximize skill in the NAB.
2. Conduct sensitivity testing and validation of modified model.
3. Provide 3-hour gridded velocity fields (wind, surface water, ice), and ice cover to MMS in agreed format for 10-20 years hindcast simulation.
4. Documentation through model manual, final report, and submittal of a peer-reviewed journal article.

Current Status: In procurement

Revised Date: September 2007

ENVIRONMENTAL STUDIES PROGRAM: ANNUAL STUDIES PLAN 2008

Region: Alaska
Planning Area: Beaufort Sea
Title: Beaufort Sea Nearshore Currents

MMS Information Needs to be Addressed: This study will be useful to MMS to validate the oil spill risk analysis model. It will provide understanding for oil spill contingency planning in areas outside the barrier islands versus inside the barrier islands. This information will be used to evaluate oil spill contingency plans for Liberty, if approved, and other developments. It would also be used for NEPA analysis and documentation for Beaufort Sea Lease Sales and DPPs.

Total Cost: \$605,000

Period of Performance: FY 2003-2008

Conducting Organization: UAF, Institute of Marine Science

Description:

Background Understanding the under-ice and open water currents through a long term time series is a necessary precursor to estimating potential effects on sensitive resources from oil spills or in the landfast ice. A recent MMS study provided measurements from three locations within the barrier islands of Stefanson Sound near Northstar and Liberty for 1999-2000, 2000-2001, and 2001-2002; and from a fourth location just outside the barrier islands in 2001-2002. The ongoing study has provided the first current, temperature, and salinity data covering the entire freeze up, winter, and breakup periods in the nearshore Beaufort Sea. Preliminary evidence suggests that in the future, a single mooring would suffice in capturing the along-lagoon flow in this region of Stefanson Sound.

Other areas of the Beaufort Sea have different current regimes and have not been sampled for under-ice currents and only limited open water currents. Lagoons in the eastern Alaskan Beaufort Sea have narrower passes between the barrier islands, causing a pulsed circulation in and out of the lagoons. These passes are important due to their potential to funnel flow and oil spills into the lagoons. Camden Bay, also to the east, is not protected by barrier islands and represents a third type of coastal flow regime. The only current meter moorings for these eastern Beaufort Sea coastal regimes were a small oceanographic program in summer 1988 and 1989.

Objectives

1. Measure currents, temperature, and salinity hourly at three locations in the landfast ice zone; one in the vicinity of Liberty and Northstar and two in new locations with different flow characteristics.
2. Quantify the magnitude of current variability and to describe the relationship between currents and local winds.

3. Estimate the vertical structure of the currents throughout the water column and how the structure changes with the development of the landfast ice through the winter and in summer when the ice melts and rivers flood the inner shelf.
4. Provide physical oceanographic data to the continuation of the Arctic Nearshore Impact Monitoring in Development Areas (ANIMIDA) study.

Methods

1. A 1200 kHz acoustic Doppler current profilers (ADCPs) will be moored for one-year periods, recovered, and redeployed for total of 3 years. All three moorings will have conductivity temperature depth measuring devices (CTD's) and transmissometers.
2. Local winds measured at Deadhorse, Northstar, Endicott, Oliktok and Badami and sea level data collected at the Waterflood facility will be collated for time-series comparison with mooring data.
3. Standard physical oceanographic time-series analyses (e.g., univariate statistical descriptors and correlation in both time and frequency domains) and velocity shear calculations will be done.

Date Information Required: The final analyses are due July 2008.

Revised date: September 2007

ENVIRONMENTAL STUDIES PROGRAM: ANNUAL STUDIES PLAN 2008

Region: Alaska

Planning Areas: Beaufort Sea, Cook Inlet

Title: Surface Circulation Radar Mapping in Alaskan Coastal Waters: Field Study Beaufort Sea and Cook Inlet

MMS Information Needs to be Addressed: The Oil-Spill-Risk Analysis (OSRA) is a cornerstone to regional EISs environmental assessments, and oil-spill-contingency planning. MMS is being tasked with providing circulation and oil-spill-trajectory information at higher resolution than feasible or justifiable by current modeling state-of-the-art or current-meter technology. Information from this study will be used in NEPA analysis and documentation for Beaufort Sea Lease Sales, Cook Inlet Lease Sales, DPPs, and oil-spill-contingency plans.

Total Cost: \$900,000

Period of Performance: FY 2006-2008

Conducting Organization: UAF

Description:

Background Over the past 25 years, oceanographic radar techniques have been developed and improved so that detailed, gridded, 2-dimensional maps of surface circulation can be provided and recorded in real time. Currents would play a critical role in the transport and fate of spilled oil, but there is paucity of direct circulation measurements in some areas of the Beaufort Sea and Cook Inlet. Current meters provide only data at specific points and not at the water surface, where the oil would be. These radar techniques provide a measured equivalent of a gridded circulation model and can be used as input to and validation for oil spill trajectory models.

Several entities, including MMS, NOAA, NOPP, IOOS, the University of Alaska Fairbanks, and oil industry have expressed interest in using circulation mapping radar techniques in Alaskan coastal waters. The radar units are expensive and cost and use-sharing rental agreements among multiple users is a preferred approach.

Objectives This study's objectives would be to field test the capability of the HF radar to collect near-real time surface current measurements in the Beaufort Sea from July (breakup of the landfast ice and opening of the offshore pack ice) through freeze-up and test the capability of the same units to collect surface currents in lower Cook Inlet for a period of a year. Analysis will compare surface currents to winds, subsurface currents, and ice concentration.

Methods

1. Deploy radar units to the Beaufort Sea during the 2005 and 2006 field seasons.
2. Collect near real-time surface current measurements on an hourly basis over a publicly available Internet connection from West Dock east to the Endicott causeway and as far out on the continental shelf as technically feasible.

3. Collect surface current measurements from the end of breakup (July) through the formation of landfast ice in October.
4. Develop new routines to process the surface current measurements in ice covered waters of the Beaufort Sea
5. Analyze the processed surface current measurements against ice data, wind data collected from MMS meteorological stations on the North Slope and sub-surface currents collected from MMS Acoustic Doppler Current Profiler (ADCP) situated within the study area.
6. Produce a field report for Beaufort Sea 2005 and 2006 field seasons.
7. In October 2006, demobilize HF radar units in the Beaufort Sea and deploy to lower Cook Inlet for a one year test
8. Demobilize the units in Cook Inlet in November 2007
9. Process and analyze the data for Cook Inlet
10. Produce a final report for all years for the Beaufort Sea and Cook Inlet.
11. Produce a final geospatial database of all of the surface current measurements

Date Information Required: A final report and database will be provided to MMS in September, 2008.

Revised date: September 2007

ENVIRONMENTAL STUDIES PROGRAM: ANNUAL STUDIES PLAN 2008

Region: Alaska

Planning Areas: Beaufort Sea, Chukchi Sea

Title: Simulation of Landfast Sea Ice along the Alaska Coast

MMS Information Needs to be Addressed: The Circulation and Oil-Spill-Trajectory Model is a cornerstone to regional EISs, environmental assessments, and oil-spill-contingency planning. Model results are used by MMS, industry, and other agencies to evaluate the risks and advantages of specific alternatives, and they are used to fine-tune protective lease-sale stipulations. Information from this study will be used for NEPA analysis and documentation for Beaufort Sea Lease Sales, Chukchi Sea/Hope Basin Lease Sales, DPPs, and review of oil-spill-contingency plans for OCS and coastal facilities.

Total Cost: \$120,000

Period of Performance: FY 2004-2008

Conducting Organization: CRREL

Description:

Background The study addresses MMS's need for high-resolution sea ice modeling in the landfast ice zone of the Beaufort and Chukchi Seas. The study will implement a unique sea ice modeling approach developed by CRREL and funded by NASA. The sea ice model uses a Lagrangian-discrete-element-based approach that is well suited to tracking ice trajectories for oil spill transport modeling and simulating ice effects on man-made structures. The model has the ability to vary resolution at sub-kilometer resolution at the coast to 20-30 kilometer resolution in the central basin. This study will cooperate with the state-of-the-art ice modeling MMS Inter-agency Agreement (IA) with National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA). Other models available to, or being developed by MMS, have or anticipate problems with modeling the landfast ice regime where oil development is occurring in Beaufort Sea.

Objectives Develop a nearshore Beaufort Sea ice model for the landfast ice zone:

1. Construct a high-resolution model for simulation of the Beaufort Sea coastal landfast zone based on the existing CRREL/NASA Lagrangian Arctic Basin sea ice model.
2. Demonstrate the model through a series of simulations of sufficient duration to encompass a range of processes from formation to break-up.

Methods

1. Employ kilometer or sub-kilometer resolution at the model coast in the region of interest and 20-30 kilometer resolution in the remainder of the basin.

2. The model region is a 100-200 kilometer section of the Beaufort Sea coast and extending 50-100 kilometers offshore.
3. As available, the sea ice model will incorporate high-resolution ocean currents in the region of interest, to be obtained from other MMS studies. Coupling issues will be addressed.
4. A coast line data set is discretized by CRREL at sub-kilometer resolution from remote sensing images. The model incorporates available bathymetry.

Date Information Required: Annual reports have been provided in FY 2005 and 2006. A final report will be completed in late 2007.

Revised date: September 2007

ENVIRONMENTAL STUDIES PROGRAM: ANNUAL STUDIES PLAN FY 2008

Region: Alaska

Planning Area: Beaufort Sea

Title: Feasibility and Study Design for Boundary Oceanography of the Beaufort Sea

MMS Information Needs to be Addressed: This study is needed by MMS to better understand the oceanography of Beaufort Sea and to insure that first-order oceanic physics are understood and appropriately represented in MMS circulation models and oil spill risk analyses. This information will be used to evaluate oil spill contingency plans for Liberty, if approved, and other developments. It would also be used in NEPA analysis and documentation for proposed Beaufort Sea Lease Sales, EPs, and DPPs.

Total Cost: \$179,000

Period of Performance: FY 2006-2008

Conducting Organization: University of Alaska Fairbanks

Description:

Background MMS sponsored two international workshops designed to provide MMS with recommendations regarding future Arctic oceanographic research needs. The 2003 MMS/UAF CMI workshop on small sea-ice and ocean modeling in the Beaufort and Chukchi seas reflects discussions of international sea ice modelers and observers who developed strategies to advance the state-of-art in Arctic ice modeling. Following recommendations from this workshop, MMS and NASA signed an IA in 2003 to research sea-ice modeling in nearshore Beaufort and Chukchi Seas.

Also in 2003 MMS held a workshop on physical oceanography of the Beaufort Sea. The proceedings of that workshop reflect discussions of international experts in Arctic oceanography on state-of-knowledge of Beaufort Sea physical oceanography and recommend long-range goals for oceanographic research to meet MMS needs. Several of the recommendations articulate the need to better understand the coastal boundary (buoyancy-forced coastal circulation), lateral ocean boundaries, and the offshore boundary. Two MMS 2003 studies, on Beaufort Sea nearshore currents, an ADCP along coast mooring study, and on mapping and characterization of recurring spring leads and landfast ice in the Beaufort Sea, addressed a portion of these recommendations. However, other recommendations require more resources than MMS can provide alone. Thus, they are best suited for interagency, international partnerships.

Objectives Provide MMS with design and costs for research to meet the recommendations of the Beaufort Sea Workshop. These recommendations cover:

1. Lateral Ocean Boundaries: Develop better understanding of western and eastern boundary influences.

2. Offshore Boundary:
 - a. Conduct shipboard and moored measurements of currents, sea-ice drift, and hydrography across Beaufort Sea shelf.
 - b. Establish fate of Barrow Canyon outflow.
 - c. Establish the degree of infiltration of Mackenzie River plume into eastern Alaskan Beaufort Sea.
3. Buoyancy-forced Coastal Circulation:
 - a. Gain better understanding of the processes which enhance or inhibit transport across the landfast/pack ice margin.
 - b. Gain better understanding of the behavior of the snowmelt freshwater plumes beneath landfast ice in spring.
 - c. Make better estimates of the freshwater discharge cycle for North Slope rivers.
 - d. Make observations of open water period 3-D circulation and thermohaline field associated with river discharge.
 - e. Develop geochemical discrimination techniques and apply to keying of low salinity to their freshwater sources.

Methods

1. Prioritize specific research objectives based on criteria including potential mutual interest (i.e. co-funding opportunities) and maximization of scientific gain.
2. Provide as a final report a study design and cost estimate for research on the boundary oceanography of the Beaufort Sea that would address the stated objectives. MMS would consider implementation of some, or all components, in future fiscal years.
3. This project will consider results of the FY 2005 workshop on hydrological modeling for freshwater discharge from the Alaska arctic coast, and it will coordinate with other ongoing environmental studies, as appropriate.

Date Information Required: A final report will be due September 2008.

Revised date: September 2007

ENVIRONMENTAL STUDIES PROGRAM: ANNUAL STUDIES PLAN FY 2008

Region: Alaska
Planning Area: Beaufort Sea
Title: Beaufort Sea Mesoscale Meteorology

MMS Information Needs to be Addressed: The final modeled data will improve the predictive capabilities of the MMS oil spill trajectory model and the Foundation for Scientific and Industrial Resources of the Norwegian Institute of Technology [Norwegian acronym] (SINTEF) weathering model for the Beaufort Sea. Information will be used in NEPA analysis and documentation for Beaufort Sea Lease Sales, Exploration Plans (EPs), and Development and Production Plan (DPPs).

Total Cost: Phase I: \$350,000
Phase II: tbd

Period of Performance: FY 2006-2008

Description:

Background The 2003 MMS workshop on physical oceanography of the Beaufort Sea brought together international experts in Arctic oceanography to review the state-of-knowledge of Beaufort Sea processes and recommend long range goals for research to meet MMS needs. One recommendation was for improvements in understanding the mesoscale meteorology. Critical issues requiring study are the wind and surface stress fields established by mesoscale variations in regional meteorology and sea ice distribution and deformation fields. Accurate specification of the surface wind and stress field is essential to predicting ocean and ice circulation. The Beaufort Sea shelf is likely subject to substantial along and cross shore gradients in the surface wind velocity with these gradients possibly involving changes in both wind speed and direction. At present, wind gradients are not captured adequately by winds derived from synoptic pressure fields (typically prepared by weather forecasting and climate centers) and/or extrapolated from coastal meteorological stations, both of which are often used in estimating the shelf wind field. Oil spill models that rely on winds measured from coastal stations or from synoptic pressure fields could be seriously biased.

Objectives Evaluate existing mesoscale meteorology models that can predict along shore and cross-shelf wind speed and direction for the Beaufort Sea, Alaska.. Determine the appropriate technical enhancements, funding levels and partnerships needed to build an enhanced mesoscale meteorological model for the Beaufort Sea that will optimize the prediction of spatial variability of winds, accounting for sea breeze and orographic effects.

Methods

Phase I:

1. Identify Potential Interagency Agreements or Partnerships with other Public, Private, or International Groups that are interested in Cost or Logistics sharing during Phase I
2. Produce a Procite bibliographic database and report summary of potential mesoscale

- meteorological models and data collection efforts for the project study area
3. Conduct Comparative Data Analysis and Model Evaluation
 4. Based upon the comparative data analysis, and other analytical tools at the contractors discretion, describe how well the mesoscale meteorological model represents the observational data with regards to Orographics steering effects, seabreeze affects, and along shore and cross shelf wind spatial coherence.
 5. Produce a Phase II plan to develop a Mesoscale Meteorological Model for the Beaufort Sea that will meet MMS objectives

Phase II:

1. Collect additional data as required for model implementation based upon the analysis of Phase I data, model priorities, and cost:
 - a. Improved sea ice measurements.
 - b. Measurement of surface winds from portable, temporary meteorological stations, buoys, on the landfast ice, pack ice and other proposed meteorological stations on offshore islands or offshore oil platforms of opportunity.
 - c. Spatially varying surface variables such as soil moisture, canopy temperature and water content, terrain height, land roughness, land percentage etc.
 - d. Other data.
2. Incorporate newly collected field data and develop preliminary model results that can predict the spatial and temporal variability of the along and cross shore surface wind and stress fields for the Beaufort Sea.
3. Produce an improved mesoscale meteorological model that meets MMS objectives

Date information is required: Information will be used in NEPA analysis and documentation for Beaufort Sea Lease Sales, EPs, and DPPs. A Phase I report will be due in April 2008. Preliminary model results will be due in July 2009 and a final in July 2010.

Revised date: September 2007

ENVIRONMENTAL STUDIES PROGRAM: ANNUAL STUDIES PLAN FY 2007

Region: Alaska
Planning Area: Beaufort Sea
Title: Mapping Sea Ice Overflow Using Remote Sensing from Smith Bay to Camden Bay

MMS Information Needs to be Addressed: This information is important to identify and characterize potential hazards, such as from strudel scour along the Beaufort Sea coast. In addition this information could be used to assist in the development of ice models and their performance during breakup in the landfast ice zone. The results will be used in NEPA analysis and documentation for Beaufort Sea Lease Sales, EPs, and DPPs.

Total Cost: \$475,000? check?

Period of Performance: FY 2006-2009

Description:

Background MMS has limited spatial and temporal information on rivers overflowing the nearshore sea ice in spring. The most recent work in 1999 focuses on overflow of the Sagavanirktok River in the vicinity of the proposed Liberty prospect. There are also 3 years of overflow data for the Kuparuk River in the vicinity of Northstar. Landsat imagery from projects in 1988 and 1993 has been collected and archived at the University of Alaska Geophysical Institute for the Beaufort Sea. With the advent of development in the Beaufort Sea this type of information is needed to address issues regarding pipeline routing and facility siting. Analysis of overflow and its implications for exploration and development requires information on both the temporal and spatial distribution of ice overflow from the breakup of North Slope rivers in the spring. This study would provide baseline data and improve the accuracy of information for environmental assessment and hazard mitigation. These observations would also be of value to the offshore industry for planning operations on the OCS.

Objectives

1. Produce a time series depicting the spatial distribution of river water overflowing the landfast ice adjacent to the Beaufort Sea coast from Smith Bay to Camden Bay.
2. Quantify the relationship between stream flow and ice damming for the Sagavanirktok and Kuparuk rivers, and the aerial extent of overflowing on the landfast ice adjacent to those rivers.

Methods

1. Collect and synthesize existing Landsat/Radarsat/MODIS and other available remote sensing imagery.
2. Quantify the spatial and temporal distribution of river overflow of the moderate size rivers on the North Slope of Alaska from Smith Bay to Camden Bay. Focus on mapping the maximum overflow extent.
3. Compile Beaufort Sea stream gauge data.
4. Fly an aerial survey along the Colville River delta for one season to ground truth remote sensing data and quantify uncertainties of estimating the overflow from remotely sensed data.
5. Collect hydrographic data for the Sagavanirktok and Kuparuk rivers and quantify any relationship between river runoff and aerial extent of overflow.
6. Compile available spatial data on the location of strudel scours from existing surveys along the Beaufort Sea coast
7. Compile all of the overflow limits and available strudel scour data into a Geographic Information System (GIS) database
8. Provide a report that summarizes the spatial distribution of river overflow by year along the Beaufort Sea Coast. Provide individual years as well as minimum and maximum historical overflow extents from 1996-2007.
9. Compare overflow extent to the location of strudel scours and other environmental variables

Date information is required: In addition this information could be used to assist in the development of ice models and their performance during breakup in the landfast ice zone. The results will be used in NEPA analysis and documentation for Beaufort Sea Lease Sales, EPs, and DPPs. Draft information will be due December 2007. Draft and final reports with maps and GIS database will be due July and September 2008, respectively.

Revised Date: September 2007

ENVIRONMENTAL STUDIES PROGRAM: ANNUAL STUDIES PLAN FY 2008

Region: Alaska

Planning Areas: Beaufort Sea

Title: Exchange between Elson Lagoon and the Nearshore Beaufort Sea and Its Role in the Aggregation of Zooplankton

MMS Information Needs to be Addressed: This study will provide additional information on the importance of the study area to feeding bowhead whales, and a better understanding of the relationship between physical oceanography and ecology of the whales. The study also addresses a Conservation Recommendation in NMFS' 2001 Arctic Region Biological Opinion that MMS study "the use of the Beaufort Sea by feeding bowheads..." Information from this study will be used for permit approvals for all Beaufort Sea Lease Sales, NEPA analysis and DPPs, and will be made available to the MMS larger long-term feeding study.

Total Cost: \$17,000

Period of Performance: FY 2006-2008

Conducting Organization: UAF, Institute of Marine Science

Description:

Background Scores of bowheads were observed feeding in a localized area within the shore region a few kilometers outside the barrier islands of Elson Lagoon in September 2005, during an NSF-funded study "Environmental Variability, Bowhead Whale Distributions, and Inupiat Subsistence Whaling." Net tows within Elson Lagoon collected large numbers of euphausiids, whereas net tows outside the lagoon and away from feeding whales collected few. The observations of whales feeding near the barrier islands and large numbers of euphausiids within the lagoon suggest that circulation/exchange between lagoon and nearshore act to aggregate zooplankton for efficient grazing by bowheads.

Objectives The objectives are:

1. Estimate the transports through passages between barrier islands of Elson Lagoon
2. Relate these transport estimates to local wind forcing, and
3. Integrate the wind forcing and transport observations with NSF-funded field observations of euphausiid and other zooplankton distributions to describe how this physical forcing aggregates the plankton.

Methods Deploy two current meters instrumented also with conductivity/temperature sensors in passages between Elson Lagoon barrier islands. The meters will be deployed for one month, with recovery in mid-September 2006. The data will be downloaded and the meters redeployed as part of the MMS Beaufort Sea Nearshore Currents study.

Date information is required: An Annual report is due in 2007. A Final Report is due 2008.

Revised Date: September 2007

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ENVIRONMENTAL STUDIES PROGRAM: ANNUAL STUDIES PLAN 2008

Region: Alaska

Planning Areas: Beaufort Sea, Chukchi Sea, Hope Basin

Title: Sea Ice Modeling for Nearshore Beaufort and Chukchi Seas

MMS Information Needs to be Addressed: The importance to the MMS is to increase the accuracy of estimates of oil spill movement in ice in the Beaufort and Chukchi Seas. Current models are suspect inshore and to a 100-km to few-km resolution. This study will help resolve modeling issues for the Alaska OCS Region, increase confidence in the models used by the OCS Program, and help in review of oil-spill-contingency plans. The information will also be used for NEPA analysis and documentation for Beaufort Lease Sales and DPPs.

Total Cost: \$100,000

Period of Performance: FY 2003-2008

Conducting Organization: NASA

Description:

Background The MMS used the results of the FY 2002 sea ice modeling workshop to focus on what MMS needs from this next-generation effort addressing the specific problem of modeling fine scale ice/ocean and ice/ice interactions.

Most basin-scale dynamic-thermodynamic models in general use relatively simple thermodynamics and ice thickness distribution approximating the ice as slabs of a one to few meters mean thickness plus open water. While sufficient as a first approximation of the arctic ice pack, such treatment lacks the ability to sufficiently resolve the spectrum of ice thickness from thin new ice to thick ridged ice to fast ice that have been observed. The ice models in current state-of-the-art coupled ice/ocean models, including those current Rutgers and CMI models contracted by MMS, are based on empirical ice physics valid at a 100-km scale and extrapolated to smaller grid dimensions. Even at the larger scale, new satellite remote sensing data demonstrates that the first order physics of lead formation is not correctly depicted in existing ice models.

Development of this next-generation ice model is being jointly funded through an IA with NASA. Some aspects of the model are being developed under separate, additional funding by the National Science Foundation and Office of Naval Research. For MMS purposes, this new generation ice model would need to improve modeling of spatial resolution, fracture patterns and ice formation, better track observed ice interactions, and lead toward better modeling of nearshore interactions.

Objectives The objective of this study is to improve the state of the art in ocean-ice or ice modeling and to produce either a stand alone ice/ocean model or an improved ice model that can be coupled to and or nested in the current MMS ice/ocean model. The existing or new model would be applied to the nearshore Beaufort and Chukchi Seas.

Methods

1. Participate in interagency working group to co-fund new generation ice model.
2. Develop new ice model based on smaller scale parameterization.
3. Produce stand-alone ice/ocean model or couple the ice model to the current MMS ocean model.
4. Run coupled model simulations.
5. Conduct sensitivity testing and validation of the model results.

Date Information Required: Annual reports are due 2005 and 2006. The final model and results are due in September 2007.

Revised date: September 2007

ENVIRONMENTAL STUDIES PROGRAM: ANNUAL STUDIES PLAN 2008

Region: Alaska

Planning Area: Cook Inlet

Title: Water and Ice Dynamics of Cook Inlet

MMS Information Needs to be Addressed: This project will enable MMS to improve its oil-spill risk modeling applied to Alaskan waters. This in turn will enhance the credibility of MMS Cook Inlet EISs and related NEPA analysis and documentation. Public acceptance of OSRA results and analyses will be enhanced if accompanied by supporting drifter data for Alaskan waters.

Total Cost: \$940,000

Period of Performance: FY 2002-2008

Conducting Organization: CMI, UAF

Description:

Background The Cook Inlet tidal regime is among the most complex in the United States because of the large tidal range, extensive mud flats, strong currents, severe weather, and seasonal ice cover. Most physical oceanographic data supporting the model is derived from a comprehensive NOAA circulation survey of Cook Inlet carried out from 1973-1975. A few modest Lagrangian surface current studies have been performed in the Cook Inlet/Shelikof Strait. One study involved releasing drifters in and near Kachemak Bay as documented in 1977; another, released drifters from lower Cook Inlet, was documented in 1981; and another involved releasing drifters in the lower Shelikof Strait. The latter study released a small number of oil-spill-simulating drifters for the purpose of testing how well these drifters would follow an actual oil spill, in this case the *Exxon Valdez* spill.

The MMS has used a variety of ocean models to estimate water and oil movement in Cook Inlet. Most recently, MMS has used an in-house version of the Princeton Ocean Model. In 1999 MMS co-sponsored a Cook Inlet oceanography workshop which recommended that Cook Inlet models be improved and validated in parallel with acquisition of improved observational data.

Objectives The objective of this work is to successfully simulate the sea ice and water dynamics in Cook Inlet and validate the simulations with observational data.

Methods A combination of 2-d models and a 3-d model, the Regional Ocean Model System (ROMS) because it has been configured to Cook Inlet, will be used and compared to observational data. An improved Cook Inlet bathymetry needed for the modeling has been obtained from commercial and government sources. Scatterometer satellite observations will provide winds to the models. Drifters are a primary data source. These include oil-following drifters provided by MMS and water following drifters with combined Global Positioning System (GPS) and Advanced Research and Global Observation Satellite (ARGOS) capabilities. Synthetic Aperture Radar (SAR) imagery is being obtained concurrent with drifter and other

field measurements to obtain broad scale information on tide rips.

Date Information Required: A final report is due December 2007.

Revised date: September 2007

ENVIRONMENTAL STUDIES PROGRAM: ANNUAL STUDIES PLAN FY 2008

Region: Alaska

Planning Areas: Cook Inlet

Title: Physical Measurements and Seasonal Boundary Conditions for Cook Inlet, Alaska

MMS Information Needs to be Addressed: Information will be used for NEPA analyses and documentation for Cook Inlet Lease Sales and to enhance further circulation and trajectory models.

Total Cost: \$264,000

Period of Performance: FY 2003-2008

Conducting Organization: CMI, UAF

Description:

Background

Improved understanding of density-driven and other circulation in Cook Inlet is needed for development of more sophisticated oil spill models. Present oil spill models for Cook Inlet are two dimensional and lack sufficient data in Cook Inlet to develop more useful three dimensional models. That is, they model only surface distribution of an oil spill. Developers of local numerical circulation/spill trajectory models and planners of Geographical Response Strategies need physical measurements by which their respective models and operational plans can be validated and improved.

Objectives

1. Measure Cook Inlet temperature, salinity, and hydrography from which the density-driven, geostrophic and other circulation within the inlet can be derived.
2. Deploy drift cards whose deployment locations will be used as input to the CIRCAC numerical spill trajectory model for simulations of point source spills and whose recovery locations will then be compared to the grounding locations of the simulated spills.
3. Involve local high school science classes in the reparation, field work/data acquisition and data analyses for temperature and salinity measurements.
4. Measure seasonal changes in volume and property fluxes at the inflow and outflow boundaries in Cook Inlet.
5. Continuously monitor freshwater signals in central and lower Cook Inlet by deploying moored conductivity-temperature-depth (CTD) sensors near the Forelands (in central Cook Inlet) and near Nanwalek in lower Cook Inlet.

Methods

1. Schedule spring and late summer sampling periods to correspond to period of increasing and diminishing fresh water runoff into Cook Inlet.

2. CTD casts at 1-2 nautical mile spacing along ~20-40 km offshore transects near participating high schools.
3. Take additional CTD cast along the transect on each side of visible fronts.
4. Plot cross sections and surface maps of the temperature, salinity, density, and geostrophic velocity (dynamic topography) fields after the spring, summer and fall hydrographic surveys.
5. Acquire seasonal hydrographic and velocity measurements along transect lines crossing Kennedy Entrance, Stevenson Entrance, Shelikof Strait, Cook Inlet (Red River to Anchor Point), Kachemak Bay (Barbara Point to Bluff Point) and at the Forelands.
6. Analyze data and report properties.

Date Information Required: Draft final report is due September 2007; final printed report is due December 2008.

Revised date: September 2007

ENVIRONMENTAL STUDIES PROGRAM: ANNUAL STUDIES PLAN FY 2008

Region: Alaska

Planning Areas: Beaufort Sea

Title: Idealized Process Model Studies of Circulation in the Landfast Ice Zone of the Alaskan Beaufort Sea

Total Cost: \$77,171

Period of Performance: FY 2006-2009

Conducting Organization: CMI, UAF

MMS Information Needs to be Addressed: This study responds to a weakness in our understanding of first order physics of circulation along the landfast ice edge that was identified in the MMS Beaufort Sea Physical Oceanography Workshop and in prior MMS under-ice nearshore current measurements. The information gained will improve our circulation and oil spill trajectory models used in pre-lease Beaufort Sea environmental assessments and post-lease evaluation of oil spill contingency plans.

Description:

Background Winds and river runoff influence the dynamics and circulation pathways over the innermost portion (water depths $\sim < 20$ m) of most continental shelves. While this is true for Arctic shelves as well, the effects of wind stress and buoyancy are substantially modulated by the annual freeze/thaw cycle, which controls the phasing and duration of the landfast ice season and river discharge. Because much of our understanding of shelf dynamics derives from studies on ice-free shelves, it is not clear how well these lessons apply to Arctic shelves, particularly regions influenced by landfast ice.

Landfast ice, which is anchored at the coast along the 2 m isobath and extends offshore to the 20-40 m isobath, covers the innermost Alaskan Beaufort shelf from October to June, or 25% of the total shelf area. In the absence of landfast ice, currents are swift (20-100 cm/s) and both currents and sea level are coherent with one another and with the local winds during the open water season. When landfast ice is present, recent MMS studies have show that the under-ice currents are weak (< 5 cm/sec), variable, and uncorrelated with winds and sea level. Thus landfast ice (but not moving pack ice) inhibits momentum transfer from wind to water. This presumably results in an abrupt transition in surface stress at the transition between landfast and pack ice. Although there are no observations of this transition region, the physics should force an along-shore ice edge jet an a cross-shelf circulation cell. The direction of the ice edge jet, east or west along the Beaufort coast would depend on the water depth at the landfast ice edge.

Objectives The overall goal of this study is to better understand the physical processes controlling circulation in the landfast ice zone of arctic shelves when forced by winds and buoyancy and subjected to various parameterizations of ice-water stress.

Methods This is a modeling study. Using the Regional Ocean Model System, the under-ice circulation responses to the following forcing will be determined:

1. Along- and cross-shelf wind stress patterns offshore of the landfast ice zone,
2. Along-shore flows imposed at the eastern or western edges of the modeling domain,
3. River inflow introduced at the coastal boundary without ambient stratification, and
4. River inflow introduced at the coastal boundary with ambient stratification.

The responses to the forcings above will be examined subject to the following landfast ice-water stress scenarios:

1. No stress
2. Spatially constant stress
3. Stress that increases linearly in the offshore direction out to the landfast ice edge, and
4. Spatially random stress.

Date Information Required: A final report is due September 2009.

Revised date: September 2007

ENVIRONMENTAL STUDIES PROGRAM: ANNUAL STUDIES PLAN 2008

Region: Alaska

Planning Areas: Beaufort Sea, Chukchi Sea, Hope Basin, Cook Inlet

Title: Empirical Weathering Properties of Oil in Snow and Ice

MMS Information Needs to be Addressed: The Alaska Region of the MMS leases in areas which are ice covered. Better estimates of the weathering of oil in snow and ice are important to further impact assessment and oil spill contingency and response planning. Study results will be used for NEPA analysis and documentation for Beaufort Sea Lease Sales, Cook Inlet Lease Sales, Chukchi Sea/Hope Basin Sales, DPPs, and associated Oil Discharge Prevention and Contingency Plans.

Total Cost: \$632,000

Period of Performance: FY 2004-2008

Conducting Organization: MAR, Inc.

Description:

Background Oil spill weathering models are used in National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) analysis as well as Oil Discharge Prevention and Contingency Plans (ODPCPs). The results of these models are used to estimate impacts in NEPA analysis as well as pre-planning for oil spill response. A modest amount of work in the field was done in the 1970's and 1980's on first order physics for oil weathering in ice. Additional studies have continued in the laboratory in the late 1980's and 1990's, but were generally limited to low viscosity, low pour-point oils. We now know that oil weathering is strongly dependent on the specific chemical composition and characteristics of individual crudes. The physical and chemical data required by modern state-of-the-art models (such as the SINTEF oil weathering model used by MMS in Alaska) are scarce, of poor quality, or nonexistent for oil-ice interaction. Such models, therefore, ignore the more difficult aspects of oil-in-ice weathering. Sophisticated measurement techniques currently available would enable precise measurements regarding oil evaporation, spreading, and dispersion in ice (as well as on ice) as a function of oil type and chemistry.

Objectives

1. For low and high pour-point oils, measure emulsification, evaporation, dispersion, spreading, slick thickness, and oil composition in an ice field and snow on top of sea ice.
2. Develop a database on oil weathering in ice fields for use in model validation.
3. Use these data, in concert with other oil-ice weathering data, to validate and enhance or develop new algorithms of oil weathering in ice.

Methods Collect and analyze data on weathering of oil in ice and snow on top of sea ice, including but not limited to evaporation, emulsion, dispersion, spreading and slick thickness. Dependant tasks include developing a dataset from the experimental data for use to validate weathering algorithms and oil weathering models in the presence of ice. Create a database or experimental data set of oil weathering parameters in ice fields and snow. Some of this work

should be done with both high and low pour point oils. Liberty crude would be an example of a high-pour crude with pour point above environmental temperatures. Validate or enhance oil in ice weathering algorithms. Include recommendations for new algorithms in the oil weathering model that are validated by the field results.

Date Information Required: A final report is due June 2008.

Revised date: September 2007

ENVIRONMENTAL STUDIES PROGRAM: ANNUAL STUDIES PLAN 2008

Region: Alaska

Planning Areas: Beaufort Sea, Chukchi Sea, Hope Basin

Title: Sea Ice-Ocean-Oil Spill Modeling System (SIOMS) for the Nearshore Beaufort and Chukchi Seas: Improvement and Parameterization (Phase II)

MMS Information Needs to be Addressed: The Circulation and Oil-Spill-Trajectory Model is a cornerstone to regional EISs, environmental assessments, and oil-spill-contingency planning. Model results are used by MMS, industry, and other agencies to evaluate the risks and advantages of specific alternatives, and they are used to fine-tune protective lease-sale stipulations. The MMS is currently using an Arctic basin model with 20-km grid spacing to project oil spill trajectories within 10-km of land for ongoing developmental EISs. This study will provide a better model resolution. It is critical to continue efforts to improve the art and reliability of circulation and trajectory models used in nearshore portion of the central Beaufort Sea. Information from this study will be used in preparing NEPA analysis and documentation for Beaufort Sea Lease Sales, DPPs, and oil-spill-contingency plans for OCS and coastal facilities.

Total Cost: \$579,000

Period of Performance: FY 2004-2008

Conducting Organization: CMI, UAF

Description:

Background The study addresses MMS's needs in terms of modeling at smaller scales in the Beaufort nearshore. The study will implement recommendations from MMS CMI workshop on small-scale SIOM for the nearshore Beaufort and Chukchi Seas held at UAF in August 2002. Recent satellite imagery demonstrates the importance of eddies in the coastal Beaufort Sea and thus the need for smaller scale, eddy-resolving modeling such as proposed here. This study will cooperate with the state-of-the-art ice modeling MMS IA with NASA. The study continues development of a CMI model of the Arctic Basin, focusing on the nearshore Beaufort Sea. MMS adoption of circulation model products for use our leasing program's NEPA documents requires a high degree comfort for MMS modelers doing the adoption or by Regional analysts tasked with coordinating use the resulting Oil Spill Risk Analysis in EISs and then responding to public comments on that analysis. Other models available to MMS do not resolve the coastal barrier islands in the Beaufort Sea, where oil development is occurring.

Objectives The objective of this study is to implement a finer resolution (1-3 km) stretched grid coupled ice-ocean-oil model in the nearshore Beaufort and Chukchi Seas. The entire model is extended to an existing Arctic and North Atlantic Ocean model and includes an open Bering Strait.

Methods

1. Set minimum model depth to 5 meters, and extend the stretched domain through the 500-m isobath.
2. Parameterize sea ice thickness to represent thin ice, new ice, level ice, rafted ice, rubble ice, and ridged ice.
3. Parameterize the landfast ice, which can be ridged and anchored, based on existing theory and observations.
4. Couple the oilspill model developed during the prior CMI study with this SIOMS.
5. Annual review of modeling effort by MMS Modeling Review Board

Date Information Required: Annual reports are due in FY 2005 and 2006. A final report is due November 2007.

Revised date: September 2007

ENVIRONMENTAL STUDIES PROGRAM: ANNUAL STUDIES PLAN FY 2008

Region: Alaska

Planning Areas: Beaufort and Chukchi Seas

Title: Updates to the Fault Tree Approach to Oil Spill Occurrence Estimators for the Chukchi and Beaufort Sea Planning Areas

MMS Information Needs to be Addressed: The Oil-Spill-Risk Analysis (OSRA) is a cornerstone to regional EISs, environmental assessments, and oil-spill-contingency planning. Oil-spill issues constitute a significant portion of public comments submitted on sale or development EISs in the Alaska OCS Region. This study is necessary to incorporate fault-tree spill occurrence estimators into NEPA analyses for Beaufort Sea and Chukchi Sea oil and gas lease sales or development during the forthcoming MMS 2007-2012, 5-Year Plan.

Total Cost: \$223,000

Period of Performance: FY 2005-2010

Conducting Organization: Bercha Group

Description:

Background The OCS spill occurrence rates used in MMS NEPA analyses are based on historical platform and pipeline crude oil spill rates, almost entirely from the Gulf of Mexico OCS. For the Alaska OCS Region Arctic planning areas, the MMS has recently incorporated a fault-tree approach which incorporates (1) differences in oil spill occurrence factors between the Arctic and Gulf of Mexico OCS and (2) Arctic-specific factors. The first MMS-sponsored fault-tree study was finished in 2002. The second, ongoing, fault-tree study *Alternative Oil Spill Estimators for the Beaufort and Chukchi Seas* primarily implements the MMS Scientific Committee recommendations to improve the fault tree application and statistics for Beaufort Sea spill occurrence rates. This second study is scheduled for completion in late 2005.

Objectives To provide:

1. An updated fault tree spill occurrence rates and confidence intervals for NEPA analyses for Chukchi and Beaufort OCS Lease Sales or for oil and gas developments during the contract period of performance.
2. A PC program to provide MMS analysts the ability to calculate spill occurrence rates and confidence intervals subsequent to contract period of performance.

Methods

1. Review and assimilate oil spill occurrence data and geohazard data from alternative sources and locations as needed.
2. Use updated Gulf of Mexico OCS historical data together with its measures of spill size and frequency variance and setup the Monte Carlo fault tree model to run with these measures of variance.

3. Update the Chukchi Sea fault-tree analysis used in the MMS-sponsored study finished in 2002 incorporating the MMS Scientific Committee recommendations and a new MMS exploration and development scenario. Generate life-of-field occurrence indicators.
4. Update the Beaufort Sea fault-tree analysis from the ongoing *Alternative Oil Spill Estimators for the Beaufort and Chukchi Seas* study to match a new MMS exploration and development scenario. Generate life-of-field occurrence indicators.
5. During the period of performance, provide up to two additional Chukchi Sea and up to two additional Beaufort Sea updated fault-tree analyses based on updated MMS exploration and development scenarios.
6. During the period of performance, provide up to two additional fault-tree analyses for Beaufort and/or Chukchi Seas for site-specific oil and gas development taking into account site-specific geohazards. Generate life-of-field occurrence indicators.
7. Develop a PC program, manual, and training necessary to provide MMS analysts the ability to calculate spill occurrence rates and confidence intervals from updated exploration and development scenarios for Chukchi and Beaufort Seas oil and gas lease sales subsequent to contract period of performance.
8. Provide professional support to MMS in regard to statistical issues of occurrence rates and estimator(s) related to this study and its results.

Date Information Required: Information from this study has been generated for the NEPA analysis for the first Chukchi Oil and Gas Lease Sale in the 2007-2012 5-Year Plan. Additional fault trees will be generated for subsequent Arctic sales in the 5-Year Plan.

Revised Date: September 2007

ENVIRONMENTAL STUDIES PROGRAM: ANNUAL STUDIES PLAN FY 2008

Region: Alaska

Planning Areas: Beaufort Sea

Title: Assessment of the Direction and Rate of Alongshore Transport of Sand and Gravel in the Prudhoe Bay Region, North Arctic Alaska

MMS Information Needs to be Addressed: Information will be used for NEPA analysis and documentation for Beaufort Sea Lease Sales, oil-spill-contingency plans, and DPPs.

Total Cost: \$268,000

Period of Performance: FY 2005-2008

Conducting Organization: CMI, UAF

Description:

Background In support of oil-related activities several coastal and offshore infrastructures have been built (e.g., docks, causeways, offshore production and exploration islands, submerged marine pipelines, extended-offshore-reach drilling pads on the shoreline). The possible cause-effect between the infrastructures and the natural nearshore hydrodynamic processes (wave, current, sea ice regimes, storm surges), coastal geomorphology, barrier island stability, shoreline erosion, and littoral sediment drift are not fully known, but are important to safe development.

Objectives

1. Comprehensive gray literature survey of past and ongoing investigations along the North Slope coast
2. Field determination of seasonal direction and volume of sand and gravel beach transport for Narwhal Island, a barrier island offshore of the Liberty prospect and Endicott causeway
3. Examine the impact of episodic storms on sediment drift

Methods

1. Literature review through internet and oil industry libraries
2. Beach transport will be determined by use of fluorescent dyed sand and tagged gravel using tiny Passive Integrated Transponder tags which transmit at 132.2 kHz.
3. Adapt existing Beaufort Sea storm surge model to further examine the impact of episodic storms on sediment drift.

Date Information Required: The final report is due September 2008.

Revised date: September 2007

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ENVIRONMENTAL STUDIES PROGRAM: ANNUAL STUDIES PLAN FY 2008

Region: Alaska

Planning Area: Beaufort Sea

Title: Synthesis of Time-Interval Changes in Trace Metals and Hydrocarbons in Nearshore Sediments of the Alaskan Beaufort Sea: A Statistical Analysis

MMS Information Needs to be Addressed: This study will consolidate and conduct statistical analyses of trace metal and hydrocarbon data in sediments along the Alaskan Beaufort Sea for monitoring potential effects of offshore oil and gas activities. Findings will increase knowledge of the mechanisms of environmental change. Study results will be used for NEPA analysis and documentation for the proposed Beaufort Sea Lease Sales and for DPPs.

Total Cost: \$82,184

Period of Performance: FY 2008

Conducting Organization: CMI, UAF

Description:

Background For comparison to OCS development areas, it is important to establish measurements of trace metals and hydrocarbons in sediments of the Alaskan Beaufort Sea. The marine sediments of the North Slope may be a sink for both organic and inorganic anthropogenic compounds. Sediments may serve as transfer pathways to higher trophic levels. Environmental accumulation is of particular concern in the Arctic where marine organisms, being lipid rich, with relatively simple and short food chains and low biodiversity, may be especially vulnerable to bioaccumulations.

Objectives The primary objective of this study is to consolidate and statistically characterize the concentrations of 12 metals (V, Cr, Cu, Ni, Zn, As, Cd, Pb, Sn, Ba, Fe and Mn) in the mud fractions (<63 micrometre [μm] size) and HG and hydrocarbons in gross sediments sampled in the past several decades across the Beaufort Sea.. This statistical analysis will help to develop criteria for detecting metal and hydrocarbon accumulation resulting from marine and other human activities in the Beaufort Lagoon region as well as elsewhere in the Alaskan Beaufort Sea.

Methods

1. Consolidate data on a suite of trace metals and hydrocarbons that have been gathered by the authors on CMI/MMS and Outer Continental Shelf Environmental Assessment Program funded projects.
2. Conduct a statistical analysis on the data to characterize the distribution, sources (natural and anthropogenic), and regional differences.
3. Detect site-specific time-interval differences and extent of contamination during the past 30 years.

Date Information Required: A final report is due August 2007.

Revised date: September 2007

ENVIRONMENTAL STUDIES PROGRAM: ANNUAL STUDIES PLAN 2008

Region: Alaska

Planning Areas: Beaufort Sea

Title: Analysis of Variation in Abundance of Arctic Cisco in the Colville River

MMS Information Needs to be Addressed: Information will be used for NEPA analysis and documentation for Beaufort Sea Lease Sales, oil-spill-contingency plans, facilitation of outreach with North Slope communities, and DPPs.

Total Cost: \$345,000

Period of Performance: FY 2003-2008

Conducting Organization: ABR, Inc.

Description:

Background Native Alaskans are concerned that arctic cisco in the Colville River have been less abundant during the last few years than in the years preceding. Considerable research has been conducted on the natural history of the species, with particular emphasis being placed on the potential effect of causeways, constructed during oil development, on migration. The current understanding of the arctic cisco life cycle is that all spawning for the species takes place in the Mackenzie River drainages. The young-of-the-year leaves the river during the spring and become entrained in wind-driven currents along the Beaufort coast. If east winds are sufficient and sustained, young fish migrate all the way to the Colville River, where they will spend several years maturing before returning to the Mackenzie River. If winds are not sufficient, they go elsewhere. Thus, migrations of arctic cisco are particularly vulnerable to large-scale changes in oceanic circulation, such as recent suspected changes in the Beaufort gyre, which may lead to modification of the strength and direction of nearshore winds. Nuiqsut villagers are also concerned that drilling muds, spilled underground during the construction of the Alpine pipeline, could be entering the river and have effects on the abundance of arctic cisco. Other factors that could affect arctic cisco populations include, but are not limited to, factors affecting recruitment at the Mackenzie River, changes in the channels of the Colville river and hence the distribution of fish available for subsistence use, fishing practices and harvest, and possibly, the cumulative effects of onshore and offshore oil-related development. A study is needed to further establish the observed trends in arctic cisco abundance and evaluate the factors influencing population variation.

Objectives

1. Access information from subsistence users, fisheries biologists and governmental organizations to develop hypotheses on the variable, or possible declining, arctic cisco abundance in the Colville River and its tributaries.
2. Quantify inter-annual variation in the abundance of arctic cisco in the Colville River and its tributaries.
3. Use a statistical approach to estimate which environmental factors contribute to observed

variation in arctic cisco abundance in the Colville River.

Methods

Phase I:

Sponsor a meeting of individuals with traditional and scientific knowledge about arctic cisco abundance and fishing success, stock exploitation, long-term climate related changes, and arctic cisco genetics to identify factors that might contribute to observed variation in arctic cisco abundance and to recommend a study design for further scientific inquiry.

Phase II:

1. Quantify the abundance of fish of various cohorts in the Colville and its tributaries using sampling techniques such as fyke nets.
2. Use existing data, and data from concurrent MMS- and MMS/CMI-funded studies to analyze the effects of changes in oceanic circulation on nearshore wind and related fish migrations between Mackenzie River and Colville River.
3. Review existing data from the Mackenzie River to see if gross changes in arctic cisco stocks have occurred.

During Phase I, the Alaska Region will attempt to seek joint funding from potential co-sponsors, such as the State of Alaska or other Federal agencies with fisheries management responsibilities.

Date Information Required: A final report is due October 2007.

Revised date: September 2007

ENVIRONMENTAL STUDIES PROGRAM: ANNUAL STUDIES PLAN 2008

Region: Alaska

Planning Areas: Beaufort Sea

Title: Foraging Ecology of Common Ravens on Alaska's Coastal Plain

MMS Information Needs to be Addressed: This study, which is a collaboration amongst MMS, the University of Alaska CMI, the North Slope Borough and Phillips Petroleum, will help MMS assess and potentially mitigate, possible indirect impacts of MMS actions that may occur as a result of enhancement of raven habitat on the North Slope resulting from the presence of human structures. If data indicate that structures, pipelines or other factors related to oil or gas development enhance raven predation, MMS may need to design mitigation to reduce such impacts on natural fauna. Information from this study will also be useful for analysis of the cumulative effects of offshore development on the fauna of the OCS and Alaskan Coastal Plain. Information will be used for NEPA analysis and documentation for Beaufort Sea Lease Sales and DPPs

Total Cost: \$205,000

Period of Performance: FY 2003-2008

Conducting Organization: CMI, UAF

Description:

Background The impact of avian predators, including the common raven, on the North Slope has often been assumed to be higher in areas with oil development or human habitation due to increased availability of food and nest sites associated with human-made structures. Predator management on the Alaska North Slope is an issue that has arisen in many contexts. For example, the Steller's Eider Recovery Team has recommended killing ravens in Barrow to benefit the threatened Steller's eider (*Polysticta stelleri*), and this recommendation has been implemented to a limited extent. More generally, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has attempted to reduce predator access to human food waste in the oilfields and villages through its authorities under the Clean Water Act.

It is clear that common ravens (*Corvus corax*) on the North Slope are utilizing human-related facilities both as nesting sites and to obtain sufficient food to overwinter on the outer arctic coastal plain. However, the associated impact of raven predation on other tundra-nesting birds has not been studied. Data on summer diet and raven productivity are needed to assess whether increased raven numbers pose a threat to other species, particularly the threatened spectacled (*Somateria fischeri*) and Steller's eiders.

Objectives The objective of this study is to document summer foraging ecology, and distribution and abundance of ravens nesting within areas of oil development, in and near villages, and in semi-natural habitat (DEW Line sites) on Alaska's North Slope.

Methods

1. Use biological surveys and obtain anecdotal information from local residents to document the distribution and abundance of ravens breeding in the oil fields, in and near villages, and in semi-natural sites using surveys and local knowledge. A GIS map will be produced showing the locations of nests and/or breeding pairs.
2. Document the summer diet of nestling ravens using video camera monitoring stations, by direct observation at nests, by examination of pellets and/or fecal remains, and by collection of prey remains at nests.
3. Monitor nests to assess fledging and nest success of ravens in and outside of the oil fields.
4. Use very high frequency (VHF) and satellite telemetry to document the movements of ravens from nesting sites to foraging areas, and between breeding and non-breeding seasons on Alaska's North Slope.

Date Information Required: A final report is due September 2007.

Revised date: September 2007

ENVIRONMENTAL STUDIES PROGRAM: ANNUAL STUDIES PLAN 2008

Region: Alaska

Planning Areas: Beaufort Sea, Chukchi Sea, Hope Basin, Cook Inlet

Title: Review and Monitoring Ambient Artificial Light Intensity in the OCS and the Potential for Effects on Resident Fauna

MMS Information Needs to be Addressed: Information from this study will be used for evaluating the effects of exploration and development on various protected or endangered species, including: spectacled eider, Steller's eider, Bowhead whale, Beluga whale, polar bears, ringed-seals, and several other cetaceans and pinnipeds. If ambient light is found to have effects on these, or other, local fauna, mitigation measures can be designed and initiated through stipulations in future development- or production-oriented EISs or permits. Information from this study may be used to update the extant lighting protocols recommended for offshore oil and gas development.

Total Cost: \$147,000

Period of Performance: FY 2004-2007

Conducting Organization: Golder & Associates

Description:

Background A stipulation in a final Beaufort Sea final EIS in 2003 requires that all structures associated with offshore drilling must be lighted in order to avoid avian mortality. But light radiating outward from structures must be minimized. Other industrial support facilities such as the buildings and storage areas at West Dock, structures at Endicott Spur Drilling Island, structures and work areas on Northstar Island and support vessels and supporting facilities are already brightly lighted. More lighted structures can be expected as OCS development proceeds.

Little study has been made of the introduction of artificial light into the formerly dark habitat of numerous species of marine invertebrates, fish, water birds, and mammals. These include a number of protected marine mammals that live in, or migrate through, potentially artificially lighted habitat. At a recent interagency coordination meeting the issue of potential conflict between lighting strategies and other non-avian marine life was raised. The proposed study will address the issue of artificial light in the dark arctic by conducting a literature review and possibly thereafter a light monitoring program. The study will lay groundwork for studies of ecological effects of increasing artificial lighting at several trophic levels.

Objectives

1. Review the literature and evaluate the theoretical basis of artificial lighting effects on the physiology, reproductive biology, and/or behavior of key predators and their forage species in the Beaufort Sea area.
2. Plan and/or initiate long-term, meso-scale monitoring to measure and document general levels of ambient light in the Beaufort Sea OCS: (a) Design appropriate sampling methods

and regime and (b) measure and document light in specific OCS development areas at various distances from sources, including new sources as they are created.

3. Initiate relevant ecological studies of Arctic marine systems in the vicinity of artificial light sources to estimate any effects of artificial light on the system's trophic processes, and productivity, and behaviors.

Methods All activities will be coordinated with ongoing industry studies as appropriate.

Phase I:

1. Conduct a comprehensive literature review. Prepare an annotated bibliography and summary report on the potential effects of artificial ambient lighting on relevant taxa.
2. Hold a facilitated scientific meeting to make recommendations on the justification for, and design of, a monitoring program. Recommendations for specific studies, defined under Objective 3, will also be recorded.

Phase II:

1. If justified, initiate a meso-scale monitoring study to document the intensity of artificial ambient lighting as per Objective 2, above.
2. Refine design and initiate focused ecological studies, as per Objective 3.

Date Information Required: A final report is due September 2007.

Revised date: September 2007

ENVIRONMENTAL STUDIES PROGRAM: ANNUAL STUDIES PLAN FY 2008

Region: Alaska

Planning Area: Beaufort Sea

Title: Beaufort Sea Marine Fish Monitoring: Pilot Survey and Test of Hypotheses

MMS Information Needs to be Addressed: Fish resources are important in the Beaufort Sea ecosystem and to the coastal communities. Study information will be used in NEPA analysis and documentation for Beaufort Sea Lease Sales, EPs, and DPPs.

Total Cost: \$997,000

Period of Performance: FY 2006-2009

Description:

Background A consistent Beaufort Sea fish monitoring study is needed to obtain fundamental and current fish resource information. Data at the most basic level, e.g., fish distribution data, are not only spotty but also outdated. Fish assemblages and populations in other marine ecosystems off Alaska have undergone observable regime-shifts in diversity and abundance over the last 20-30 years. While the same is likely true of the Beaufort Sea, it is unconfirmed because the scant distribution and abundance data available are pre regime-shift. Furthermore, the delineation of important marine mating, spawning, rearing, feeding and migration habitats (pre or post regime-shift), is simply non-existent.

In addition to the need for basic distribution data, ecological information is necessary to assess potential effects of offshore development. However, Beaufort Sea life history strategies, foraging, population dynamics and other aspects of marine fish behavior and ecology are, for the most part, unknown. Because MMS is the principle agency proposing federal actions in the Alaskan Beaufort Sea, it is unlikely that other sources of applicable information will become available.

This study will begin to establish baseline knowledge of fish distribution in the Beaufort leasing area and assess interannual variation through monitoring. Concurrent collection of salinity, temperature and plankton data can establish basic ecological facts.

Objectives

1. Design a long-term fish monitoring plan for the Beaufort Sea OCS leasing area that includes ocean and lower trophic data essential to understanding fish dynamics.
2. Implement the first survey covering 1/5th of the Beaufort Sea OCS (roughly a 40 by 130 mile area). Repeat at the appropriate interval in the remaining areas of the Beaufort Sea OCS to establish a long term monitoring baseline.

Methods

Phase I: Design

Review and adapt marine fish survey design methods to specific MMS information needs and Beaufort Sea conditions. Design survey methods for long-term comparability, cost-effectiveness and incorporation of future technological and remote sensing advances. Monitor demersal and pelagic fishes at all life history stages and across depths and habitats. Include active *in situ* fish sampling with concurrent collection of plankton and ocean conditions.

Phase II: Implementation

1. Conduct the first survey based on results of the design phase. Analyze samples for basic ecological information. Summarize information on fish distribution, relative abundance, locations of critical or sensitive life history stage habitats, and trophic structure in GIS and report format. Provide intermediate results for NEPA analyses. Incorporate lessons learned into recommendations for the next 5-year survey in another section of the Beaufort Sea OCS.
2. Archive environmental data and specimens to provide a cost effective means of future hypothesis testing by MMS and other agencies.

Date information is required: Study products will be timed to enhance assimilation into environmental assessment and NEPA process of the Alaska OCS Region. Study information will be used in NEPA analysis and documentation for Beaufort Sea Lease Sales, EPs, and DPPs. Initial survey will be implemented in 2008. Initial survey results will be due July 2009. Draft and final reports are due October and December 2009, respectively.

Revised date: September 2007

ENVIRONMENTAL STUDIES PROGRAM: ANNUAL STUDIES PLAN FY 2008

Region: Alaska

Planning Areas: Beaufort Sea

Title: Evaluating the Potential Relict Arctic Invertebrate and Algal Community on the West Side of Cook Inlet

MMS Information Needs to be Addressed: An evaluation of the lower western Cook Inlet intertidal and subtidal invertebrates and algae will potentially lead to a better understanding of the potential effects of offshore oil and gas, or other mineral, exploration and extraction on the outer continental shelf. New information will support NEPA analysis and documentation for future Cook Inlet Lease Sales, DPPs, and monitoring.

Actual Costs: \$60,000

Period of Performance: FY 2005-2007

Conducting Organization: CMI, UAF

Description:

Background This study is based on previous work conducted on the lower west side of Cook Inlet when taxonomic identifications of epifaunal invertebrates collected in the 1970's for the OCS Environmental Assessment Program bore a striking resemblance to species reported for the Alaskan Arctic. Additional information provided by other historical invertebrate collections in the area indicate that these west side species and assemblages more closely matched Arctic species and assemblages than those on Cook Inlet's east side or in other areas of the Gulf of Alaska. Few studies have been conducted in the Bering or Chukchi Seas or Norton Sound, making it difficult to conduct a suitable comparison of species between Cook Inlet and the Arctic. From the limited comparisons, though, it is possible that many of the species do not occur nearer to the populations in western Cook Inlet than the Beaufort Sea, effectively isolating these species from similar species or genera. Based on its duration, it is possible that geographic isolation has allowed some species to become genetically distinct, to the point of evolving into separate subspecies or species. Thus, this assemblage is very interesting in evolutionary terms.

While defining biogeographical regions in coastal Alaska, scientists have placed upper Cook Inlet in the subpolar Beringian Province rather than the Aleutian Province with the adjacent Gulf of Alaska. This classification was based on fish assemblages, the occurrence of an isolated population of beluga whales, and water column characteristics (i.e., water temperature and salinity). They noted that this apparently unique region "is not represented in the system of marine protected areas in the United States." Given their potential isolation, these western Cook Inlet populations could be at risk of significant habitat perturbation and may prove to be sensitive indicators of climate change or other ecological shifts. Monitoring their distributions and abundance could provide "early-warning" signals.

Objectives

1. Develop a more complete comprehension of the species composition of the intertidal and subtidal benthic assemblages on the west side of Cook Inlet.
2. Evaluate the degree of geographic isolation for each potential relict Arctic species.
3. Determine the taxonomic status of the species observed on the west side of Cook Inlet.

Methods

1. Conduct a survey of archived specimens from the west side of Cook Inlet.
2. Review species lists from previous studies conducted on the east side of Cook Inlet, the Alaska Peninsula, Kodiak, and in Shelikof Strait and the Bering Sea.
3. Conduct detailed taxonomic evaluations on a wide variety of algae and invertebrates, including those in previous collections that have been preserved and archived.

Date Information Required: A final report is due February 2007

Revised date: September 2007

ENVIRONMENTAL STUDIES PROGRAM: ANNUAL STUDIES PLAN FY 2008

Region: Alaska

Planning Areas: Beaufort Sea, Chukchi Sea

Title: Arctic Fish Ecology Catalogue

MMS Information Needs to be Addressed: MMS needs organized fish ecology and behavioral information for NEPA analysis of fisheries resources, including Essential Fish Habitat and rare species. Study products will be used in post-sale NEPA analysis, review of EPs, DPPs and other reviews for post-sale and post-exploration MMS decision making and mitigation. Also, study results will be used in similar pre-lease analyses and documentation for later Chukchi Sea Lease Sale(s) in the *Outer Continental Shelf Oil and Gas Leasing Program 2007-2012*. Whether, when, and in which Planning Areas Lease Sale(s) may be held depends on decisions of the Secretary of Interior for the forthcoming *Final Outer Continental Shelf Oil and Gas Leasing Program 2007-2012*.

Period of Performance: Deferred to FY 2008–2010

Description:

Background A comprehensive synthesis of ecological and behavioral information concerning arctic fishes of Alaska is important to MMS fisheries scientists investigating arctic fish resources. MMS co-funded the most recent reference on Alaskan fishes. However, the latter is primarily a taxonomic key to Alaska fish species with summary distribution maps. A companion volume describing the ecology and behavior of important fish species has yet to be funded. Limited sub-arctic commercial and forage fish data are available in gray literature, e.g., the NMFS groundfish assessment documents for Gulf of Alaska, the Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands. Arctic fish ecological and behavioral information has not been synthesized; it is only available piecemeal from a wide range of peer-reviewed and gray literature.

The MMS share shown above is 50 percent of the estimated total joint funding needed. The MMS share shown above is 50 percent of the estimated total joint funding needed. Joint funding may be established via NOAA, NSSI, NPRB and/or other agencies.

Objectives

1. Synthesize ecological and behavioral information on Arctic Alaska fish.
2. Organize distribution, abundance, and habitat use information into a GIS format.
3. Publish as a web-based catalogue and GIS mapping function for agencies and public use assuming participation of other agencies.

Methods

1. Conduct an intergovernmental/academic/industry coordination meeting to evaluate potential co-sponsorship before seeking final approval.

2. Conduct an extensive and thorough review of the peer-reviewed and gray literature concerning each fish species that may occur or expand into Arctic Alaska waters. Include freshwater, diadromous, and marine fish species occurring in the Beaufort and Chukchi Seas and possibly adjacent Arctic waters (eastern Russia and western Canada).
3. Synthesize ecological and behavioral information into a web-based catalogue.
 - In the first portion of the catalogue, include species-specific accounts of 1-3 pages in length per species. Pertinent information per each species include: species binomen; synonymy; common names; illustration; field marks; diagnostic features; geographical distribution (including GIS maps of documented occurrences and habitat areas by life history stage); biology (e.g. reproductive biology); behavior, ecology, and habitat (e.g. life history strategy, habitat types and areas, migration); size; interest to fisheries; literature; and remarks. Identify data deficiencies and areas for future research for each species.
 - In the second portion of the catalogue, include articles synthesizing ecological and behavioral information by topic. Include broad topics, but do not limit them to: environmental and organismic constraints, foraging and feeding ecology, bioenergetics, use of time and space, growth, reproduction, predation and parasitism, competition and mutualism, dynamics of population abundance and production, life history strategies, fish assemblages, information needs, and areas for future research.
4. Publish and maintain as a web-based catalogue available to fisheries scientists and the greater public to use in research and education. The web-based catalogue is superior to a book because it may be updated with new information as it is published in the scientific literature, and is searchable using GIS functions.

Date Information Required: An interim report is due July 2009 and a final report is due July 2011.

Revised date: September 2007

ENVIRONMENTAL STUDIES PROGRAM: ANNUAL STUDIES PLAN 2008

Region: Alaska

Planning Area: North Aleutian Basin

Title: Distribution, Abundance, and Habitat Use of North Pacific Right Whales

MMS Information Need(s) to be Addressed: The Dept. of Interior's Proposed OCS Oil and Gas Leasing Program 2007-2012 considers a North Aleutian Basin (NAB) oil and gas lease sale for 2011. The proposed sale area (or areas adjacent) supports very important commercial and subsistence fisheries, provides habitat to numerous marine mammals, and is an important migration and staging area for internationally important waterfowl. Marine mammal species known to occur in or near the NAB include the listed Endangered or Threatened North Pacific right whale, fin whale, humpback whale, and Steller sea lions; the recently delisted gray whale; and the sea otter, which is proposed for listing. The study described here will provide information that was identified by the Alaska OCS Region as a highly time-sensitive and important decision-applicable information need for proposed oil and gas leasing. Information obtained is planned to be used in Section 7 Endangered Species Act consultation, for enhancing compliance with provisions of the Marine Mammal Protection Act and for pre- and post-sale NEPA/EIS analysis, documentation, and mitigation of potential effects of OCS exploration and development.

Actual Costs: \$3,000,000

Period of Performance: FY 2007-2010

Conducting Organization: NMFS, NMML

Description:

Background The eastern population of the North Pacific right whale (*Eubalaena japonica*) is arguably the rarest stock of whales anywhere in the world. Right whales throughout the North Pacific were drastically reduced by commercial whaling beginning in 1835, and the remnant eastern population was almost wiped out by illegal Soviet catches in the 1960's. Today, the surviving population likely numbers fewer than 100 whales, although little is known of its abundance, movements and current habitat use. Because of its endangered status under the Endangered Species Act (and designated as "critically endangered" by the IUCN), the eastern North Pacific right whale is among the highest priorities for recovery efforts by NOAA Fisheries. Historical data as well as recent observations confirm that the NAB lease-sale area is used by right whales for at least the period May-September; although it is generally assumed that the animals migrate out of the area during winter, this is based on very little information and has never been confirmed. It is also assumed that right whales occupy the NAB area to feed upon copepods, but oceanographic and foraging ecology studies of the region are lacking.

Objectives

1. Estimate seasonal distribution, abundance and movement patterns in and adjacent to the lease sale area.
2. Characterize right whale habitat, foraging behavior, health, and prey distribution.

Methods

Activities will be coordinated with other programs (e.g. Bering Ecosystem Study [BEST], North Pacific Research Board's Integrated Ecosystem Research Program) so these relatively small-scale observations can be put into the broader context of conditions and processes occurring over the Bering Sea. Integrated ship-based research activities will provide information on right whale ecology and behavior at various spatial scales. Specifically, methods to be used include:

1. Fixed-winged aircraft and ship-based surveys (focused in lease sale and adjacent area)
2. Acoustic and satellite tagging of individual whales (lease sale area and critical habitat)
3. Ship-based passive acoustic methodology to locate whales for tagging and observation
4. Passive acoustic methodology for year-round monitoring of presence and relative abundance (lease sale area, critical habitat, and potential migration routes from Bering Sea.
5. Biopsy samples of right whales will be taken during tagging operations for analysis of genetics, pollutants and diet. In addition, samples of copepods will be taken during oceanographic operations to establish a baseline for contaminants in right whale prey prior to oil and gas development activity.

Date information is required: Because of the extremely vulnerable status of this population and the potential for industry activities (notably seismic surveys) to begin as early as 2008, it is essential that work is begun in the summer of 2007. Comprehensive annual reports will be submitted and a final report is needed by September 2010.

Revised date: September 2007

ENVIRONMENTAL STUDIES PROGRAM: ANNUAL STUDIES PLAN 2008

Region: Alaska

Planning Areas: Beaufort Sea, Chukchi Sea

Title: Monitoring the Distribution of Arctic Whales

MMS Information Needs to be Addressed: This continuing MMS study is needed for decisions on environmental assessment and exploration monitoring for past and upcoming OCS activity in the Beaufort Sea. It analyses behavioral information needed to identify areas of interest to feeding bowhead whales. In years with active offshore seismic-vessel or drilling operations, the BWASP provides real-time data to MMS and NMFS on each fall migration of bowhead whales across the Alaskan Beaufort Sea for implementing overall limitations on offshore drilling and geological and/or geophysical exploration. Project information is used to ensure that planned activities will not have an immitigable adverse effect on the availability of the bowhead whale to meet subsistence needs by causing whales to abandon or avoid hunting areas. Information is needed each year to monitor the migration of bowhead whales past active seismic, drilling, construction, and production operations. Information from this study also will be needed to support NEPA analysis and documentation for Beaufort Sea Lease Sales, DPPs, and monitoring of Northstar.

Total Cost: \$4,000,000

Period of Performance: FY 2007-2011

Conducting Organization: MMS, NOAA AOC and NMFS NMML (See second paragraph of methods.)

Description:

Background The MMS has conducted aerial surveys of the fall migration of bowhead whales each year since 1987. Methods are comparable from year to year, based on similar monitoring dating to 1979. Real-time data are used to implement overall seasonal restrictions and limitations on geological and geophysical exploration. The study provides the only long-term database for evaluating potential cumulative effects of oil- and gas-exploration activities on the entire bowhead-migration corridor across the Alaskan Beaufort Sea. Project reports compare distances from shore and the water depths used by migrating bowheads. Data are collected in a robust GIS-compatible data structure. The bowhead whale is protected under the Endangered Species Act and is of great importance to Alaskan Natives for cultural and subsistence purposes.

Objectives

1. Define the annual bowhead fall migration, significant inter-year differences, and long-term trends in distance from shore and water depth at which whales migrate.
2. Monitor temporal and spatial trends in the distribution, relative abundance, habitat, and behaviors (especially feeding) of endangered whales in arctic waters.

3. Provide real-time data to MMS and the NMFS on the general progress of the fall migration of bowhead whales across the Alaskan Beaufort Sea for use in protection of this Endangered Species.
4. Provide an objective area-wide context for management interpretation of bowhead migrations and site-specific study results.

Methods Aerial surveys, based out of Deadhorse, Alaska, during September and October, monitor the fall bowhead migration between 140°W. and 157°W. longitudes, south of 72°N. latitude. Particular emphasis is placed on regional randomized transects, statistical tests, and power analyses to assess fine-scale shifts in the migration axis of bowhead whales across the Beaufort Sea, and on the coordination of effort and management of data necessary to support seasonal offshore-drilling regulations. The project analyzes migration timing, distribution, relative abundance, habitat associations, swim directions, water depths, and behaviors (especially potential feeding) of whales, as well as ice type and percentage at bowhead sightings. Belugas, gray whales, and polar bears are regularly recorded along with incidental sightings of other marine mammals. Data are also shared with site-specific studies to define bowhead responses to individual oil-industry activities. Incidental oceanographic observations are shared with the National Ice Center and National Weather Service to ground-truth satellite imagery.

Field work will be conducted and various analyses and reports will be prepared by the NMFS, NMML. MMS staff will continue to prepare an annual report concerning the axis of the bowhead migration. Aircraft operations will be managed by the NOAA AOC.

Date Information Required: Annual reports will be prepared by NMML and MMS.

Revised date: September 2007

ENVIRONMENTAL STUDIES PROGRAM: ANNUAL STUDIES PLAN FY 2008

Region: Alaska

Planning Areas: Beaufort Sea, Chukchi Sea, Bering Sea

Title: Bowhead Whale Feeding Variability in the Western Alaskan Beaufort Sea

MMS Information Needs to be Addressed: With additional information on the importance of the study area to feeding bowhead whales, and a better understanding of potentially predictable factors that correlate with variations in whale behavior, alternative mitigation options for future Beaufort Sea lease sales may be feasible. Also this study addresses a conservation recommendation in NMFS' 2001 Arctic Region Biological Opinion. The recommendation is that MMS study "the use of the Beaufort Sea by feeding bowheads and assess the importance of this feeding to the health and well being of these animals." Information from this study will be used for permit approvals for all Beaufort Sea Lease Sales and NEPA analysis and documentation for Beaufort Sea Lease Sales and DPPs.

Total Cost: \$6,687,300

Period of Performance: FY 2005-2011

Conducting Organization: ADF&G and NMFS NMML

Description:

Background A previous MMS study estimated the extent to which the bowhead whale population utilizes OCS areas in the eastern Alaskan Beaufort Sea for feeding, as well as that area's importance to individual whales. Additional research on this subject has been requested particularly at locations other than those included in the previous study. In a 2001 Arctic Region Biological Opinion NMFS made a Conservation Recommendation that MMS continue to study "the use of the Beaufort Sea by feeding bowheads and assess the importance of this feeding to the health and well being of these animals." Other stakeholders have recommended that MMS expand the scope of the research to include the entire Alaskan Beaufort Sea.

In this proposed study, emphasis will be placed on achieving an understanding of the factors enhancing or limiting the expression of feeding behavior in various locations in the western Alaskan Beaufort Sea. Implicit to the proposed study is the assumption that feeding by bowhead whales occurs with some degree of regularity during August-October the western Beaufort Sea study area. It is further assumed that variation in feeding behavior potentially results from any, or all, of a variety of environmental and behavioral variables including, but not limited to: sea ice coverage, oceanographic conditions, prey concentrations, and movements by whales, potentially from summering areas in both the Beaufort Sea and Chukchi Sea. By understanding how such factors are related to bowhead feeding in western Beaufort Sea locations near offshore oil and gas leases, MMS would be in a better position to mitigate potential effects of such actions on bowheads and their populations.

Objectives To better understand the relationship between feeding and environmental and behavioral variables on the timing and spatial extent of bowhead feeding in the western Alaska Beaufort Sea; specifically to:

1. Document the movements of whales of various ages, sexes, and reproductive statuses from the Beaufort Sea and Chukchi Sea within, into and out of the study area.
2. Document feeding behavior and prey utilization by bowheads at locations in the western Alaska Beaufort Sea with emphasis on timing and dynamics/variability.
3. Document variability in locations and densities of potential prey of bowhead whales.
4. Estimate variability of physical oceanographic conditions associated with concentrations of bowheads and their prey.
5. Integrate results from this study with previous results from other sources to develop a dynamic model of bowhead feeding behavior in the western Alaska Beaufort Sea.
6. Synthesize existing results and conclusions in a scientifically reviewed monograph to be published in an appropriate journal or other similar outlet.

Methods This study will have two phases and be conducted over geographic and temporal scales sufficient to include normal variability associated with environmental phenomena including local currents and upwellings, variation in ice conditions, and *el Nino*. The study area will be encompassed by the polygon bounded by the shoreline, 100 m isobath, 152° W and 155° W meridians.

Phase I: A task employing satellite transmitters would be designed and conducted to provide information on topics including, but not limited to: bowhead movements in and out of the study location, migration timing, swim speed, and residence times in functionally important portions of bowhead whale range. Collaborations would be developed between whaling captains, AEWC, NSB, ADF&G, NMFS, MMS and other interested parties to resolve roles in permitting, co-sponsorship and implementation. Satellite transmitters would be deployed on bowhead whales near Native villages in the Beaufort, Chukchi and Bering Seas during spring and fall migrations. Transmissions would be monitored and data analyzed.

Phase II: Based on preliminary observations of locations of bowhead feeding having high potential for more comprehensive study and analysis as determined during Phase I, other project planning and research would be initiated in Phase II using planning and field methods similar to those of the previous eastern Alaskan Beaufort Sea bowhead feeding study. These would include planning meetings and fieldwork such as analyses of stomach contents at Barrow and Cross Island, behavioral observations by aircraft, plankton tows by small vessel, stable isotope ratios in baleen layers, fatty acid comparisons, recording of traditional knowledge, and computer modeling of feeding information. Real-time distribution of whales in the Beaufort Sea, as well as historic information on bowhead whale feeding activity in the study area, would be provided by the ongoing MMS *Bowhead Whale Aerial Survey Project*. The study would be carefully coordinated with the Alaska Eskimo Whaling Commission (AEWC) and Whaling Captains Associations in Barrow, Nuiqsut and Kaktovik to avoid interference with fall subsistence hunts and, where feasible, to involve whaling communities in the conduct of the study. Phase II would also involve the concurrent and coordinated use of a combination of remote sensing and field measurement of oceanographic conditions in the study area. MMS will accomplish Phase II in three components:

1. Satellite tracking of bowhead whales (AK-05-01)
2. Feeding observations (AK-06-01)

3. Oceanographic measurements (AK-06-02)

Date Information Required: Annual reports for Phase I are due in 2006-2009 and a Final Report is due in August 2010. Annual reports for Phase II are due in December 2008, 2009 and 2010. A draft and final report are due in October and December 2011, respectively.

Revised date: September 2007

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ENVIRONMENTAL STUDIES PROGRAM: ANNUAL STUDIES PLAN 2008

Region: Alaska

Planning Area: Beaufort Sea

Title: Aerial Photography of Bowhead Whales to Estimate the Size of the Bering-Chukchi-Beaufort Population

MMS Information Needs to be Addressed: Information from the study will be used for ESA and NEPA analysis and documentation for Beaufort Sea Lease Sales and DPPs.

Total Cost: \$166,000

Period of Performance: FY 2004-2007

Conducting Organization: NMFS, NSB

Description:

Background An aerial photographic survey of bowhead whales was conducted during the spring of 2003 based out of Barrow, Alaska. This survey was very successful with >750 photographs having been obtained. Analysis of the photographs is expected to be useful toward an improved population size estimate using mark and recapture methods. This project is envisioned as a jointly funded effort, including but not limited to NMFS, NSB, and MMS. Additional funding sources may be involved as needed to seek additional population dynamics information.

Biological information about the status of endangered bowhead whale stocks is useful for OCS management and to maintenance of the centuries-old subsistence lifestyle along the north coast of Alaska. Two of the most important statistics are current population size and population trends. Population estimates are typically generated via ice-based censuses at Barrow; however, few (if any) data exist to confirm the apparent population increases indicated by these counts. Credible confirmation of population size would help evaluate whether the Bering-Chukchi-Beaufort bowhead whale population should be down-listed to the threatened species list. Other life history parameters (migration timing, etc) obtained from the study would likewise be useful for management of offshore activities.

Objectives The primary goal of the survey is to estimate the size of the bowhead whale population using photogrammetric mark-recapture methods and data collected during 2003 and 2004. Specific objectives for accomplishing this goal include:

1. Conduct an aerial photographic survey of bowhead whales in the spring of 2004.
2. Analyze the 2004 photographs to identify the recurrence of individual whales previously photographed in 2003.
3. Use mark-recapture methods and calculations to estimate the population of bowhead whales.
4. Develop and test a computer program that will increase efficiency of the search for matches among whale images collected in different years.

Methods This jointly-funded study would be conducted using methods already developed in 2003 by NMFS and NSB. Required permits for low-level photography will be obtained as needed. The draft final report to MMS would include full description of the aerial survey protocol, mark-recapture methods used, analysis of collected data, and discussion of findings relative to population estimation. Other ancillary population dynamics parameters obtained on growth rates, survival rates, migration timing, calving intervals and population structure (length-frequency distribution) may be included. The study will develop and test a computer program that will increase the efficiency of the search for matches among whale images collected in different years by prioritizing images for comparison.

Date Information Required: A final report is due August 2007.

Revised date: September 2007

ENVIRONMENTAL STUDIES PROGRAM: ANNUAL STUDIES PLAN 2008

Region: Alaska

Planning Areas: Beaufort Sea

Title: Protocol to Deflect Migrating Bowhead Whales Away from an Oil Spill

MMS Information Needs to be Addressed: In a 2001 Arctic Region Biological Opinion, National Marine Fisheries Service provided a Conservation Recommendation that MMS study “the possible use of air guns as a deterrent for bowhead whales near an oil spill.” A protocol for keeping bowheads away from oil spills would likely become a key part of any first-line response in the unlikely event of a large oil spill in the Beaufort Sea. The protocol would help reduce the potential for any oil-spill-related mortality or sublethal effects (e.g., feeding and reproduction) to this endangered species. While implementing the protocol might add to the expected disruption of the whale harvest in the year of any large oil spill, it would reduce the likelihood and scope of potential damage relative to perceived tainting of muktuk and other tissues. The protocol may be used to update the technical manuals relative to oil-spill preparedness at Northstar. The information is also applicable to oil-spill preparedness at Liberty, if needed.

Total Cost: \$114,000

Period of Performance: FY 2003-2007

Conducting Organization: LGL, Ltd., Environmental Research Associates

Description:

Background As a member of the North Slope Spill Response Project Team, MMS utilizes the Alaska Clean Seas (ACS) Technical Manual in the unlikely event of a large oil spill in the Beaufort Sea. In addition, oil companies submit an Oil Prevention and Technical Plan (OPTP) to MMS for Federal approval. While these plans consider deflection of polar bears and waterfowl, neither the ACS Technical Manual nor the OPTP deal specifically with bowhead whales, an endangered species and a most important species to North Slope subsistence villages. The study would test methods and develop a step-down protocol for on-scene managers to rapidly mitigate the effects of a large oil spill on bowhead whales.

Objectives The original overall goal of the study was to develop guidelines for keeping bowhead whales away from large oil spills. Specific objectives for meeting this goal were to:

1. Analyze the literature on potential methods (e.g., noise) for herding or deflecting cetaceans away from oil spills or other effects.
2. Develop a workable field protocol for using tested methods to keep bowhead whales away from a large oil spill.
3. If necessary and feasible, conduct selected field tests to evaluate the most effective ways to deflect captive cetaceans and/or bowhead whales away from a proscribed area.

The overall project has been reduced in scope. The revised goals include a literature review and a preliminary evaluation of methods of deflection.

Methods Analysis of the literature will consider the potential for use of acoustic disturbance (e.g., seismic arrays, icebreaker cavitations, whale boats, orca noise), visual disturbance (e.g., low-flying aircraft), and physical barriers (e.g., oil booms, stationary nets). The protocol will have a rapid-deployment quality in the unlikely event of a large oil spill. The cost of implementing the protocol should be considered, but should not limit important workable options. The purpose of the protocol is to exclude or deflect migrating whales away from the perimeter of a large oil spill without scattering whales in adverse directions. Variables to consider that might limit the effectiveness of certain options include ambient ice type and ice concentration, competing disturbances from oil-spill cleanup activities, and uncontrolled vessel and air traffic. The Contractor will coordinate with NOAA/NMFS on possible expansion of the study area.

Date Information Required: A final summary report is due in October 2007.

Revised date: September 2007

ENVIRONMENTAL STUDIES PROGRAM: ANNUAL STUDIES PLAN FY 2008

Region: Alaska

Planning areas: Beaufort Sea, Chukchi Sea

Title: Monitoring the Health of Subsistence Harvested Bowhead Whales

MMS Information Needs to be Addressed: This monitoring study of bowhead whales taken in subsistence hunts will provide time-series data that can be used for comparisons of general health before, during, and after offshore industry activities in the Alaskan OCS. It will also provide baseline data for comparison with data to be taken in examinations of stranded whales that will be potentially useful for evaluating the status of the bowhead population relative to carrying capacity. Study findings will be used in post-sale NEPA analysis, ongoing ESA Section 7 Consultations, review of EPs, DPPs and other reviews for post-sale and post-exploration decision making and mitigation. Also, study results will be used in similar pre-lease analyses and documentation for later Chukchi Sea Lease Sale(s) in the *Outer Continental Shelf Oil and Gas Leasing Program 2007-2012*. Whether, when, and in which Planning Areas Lease Sale(s) may be held depends on decisions of the Secretary of Interior for the forthcoming *Final Outer Continental Shelf Oil and Gas Leasing Program 2007-2012*.

Total Cost: tbd

Period of Performance: FY 2008-2011

Description:

Background The bowhead whale population of the Bering, Chukchi, and Beaufort Seas, while endangered, has been slowly recovering since the cessation of commercial whaling in 1910. There is concern, though, about potential effects of factors acting on bowhead whales and the subsistence communities that rely on them culturally and nutritionally. For example, rapid change in human activities (e.g., oil- and gas-related exploration and development) and other environmental parameters (e.g., reduction in sea ice) in the Arctic could cause a highly specialized species such as the bowhead whale to have difficulty adjusting, competing and surviving. Relatedly, environmental change could facilitate the appearance of zoonotic diseases in the Arctic because the warming environment could be beneficial to the spread of a disease agent or its vectors. New diseases could affect whales and subsistence users alike. Thus, even in the face of a growing bowhead population, it is logical to sustain a program to monitor the body condition, general health, and presence of zoonoses in bowhead whales. The bowhead whale may be a useful sentinel of environmental change and by proactively monitoring bowhead health problems may be detected and possibly mitigated before a crisis stage is reached.

Objectives Monitor health of subsistence harvested bowhead whales.

Methods

Phases I & II: Cooperate with Inupiat subsistence whale hunters to the maximum extent possible.

Phase I: Planning

1. Establish partnerships and other support with Federal and State agencies and other organizations, especially Inupiat hunters and other local leaders, to provide an efficient, sustainable and cost effective means by which to conduct a long-term monitoring program. The initial one-year Planning Phase project will focus on key North Slope local communities where the greatest amount of samples can be obtained most cost effectively.

Phase II: Implementation

1. Work closely with subsistence hunters in communities in the Beaufort, Chukchi and Bering Seas. Establish a network to obtain information on stranded or beach cast bowheads in Alaska and Canada. The primary activity of the study will be staged out of Barrow. Trained individuals in other whaling communities will participate; these include Gambell, Savoonga, Wainwright, Point Hope, Kaktovik, Nuiqsuit, and Canadian villages.
2. Take morphological measurements, collect and archive tissues and conduct screening for zoonotic diseases. Analyze samples and data using standard field and laboratory protocols. Assess body condition and health of bowhead whales using carcasses from subsistence whaling.
3. Conduct screening of bowhead whale for zoonotic diseases that could threaten the health of both the whales and of the people in subsistence communities that consume the whales.
4. Examine those whales and obtain biological samples when cost effective. Assess spatial and temporal differences that might exist in the whales.
5. Work closely with educators to involve students in this monitoring study projects and to develop culturally appropriate outreach programs to inform communities of the results of project monitoring and the possible implications for human health.

Date Information Required: Annual interim reports are due 2008-2011 and a final report is due 2012.

Revised Date: September 2007

ENVIRONMENTAL STUDIES PROGRAM: ANNUAL STUDIES PLAN 2008

Region: Alaska

Planning Areas: Beaufort Sea, Chukchi Sea

Title: Populations and Sources of Recruitment of Polar Bears

MMS Information Needs to be Addressed: The study will enhance MMS analysis of oil-spill/polar bear mortality models and provide direct input to population-recovery models currently under development for the Alaskan Beaufort Sea Region. Study information will be used for NEPA analysis and documentation for Beaufort Sea Lease Sales. It will also contribute information used for mitigation related to Northstar, Liberty, if approved, and DPPs.

Total Cost: \$1,319,000

Period of Performance: FY 2005-2011

Conducting Organization: University of Alberta, Canada

Description:

Background The approximately 22,000-27,000 polar bears of the world are currently divided among 19 recognized “populations” circumscribing the Arctic Region of the Northern Hemisphere. Although these units are referred to as “populations” there is no genetic or behavioral basis for assuming genuine isolation. The designation of these geographic populations has been largely political, in conformance with management needs, even though the units are inadequate for evaluating population discreteness, for estimating recovery from perturbations, setting harvest goals, or accounting for gene flow. Polar bears are important for subsistence, are considered a high-profile species by the general public, are the focus of a rapidly developing ecotourism industry in several Arctic coastal villages, and may be affected by disturbance and spilled oil potentially associated with OCS oil-and-gas development. Long-term monitoring of juvenile-adult polar bears has not previously been accomplished and will greatly enhance understanding of basic biology and population demographics for this key age group and the population as a whole.

Past studies of individual polar bear movements suggest that adults occupy somewhat restricted home ranges; however data are generally restricted to females because it is difficult to fit adult males with transmitter collars. In any case, adult movements do not accurately represent population structure because natal dispersal is the dominant control against population isolation in most vertebrates, with male-biased natal dispersal dominant among mammals. Thus, data on the movements of juvenile polar bears, including their adult home-ranges, is the missing critical element.

One benefit of the study is to expand collaboration between local university/government researchers and subsistence hunters along the Canadian Beaufort Sea (and adjacent coastlines). Such collaboration will complement previous/ongoing studies conducted in the Alaskan Beaufort Sea Region, but will add fresh new insights because of the emphasis on representative gene flow and dispersal. Approximately 200 polar bears are already expected to be captured in the

Canadian Beaufort Region each year for the next 4 years. This study is timed to take advantage of considerable savings in logistics by partnering with that ongoing Canadian study.

Objectives The objective of this study is to provide data necessary for interpretation of the population structure of polar bears in North America. Emphasis will be placed on understanding the importance of natal dispersal in polar bears and, specifically, on the extent to which bears born in, or near, Canada make use of United States land, nearshore, or OCS habitats at various life stages

Methods

1. Develop a partnership between University and Canadian Government polar bear biologists, and Canadian Natives to implement a study of juvenile polar bears using long-lived satellite transmitters for monitoring.
2. Test and Deploy satellite transmitters with the capability to permit multi-year (3-5 year) monitoring of juvenile polar bears. Verify and test remote release mechanisms for collars.
3. Capture juvenile polar bears and deploy up to 15 such satellite transmitters per year for 3 years.
4. As possible, take blood and tissue specimens for archival at AMMTAP, for genetic analysis, and for contaminants analysis.
5. Evaluate current and potentially more ecologically rigorous population designations in light of data from this study and other sources.

Date Information Required: Annual reports are due July 2006, 2007, 2008, and 2009 and a stand-alone final report is due October 2010.

Revised date: September 2007

ENVIRONMENTAL STUDIES PROGRAM: ANNUAL STUDIES PLAN FY 2008

Region: Alaska

Planning Areas: Beaufort Sea, Chukchi Sea

Title: Radio-Frequency Identification Tags for Grizzly and Polar Bear Research

MMS Information Needs to be Addressed: This jointly-funded study will develop and test new technology for application in population studies of polar bears on the Alaskan OCS. Such studies provide useful information on the Southern Beaufort Sea polar bear stock and specifically on the rapidly increasing sub-population of polar bears summering in areas of increasing oil and gas activities along the Alaskan Arctic coastline. New information will support NEPA analysis and documentation for Beaufort and Chukchi Sea Lease Sales, DPPs, and monitoring. Data will also be useful for MMPA permitting and development of related mitigation.

Actual Costs: \$257,000

Period of Performance: FY 2005-2008

Conducting Organization: CMI, ADF&G, USGS-BRD

Description:

Background Grizzly bears (*Ursus arctos*) and polar bears (*Ursus maritimus*) are important species for subsistence communities along the Beaufort Sea coast for food, fur and for their cultural importance. Much of our current knowledge about bear populations, habitat use, movements, and interactions with oil and gas activities on the North Slope has been the result of repeated observations of radio-collared or satellite-collared female and sub-adult bears. Unfortunately, adult male bears have a low retention rate for collars due to their large necks. Application of existing and emerging radio frequency identification technology, currently used for military and commerce, has the potential to significantly increase the sample size of marked bears by decreasing the cost of marking and allowing male bears to be marked. A system contains two major components: tags and a reader. The tags are currently capable of transmitting 100 m under laboratory conditions when interrogated by the reader. Neither the current generation of readers (receivers) nor the tags has been tested with large mammals under arctic environmental conditions where aircraft are used extensively.

Objectives The objective of this study is to modify the radio frequency identification system and test its feasibility for use on grizzly and polar bear research and management.

Methods

1. Modify an existing tag design so tags can be attached to bear ears.
2. Modify existing readers for use in aircraft and land vehicles.
3. Build 50 tags and 4 readers for use on the project.
4. Test the radio frequency identification system initially on 40 grizzly bears marked during the ADF&G "Oilfield Grizzly Bear Project" and, if successful, expand the test to include 10 polar bears.

Date Information Required: A final report is due April 2008.

Revised date: September 2007

ENVIRONMENTAL STUDIES PROGRAM: ANNUAL STUDIES PLAN FY 2008

Region: Alaska

Planning Area: Chukchi Sea

Title: Pinniped Movements and Foraging

MMS Information Needs to be Addressed: Large numbers of pinnipeds migrate through and potentially occupy areas of high oil and gas potential in the Chukchi Sea including habitat near the Burger Prospect. Pinnipeds may be affected in a variety of ways during all stages of oil and gas exploration, development, and production. Study findings will be used in post-sale NEPA analysis, review of EPs, DPPs and other reviews for post-sale and post-exploration MMS decision making and mitigation. Also, study results will be used in similar pre-lease analyses and documentation for later Chukchi Sea Lease Sale(s) in the *Outer Continental Shelf Oil and Gas Leasing Program 2007-2012*. Whether, when, and in which Planning Areas Lease Sale(s) may be held depends on decisions of the Secretary of Interior for the forthcoming *Final Outer Continental Shelf Oil and Gas Leasing Program 2007-2012*.

Actual Costs: \$1,163,000

Period of Performance: FY 2007-2011

Conducting Organization: NMFS NMML

Description:

Background As winter pack ice recedes; walrus, bearded seals, and other pinnipeds follow the ice edge from wintering areas to its northern margin. For example, large numbers of walrus migrate past the Lisburne Peninsula northward over rich potential feeding habitat such as Hanna Shoal and adjacent areas of high oil and gas potential. During this northward migration, many walrus move along coastal leads between Point Hope and Point Barrow and are hunted by Natives. Ice seals may be present in the Chukchi Sea throughout the year. Seasonal movements likely occur to offshore areas having high resources near Hanna Shoal.

Concern has been expressed by Native hunters that in recent summers, sea ice is receding faster and further to the north, making walrus less available to the communities that depend on them. Very little information is available on how walrus move through this region and where they forage. The same concerns exist over the affect changes in sea ice are having on distribution of ice seals.

The Burger Prospect has potentially strong renewed interest for oil and gas exploration and development and is located just south of Hanna Shoal. It is thus situated between winter habitat and potentially important summer feeding habitat on, and around, Hanna Shoal. Plans for geophysical exploration, field delineation, and development of production facilities and pipelines in that region are being developed and such activities may have consequences for pinniped movements and habitat utilization, which in turn could alter the availability of walrus and ice seals for subsistence by Natives in villages along the Northwestern Alaskan coastline. Identification of migration routes and high-use habitat areas is critical to assessment of potential

impacts from oil- and gas-related industrial activities on pinniped populations and subsistence use by Alaskan Natives. The MMS portion shown above is approximately 50% for FY 2007 and 67% of the estimated total joint funding of the total cost to accomplish all objectives. If joint funding from other sources, e.g. NMFS, FWS, ADFG, is not achieved, target species will be limited.

Objectives

Develop a phased cooperative project to deploy satellite transmitters to study the movements and habitat use of selected pinnipeds in the Chukchi Sea Planning area.

Model this study on a cooperative study of bowhead whale distribution and movements which MMS currently supports.

Methods

Phases I & II: Cooperate with Alaska Natives in Northwestern Alaska.

Phase I:

1. Communicate with hunters in villages along the coastline of northwest Alaska and St. Lawrence Island and other interested parties, to evaluate levels of interest in the proposed study. Hold a workshop if useful.
2. Evaluate satellite tagging technology, including equipment, deployment and attachment methods and make recommendations for proposed study(s).
3. Considering the above, prepare an implementation plan for satellite tagging and data collection. Explore joint funding opportunities.

Phase II:

1. Review literature and existing data to develop hypotheses about habitat use and seasonal movements between winter and summer habitat.
2. Train Native hunters or other coastal village residents to deploy satellite transmitters on selected pinnipeds in the vicinity of respective villages.
3. Deploy transmitters to test hypotheses developed. Since tags will have a relatively short lifespan, sampling is to be spread among villages and to the extent possible divided among northward and southward migrating pinnipeds.
4. Analyze data to test hypotheses and develop recommendations for mitigations of any likely effects of development on habitat use and migration.
5. Maintain data in a GIS and provide summaries of individual movements regularly on a public website. Share results with residents of communities near the study area. Encourage participation of local Natives, especially young people, in analysis and interpretation of findings and conclusions to the extent possible.

Date Information Required: Annual interim reports are due 2008-2011 and a final report is due 2012.

Revised Date: September 2007

ENVIRONMENTAL STUDIES PROGRAM: ANNUAL STUDIES PLAN 2008

Region: Alaska

Planning Area: Beaufort Sea

Title: Assessing Reproduction and Body Condition of the Ringed Seal near Sachs Harbour, Northwest Territory, Canada, through a Harvest-based Sampling Program

MMS Information Needs to be Addressed: This study will assist MMS in its responsibility for identifying and mitigating potential effects of OCS development on ringed seals and polar bears. Information gained will be relevant to the interpretation of results from a Canadian polar bear population assessment underway in the Beaufort Sea and various concurrent, MMS-funded marine mammal studies. The information will be used for NEPA analysis and documentation for Beaufort Sea Lease Sales and DPPs.

Total Cost: \$115,000

Period of Performance: FY2005-2010

Conducting Organization: Department of Fisheries and Oceans, Canada

Description:

Background

Ringed seals are the most abundant pinniped in the Arctic Ocean and along the Alaskan Beaufort Sea coastline. Population stocks of the ringed seals have not been delineated but ringed seals are capable of having large home ranges, with some seals making long movements between wintering and summering habitats. For example, ringed seals tagged at Cape Parry, Northwest Territory, Canada, in September of 2001 and 2002, were found to migrate westward along the Alaskan Beaufort Sea coastline and into the Chukchi Sea for over-wintering. Since ringed seals from the U. S. Beaufort and seals from Western Canada appear to intermix in the Beaufort and Chukchi Seas, and habitat is fairly similar along those respective coastlines, information from ringed seal studies in the Western Arctic of Canada is potentially useful for understanding the health status of ringed seals in Alaska, including those spending at least some of the year near the oil and gas developments along the shoreline of the Beaufort Sea and Beaufort OCS.

The health and condition of ringed seals in the Beaufort Sea are important to biologists, hunters and managers for several reasons. They have been proven to be useful indicators of the physical and biological environment. As ubiquitous and important prey, they are critical to the well being of polar bears. Also, they are valued as a subsistence resource by the Inupiat and the Inuvialuit. Changes in the seal population that have been documented in the western Arctic in the past, have included a reduction in ovulation rates among mature females, reduced percent pups in the harvest, reduced number of birth lairs, a possible shift in the age of sexual maturity, and changes in relative abundance during both ice-covered and open water periods. Moreover, changes in the reproduction and condition of ringed seals in the eastern Beaufort Sea can have profound effects on the polar bear population, according to a review in 2002. In particular, during years when the ice conditions are particularly heavy, seal fatness, reproduction and pup survival have

been observed to decline, resulting in a subsequent decline in reproduction of polar bears and survival of their cubs.

The purpose of this study is to cosponsor a sampling program jointly funded with the Department of Fisheries and Oceans (DFO), Northwest Territories, Canada and in cooperation with Inuvialuit subsistence hunters in the Sachs Harbour area. Data on seal body condition and reproductive output will provide an assessment of the status of the ringed seal population in relation to its environment and as a prey resource for Beaufort Sea polar bears.

Objectives

1. In coordination with ongoing seal monitoring studies in Holman and along the Alaskan Beaufort Sea coastline, to sample and measure ringed seals taken by Inuvialuit hunters in the Sachs Harbour area (minimum of $n = 80$).
2. Use reproductive status and body condition as indicators to evaluate ecosystem productivity and fluctuations in the seal population.
3. To contribute biological data on Beaufort Sea seal populations for use in interpretation of condition and reproduction rate data on polar bears collected in the same general study area through the same time period.
4. To examine these aspects in the context of annual variation in regional ice conditions.
5. To co-ordinate with, and provide samples for, "stock health" related studies, such as disease and contaminants.

Methods The study will be coordinated by the Canadian Department of Fisheries and Oceans, Stock Assessment Section, in collaboration with its Resources, Wildlife and Economic Development Section and the Canadian Wildlife Service. The project will utilize the same methods as an ongoing project in Holman, Northwest Territory and collect data that are comparable to existing data sets for seals in this area: in the 1970's by the Canadian Wildlife Service; in 1987-1989 by the Canadian Fisheries Joint Management Council; and in 1992 by the Department of Fisheries and Oceans. Further information on this is available from Canadian Beaufort Sea ringed seal studies at www.beaufortseals.com and several other sources. Body condition of ringed seals harvested by Inuvialuit hunters near Sachs Harbour, and two parameters of seal reproduction (ovulation rate and percent pups in the harvest) will be analyzed. These parameters were selected because they varied with changes in the seal population during work in this same area in the 1970's and 1990's, so that new data can be compared with results from past years. Also, it is possible and practical to monitor these aspects over several years through a harvest-based study in the community of Sachs Harbour, Northwest Territory, Canada.

Date Information Required: Annual reports were/are due in December 2006, 2007, 2008, and 2009. A draft and final report are due January and March 2010, respectively.

Revised date: September 2007

ENVIRONMENTAL STUDIES PROGRAM: ANNUAL STUDIES PLAN 2008

Region: Alaska

Planning Area: Beaufort Sea

Title: Pre-migratory Movements and Physiology of Shorebirds Staging on Beaufort Sea Littoral Zone

MMS Information Needs to be Addressed: MMS will use results on shorebird distribution and abundance from this study, and related studies cited within, to estimate the effects of various oil spill scenarios on the Beaufort Sea breeding and staging shorebird population. MMS will also use information on habitat-use, and peaks in staging and turn-over times to improve NEPA assessments of potential impacts of oil development, and potentially to develop mitigation measures for future OCS activity, and supporting onshore development. This work will compliment other ongoing research on tundra breeding shorebirds, and allow a more complete evaluation of the potential effects of oil and gas development. MMS will utilize information obtained from this study for NEPA analysis and documentation for Beaufort Sea Lease Sales, post-sale mitigation, exploration plan reviews, and DPPs.

Total Cost: \$270,208

Period of Performance: FY 2004-2009

Conducting Organization: CMI, UAF

Description:

Background Preliminary work conducted during the 1970's near Barrow, Alaska, indicated that shorebirds breeding along Alaska's North Slope use the Beaufort Sea littoral zone extensively for nutrient acquisition prior to migration to wintering areas in Asia and the Americas. However, little information exists on the seasonal distribution and abundance of pre-migratory shorebirds that use littoral zones along the entire Beaufort Sea and what factors may influence the duration and timing of use. This information is important given increased interest in oil and gas exploration and other development across the Arctic coastal plain.

Shorebirds are granted protection under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act, and several species that breed and stage along the Beaufort Sea (Dunlin, American Golden-plover, Bar-tailed Godwit, and Whimbrel) appear on the USFWS list of birds of conservation concern. A better understanding of the ecology of staging shorebirds across the Beaufort Sea littoral zone could be useful for assessment of potential effects from current and future industrial activity, including possible contamination of brooding and staging habitats from oil or gas spills, human disturbance, or increased rates of predation by species (e.g., gulls and ravens) whose populations have increased through anthropogenic changes in the area.

Objectives

1. Assess the species composition, distribution, abundance, and habitat use of pre-migratory shorebirds staging along Beaufort Sea coastline.

2. Examine factors affecting shorebird use of littoral zones near Barrow, Alaska, as a reference site for the remaining portions of the Beaufort Sea coastline.

Methods

1. Conduct a single aerial survey for staging shorebirds along the Beaufort coast from Point Lay to Demarcation Point on the Canadian border during August and September 2005 and 2006. Four teams of biologists will be stationed on the ground along the aerial flight line to identify species using the area and correct aerial survey data.
2. Locate and monitor littoral transects around Barrow to determine species-specific habitat preference, turnover times, and movements between local staging sites.
3. Mist-net and blood-sample birds at littoral staging sites in the Barrow vicinity to examine differences in fattening rates (measured by plasma fat metabolite levels) and physiological stress levels (measured by blood corticosterone concentrations). This information will provide information about the physiological mechanism behind the timing and duration of pre-migratory shorebird use of Beaufort Sea littoral zones.

Date Information Required: A final report is due October 2008.

Revised date: September 2007

ENVIRONMENTAL STUDIES PROGRAM: ANNUAL STUDIES PLAN 2008

Region: Alaska

Planning Areas: Beaufort Sea, Chukchi Sea

Title: King and Common Eider Migrations Past Point Barrow

MMS Information Needs to be Addressed: MMS will use the data on king and common eider distribution and abundance from this study, and related studies mentioned above, to model the effect of various oil spill scenarios on the Beaufort Sea eider population. MMS will use information on basic natural history and ecology to improve assessments of potential impacts of oil development and, potentially, to develop mitigation measures for future OCS, and supporting onshore, development. MMS will use information from this study for NEPA analysis and documentation for Beaufort Sea Lease Sales, exploration plan reviews, and DPPs.

Total Cost: \$231,000

Period of Performance: FY 2002-2007

Conducting Organization: CMI, UAF

Description:

Background King (*Somateria spectabilis*) and common eiders (*S. mollissima v-nigra*) are an important resource for Native people in northern Alaska and Canada. Residents of Barrow harvest more king and common eiders than any other species of waterfowl (Fuller and George 1977). Most individuals of both species nesting in Alaska and Canada pass very close to shore at point Barrow, Alaska, twice annually – during their northward, spring migration and their southward, fall migration. Based on previous surveys conducted at Barrow from 1953 to the present, NSB scientists in 2000 argued that the king eider population appeared to have relatively constant numbers between 1953 and 1976, but may have declined by about 53% between 1976 and 1996. Those authors also argued that the common eider population may have declined by a similar magnitude (56%) during the same period.

Although eider surveys have been conducted periodically at Pt. Barrow since 1953, a comprehensive survey was last completed in 1996. This study will support a repeat of the previous surveys, using the same location, methods and some of the same observers that participated during 1996. This effort will expand the existing synthesis of eider migration data compiled in the earlier publication by NSB scientists in 2000 and should lead to a better understanding of the timing of migrations and use of the Alaskan Beaufort Sea OCS and coastal environments by the subject species. This study also is synergistic with three other ongoing MMS studies - two that address habitat use and movements of king eiders and a third that is developing recovery models for these and related species.

Objectives

1. Estimate the number of king and common eiders passing by Point Barrow in spring and fall 2003-2004 and compare with counts made in 1996.

2. Estimate the sex ratios of king and common eiders passing by Point Barrow in spring 2003 and 2004.
3. Estimate the timing and sex/age composition of king and common eiders leaving the Beaufort Sea in the summer of 2003 and 2004.
4. Investigate possible correlation among weather conditions and high passage rates of eiders within each migration.

Methods Investigators will follow the same methodology as was used in previous surveys at the same site.

1. Count eiders from the base of the Point Barrow spit between approximately 10 September and 30 October using one to three observers.
2. Make counts up to 10 hours each day in September, but limit to 2 hours per day by October as day length decreases.
3. Collect data on weather conditions (temperature, wind speed, wind direction, cloud cover, and visibility). For each flock sighted, record: time, direction of travel, species composition, number sighted, ratio of males to females for each species, and other comments on behavior.
4. Collect data from subsistence hunters regarding species, sex, and age composition, status of molt of late summer flocks.
5. Analyze data following previous methods in a study by NSB scientists in 2000.

Date Information Required: A revised final report is due September 2007.

Revised date: September 2007

ENVIRONMENTAL STUDIES PROGRAM: ANNUAL STUDIES PLAN 2008

Region: Alaska

Planning Areas: Beaufort Sea

Region: Alaska

Planning Areas: Cook Inlet

Title: Distribution and Abundance of Harbor Seals in Cook Inlet

MMS Information Needs to be Addressed: This study will provide a sound, scientific protocol for aerial surveys to evaluate harbor seals in the Cook Inlet/Shelikof Strait area. This study will provide information for NEPA analysis and documentation for proposed Cook Inlet Lease Sales and other NEPA reviews.

Total Cost: \$813,000

Period of Performance: FY 2003-2007

Conducting Organization: National Marine Mammal Laboratory

Description:

Background Harbor seals have been identified as a “keystone” species in the Cook Inlet and Gulf of Alaska marine environment. They represent a top-level predator in the food chain and an abundant species that occurs on the OCS year-around. The western Gulf of Alaska/Cook Inlet population of harbor seals has declined drastically since 1976 (Pitcher 1990). Any perturbations that might be associated with Cook Inlet oil and gas activities could threaten this population. Information on the current trend in the population is needed to adequately assess potential effects of oil and gas activities. Harbor seal distribution could be affected by operations, and their abundance probably could be affected by a substantial oil spill.

Objectives To develop and use a sound, scientific protocol to conduct a multi-year/season series of aerial surveys to estimate the distribution and abundance of harbor seals in the Cook Inlet Area, and to identify factors contributing to variation in those estimates.

Methods

1. Review and refine the previously established protocol for harbor seals by aerial surveys including information gleaned from EVOS Prince William Sound harbor seal surveys.
2. Estimate relative abundance and density of hauled out harbor seals along the coast of Cook Inlet, and associated islands.
3. Correlate harbor seal densities along the coast with environmental parameters.
4. Develop and deploy remote camera systems for year-around use to identify factors that impact the haul-out behavior of harbor seals at various sites in Cook Inlet and quantify the relationship between haul-out patterns and these factors.
5. Integrate findings of this study with those of the concurrent MMS satellite-tagging study

“Movements and habitat use Harbor Seals in Cook Inlet”, in order to broaden the geographic extent of the data available to estimate the proportion of seals missed because they are in the water during aircraft surveys.

Date Information Required: A final report is due December 2006.

Revised date: September 2007

ENVIRONMENTAL STUDIES PROGRAM: ANNUAL STUDIES PLAN 2008

Region: Alaska

Planning Areas: Cook Inlet

Title: Movements and Habitat Use of Harbor Seals in Cook Inlet

MMS Information Needs to be Addressed: This study will provide valuable information about a harbor seal population (or populations) that is exhibiting a trend toward seriously declining abundance. The study will provide information that addresses public concerns raised during MMS outreach. Information on distribution, abundance and behavior will be used in pre- and assessments and could form the basis for post-development monitoring if oil or gas related development is undertaken in the MMS Cook Inlet Planning Area. Information will be useful for assessments and monitoring for Cook Inlet Lease Sale in 2006.

Total Cost: \$1,328,000

Period of Performance: FY 2004-2007

Conducting Organization: National Marine Mammal Laboratory

Description:

Background In recent decades, the abundance of harbor seals has declined at several Alaskan locations. For example: counts of harbor seals at Tugidak Island declined 85% between 1976 and 1988 in Bristol Bay; the north side of the Alaska Peninsula; seal counts declined 42% between 1975 and 2003; and trend site counts in Prince William Sound suggest declines in harbor seal populations of approximately 63% between 1984 and 1997. The significance and causes of these declines are unknown, but concern is rising about the present and future status of Alaska harbor seal populations, most notably in the Gulf of Alaska. Because of the proximity of the declining populations to Cook Inlet, and the inherent vulnerability of harbor seals to spilled oil, it is particularly important to assess the potential impacts of oil and gas activities on the harbor seal population in the Cook Inlet Region.

In Alaska, aerial surveys have generally been conducted during the molt period (August-September) when the number of seals hauled out is thought to be highest and the weather conditions are likely to be most favorable for flying. Haul-out patterns at other times of the year are not well known. Since any seal's activity budget includes a significant time away from haul outs, information is also needed about at-sea behaviors for oil spill risk assessment. This study would result in a coordinated benefit to ongoing MMS-funded aerial surveys of harbor seals by estimating a correction of survey counts for the numbers of animals missed when they are not hauled out. It augments the ongoing MMS study entitled, *Distribution and Abundance of Harbor Seals* by providing a correction factor and other information on the distribution and behavior of seals away from established haul-outs.

Objectives The general goal of this study is to employ satellite telemetry to document the movements, foraging behavior, and habitat use of harbor seals in Cook Inlet. Specific objectives are to:

1. Enhance estimates of harbor seal abundance in Cook Inlet by determining and applying a correction factor to survey counts of harbor seals from concurrent aerial surveys at haul outs in Cook Inlet.
2. Obtain Cook Inlet-wide information on harbor seal relative abundance, distribution and behavior with emphasis on habitat other than major haul outs.
3. Identify and prioritize any specific habitat areas that are of particular importance to the Cook Inlet harbor seal population(s) for specific activities such as feeding, breeding, pup rearing, wintering, etc.
4. Conduct a comprehensive evaluation of whether individual populations (or stocks) exist in the MMS Cook Inlet planning area.

Methods

1. Capture and instrument 30 seals in each of 3 successive years (N = 90) with Argos satellite-linked time-depth recorders. Seals to be instrumented would include approximately equal proportions of juveniles, adult females and adult males each year. Seals would be captured from locations throughout Cook Inlet, in relative numbers that are proportionate to local abundance.
2. Develop necessary statistical analyses or statistical models to produce a correction factor for harbor seal abundance derived from aerial surveys at haul outs.
3. Use movement and behavioral data from this study with any existing published results or other data in a comprehensive analysis of harbor seal distribution and habitat use in, or adjacent to, the MMS Cook Inlet Planning Area.
4. Use text, maps, photographs or other data summaries to portray harbor seal distribution and habitat use in Cook Inlet for use in oil spill risk analysis.
5. Produce a synthesis of movement data, and other existing evidence (e.g., genetic analyses or tagging studies) to evaluate whether individual populations (or stocks) exist in the MMS Cook Inlet planning area. Use tissue samples obtained from instrumented seals for supplemental genetic analyses, if needed.

Date Information Required: Quarterly and annual reports are due in 2004, 2005, and 2006. A final report is due July 2007.

Revised date: September 2007

ENVIRONMENTAL STUDIES PROGRAM: ANNUAL STUDIES PLAN FY 2008

Region: Alaska
Planning Area: Chukchi Sea
Title: Monitoring Marine Birds of Concern in the Eastern Chukchi Nearshore Area

MMS Information Needs to be Addressed: The initial MMS environmental impact analysis for the 5 Year Program, 2007-2012, identifies species of concern in the Chukchi Sea and recent Conservation Recommendations to MMS (Section 7 Consultation, Beaufort Sale 186) recommended research on migratory species of concern. Thus, updated information on marine bird distribution, species composition, molting, staging and timing of use in the eastern Chukchi coastal area between Barrow and Point Hope is needed. Avian species of moderate-high concern include the Spectacled Eider, Yellow-billed Loon, Red-throated Loon, and Pacific Black Brant. Both the threatened Spectacled Eiders and the Yellow-billed Loon occur in coastal and marine environments from Barrow south to Cape Lisburn. Ledyard Bay is ESA Critical Habitat for the Spectacled Eiders, and limited surveys indicate Peard Bay may also be an important molting area.

Study findings will be used in post-sale NEPA analysis, ongoing ESA Section 7 Consultations, review of EPs, DPPs and other reviews for post-sale and post-exploration decision making and mitigation. Also, study results will be used in similar pre-lease analyses and documentation for later Chukchi Sea Lease Sale(s) in the *Outer Continental Shelf Oil and Gas Leasing Program 2007-2012*. Whether, when, and in which Planning Areas Lease Sale(s) may be held depends on decisions of the Secretary of Interior for the forthcoming *Final Outer Continental Shelf Oil and Gas Leasing Program 2007-2012*

Total Cost: \$750,000

Period of Performance: FY 2007-2011

Conducting Organization: USGS-BRD

Description:

Background Specific areas identified for study in this profile are very important Chukchi Sea coastal lagoons and embayments where waterfowl seasonally concentrate. These locations are vulnerable to industrial disturbance or oil spills potentially associated with offshore oil and gas exploration and development. Scientists have identified the lagoons, bays, and barrier islands along the Alaskan coast of the Chukchi Sea as important feeding, staging, and molting areas for relatively large numbers and a diverse assemblage of water birds breeding in both Alaska and Canada. Peard and Ledyard Bays and Kasegaluk Lagoon, in particular, appear to represent important staging and/or molting habitat for a variety of shorebirds, seabirds (nesting colonies at Point Hope, Cape Lewis, Cape Lisburne, Point Lay, Icy Cape, and Cape Thompson), and waterfowl. In particular, it is critical to identify high-use areas by threatened Spectacled Eiders. Also, the USFWS was petitioned in 2004 to list the Yellow-billed loon under the ESA and thus this species is of concern to MMS. USFWS aerial surveys recorded fairly sizeable concentrations of Spectacled Eiders in Peard Bay, particularly in August which are presumably

molting birds. Scientists have identified Kasegaluk Lagoon as a major fall staging area for a large proportion of the Pacific Flyway population of Black Brant (approximately 40%). Coastal aerial surveys and on-shore migration surveys encountered Yellow-billed loons, particularly in the fall. Recent satellite telemetry locations of post-breeding Yellow-billed Loons provide additional evidence of the importance of nearshore habitat at Peard and Ledyard Bays, and offshore habitat near Point Hope in the Chukchi Sea. Though the OCS Environmental Assessment Program completed several avian studies in this region, most were done 15-20 years ago.

The MMS share shown above represents 50 percent of the estimated total joint funding needed for a single component, loons only. Joint funding may be established through coordination with NSSI, BLM, USFWS, or USGS.

Objective Document spatial distribution, species composition, timing of use and residence times by foraging, molting, and staging Spectacled Eider, Yellow-billed and Red-throated Loons, and Pacific Black Brant in the vicinity of Peard Bay, Ledyard Bay, and Kasegaluk Lagoon in the eastern Chukchi nearshore environment.

Methods

1. Conduct periodic low-level (45-50 meters) aerial surveys along transects established perpendicular to the shoreline (late summer) and along open-water leads (spring) to document spatial distribution, species composition, and timing of use by marine birds and waterfowl.
2. Using a combination of implanted satellite and VHF transmitters, document both local and long-distance movements of marked individuals during the breeding and post-breeding period for Yellow-billed and Red-throated Loons and staging Pacific Black Brant.
3. Using a combination of behavioral observations and monitoring of implanted transmitters, estimate distance flown/feeding flight, time away from nest, and food items provisioned to young for Yellow-billed and Red-throated Loons. Using either satellite telemetry or transmitters and remote stations to estimate peak arrival and departure times, as well as residence times for a sample of Pacific Black Brant in Kasegaluk Lagoon.
4. Using either focal or scan sampling techniques, document proportion of time spent feeding (versus other behaviors) by staging Pacific Black Brant. Quantify foraging behavior (e.g., foraging bout length, pecks/minute) and foods consumed via direct observation. Collection of birds on various dates post-arrival would provide invaluable information on both diets and nutrient acquisition and energetics.

Date Information Required: Annual interim reports are due 2008-2011 and a final report is due 2012.

Revised date: September 2007

ENVIRONMENTAL STUDIES PROGRAM: ANNUAL STUDIES PLAN 2008

Region: Alaska

Planning Areas: All Alaska Planning Areas

Title: Publication of a Book/Synthesis on the Socioeconomic Effects of Oil and Gas Industry Activity on the Alaskan OCS

MMS Information Needs to be Addressed: Throughout Alaskan coastal communities there are socioeconomic-related issues resulting from proposals for offshore oil and gas development. This study will provide a peer-reviewed synthesis of current information for use in decision making. The study information will be used for NEPA analysis and documentation for Beaufort Sea Lease Sales, Cook Inlet Lease Sales Chukchi/Hope Lease Sales, DPPs, and ongoing outreach efforts.

Total Cost: \$349,000

Period of Performance: FY 1998-2007

Conducting Organization: Stephen Braund & Associates

Description:

Background The Alaska OCS Region has implemented an important socioeconomic component of its overall Environmental Studies Program, resulting in the publication of more than 160 Technical Reports addressing statewide socioeconomic study topics. Methodologies have included case studies, institutional profile analysis and analysis of secondary-source materials, modeling and econometrics analysis, and survey research. In recent years, socioeconomic studies have become more focused and issue-oriented, emphasizing the critical points between OCS development and social systems with which potential development would interact. For example, studies have collected time-series information and measures of community and regional well being as bases for social-indicators monitoring.

Considering the extent of MMS's social research in Alaska and the substantial information accumulated, a workshop examining the usability of the current research in its original forms versus the costs and benefits of further synthesis was recently conducted. In planning for the preparation of a useful resource document resulting from the workshop efforts, the workshop participants identified a tentative outline, chapter integration, and potential co-sponsors.

The level of information regarding changes in the socioeconomic environment related to OCS activities is varied—without a comprehensive formal, comparative, quantitative, and qualitative documentation of existing data, this information is of limited use to decision makers.

Objectives The objective of this study is to coordinate and prepare a peer-reviewed book/synthesis of available information about the potential socioeconomic effects of oil- and gas-industry activity on the Alaska OCS.

Methods The study will finalize the book/synthesis outline; integrate chapters; identify the

author; and solicit potential co-sponsors. MMS funded studies will be the primary source of reference materials plus subsequent studies that were initiated from these findings. To be considered as source material, the literature must be related to oil and gas activities in Alaska and peer-reviewed. The topics to be addressed will be narrowed specific to the information available through this literature search which will also serve to identify potential authors. These authors may also identify additional sources of information for synthesis.

Date Information Required: The manuscript is completed and awaiting publication / distribution.

Revised date: September 2007

ENVIRONMENTAL STUDIES PROGRAM: ANNUAL STUDIES PLAN 2008

Region: Alaska

Planning Areas: Beaufort Sea

Title: Quantitative Description of Potential Impacts of OCS Activities on Bowhead Whale Hunting and Subsistence Activities in the Beaufort Sea

MMS Information Needs to be Addressed: Leaders of the North Slope Inupiat communities, including elders, have for many years expressed concern about potential impacts to their subsistence way of life. This study is important in its capacity to effectively measure and document such concerns and for its potential utility in future decision-making processes. This information will be used for NEPA analysis and documentation for Beaufort Sea Lease Sales and DPPs.

Total Cost: \$592,000

Period of Performance: FY 2001-2007

Organization Conducting: EDAW, Inc.

Description:

Background The residents of Nuiqsut, Kaktovik, and Barrow are close to the oil industry activity onshore on the North Slope and in the adjoining Beaufort Sea. Subsistence is central to the Inupiat people residing on the North Slope. Virtually all Inupiat residents rely on subsistence resources directly or through kinship sharing. Bowhead whaling is especially important and impacted if OCS activity causes reduction in whale hunting success. Inupiat leaders, including elders, have expressed concern about the effects of potential oil spills on bowhead whaling and cumulative impacts of past, present and future oil industry activity onshore and offshore. At a meeting in Barrow in March 2000 elders defined two principal questions concerning cultural, social and economic impacts:

- A. Regarding offshore oil and gas activities, do people in Barrow, Nuiqsut and Kaktovik feel that these activities have: a) resulted in positive social, economic or cultural impacts to their community, and/or b) resulted in negative social, economic or cultural impacts to their community?
 - If members of a community feel there have been positive social, economic or cultural impacts to their community, what are the positive impacts and how can they be quantified?
 - If members of a community feel that there have been negative social, economic or cultural impacts to their community, what are the negative impacts and how can they be quantified?
- B. What kind of support would need to be put in place to enable Alaskan Eskimo subsistence communities to continue subsistence activities and keep traditional

subsistence ways of life intact in the event of an oil spill or cumulative impacts (including air and/or water pollution and noise) that make subsistence resources locally unavailable?

Several studies have been done which address certain aspects of potential sociocultural impacts on the North Slope. This study would update some older studies and provide information not previously collected in other aspects.

Objectives To quantitatively estimate the social and cultural impacts of OCS oil and gas exploration, development, and production in the Beaufort Sea on the communities of Nuiqsut, Kaktovik, and Barrow; and to recommend mitigation measures.

1. Identify what people observe and anticipate as the positive impacts and opportunities of OCS activities.
2. Identify what people observe and anticipate as the negative impacts and risks of OCS activities.
3. Quantitatively describe direct impact experiences and anticipated experiences by bowhead hunters.
4. Document actual experiences and match the impact with the reporting unit experiencing the impact (e.g., whaling crews, households, individual hunters, elders).

Methods

1. Review the literature, including previous testimony, and make a preliminary list of North Slope impacts and concerns expressed by residents (positive and negative). Review the methodologies and survey questionnaires used in the social indicator studies conducted by MMS in the 1990's for possible use in this study. Gather a thorough list of residents' observed and anticipated impacts and concerns through focus group meetings in Nuiqsut, Kaktovik, and Barrow. Potential impacts would likely include, among others, pollution, noise, and other factors that may make bowhead whales and other marine resources more difficult to hunt or unavailable. Collect information on residents' views of possible remedies or mitigation measures related to those concerns and impacts. Design the list of impacts in such a way as to separate OCS-related impacts from other impacts as much as possible. Circulate this list of impacts and mitigation possibilities to the NSB, AEWC, village contacts as appropriate, and MMS.
2. Use the literature and focus group data to develop a draft questionnaire. Distribute that questionnaire to the NSB, AEWC, Scientific Review Board (SRB), village contacts, and MMS for review and comment. Pretest the questionnaire (N<10) in the communities, make revisions as appropriate, and re-circulate the questionnaire for final review. Obtain approval from the Federal Office of Management and Budget as required for federally funded questionnaires, estimated to take 6-8 months. Develop interviewer guides (question by question, tracking, and reporting procedures) and conduct an interviewer training session.
3. Coordinate with NSB, AEWC, and community contacts to enable face-to-face interviews in Barrow, Nuiqsut, and Kaktovik. Due to its large size and socio-demographic heterogeneity, use a stratified, representative, and randomized sampling strategy in Barrow. Attempt to interview randomly selected adult members in all households in Nuiqsut and Kaktovik, with the expectation of a response rate of over 80 percent. Select a subsistence-oriented Arctic or

sub-Arctic control community outside of the North Slope and conduct a representative and randomized sample of interviews there. Ideally, members of the control community will hunt bowhead whales.

4. Code the surveys, enter data into Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS), check, and edit. Use basic univariate and bivariate analyses to generate valid and reliable descriptive information for inclusion in summary tables and graphs, and to provide quantitative-oriented but readily understandable descriptive discussion in the draft and final reports. Use multivariate analysis to explain variation in the data and to provide quantitative-oriented but readily understandable explanatory discussion in the draft and final reports. Draw from findings about respondent's ideas for potential mitigation measures to develop a draft recommendation section.
5. Develop a draft report and present it to the AEW, NSB, SRB, and village contacts in Nuiqsut and Kaktovik for extensive input and commentary.
6. Finalize the draft report based on the input and commentary of interested parties and present and disseminate study findings to those parties.
7. Coordinate all steps above with other potential planned studies.

Date Information Required: A final report is due October, 2007.

Revised date: September 2007

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ENVIRONMENTAL STUDIES PROGRAM: ANNUAL STUDIES PLAN 2008

Region: Alaska

Planning Areas: Beaufort Sea

Title: Subsistence Mapping at Nuiqsut, Kaktovik, Barrow, and Wainwright: Past and Present Comparison

MMS Information Needs to be Addressed: The information will be used for NEPA analysis and documentation for Beaufort Sea Lease Sales and DPPs.

Total Cost: \$400,000

Period of Performance: FY 2002-2007

Conduction Organization: Stephen A. Braund and Associates

Description:

Background MMS conducted studies providing detailed mapping of a wide range of subsistence activities for Nuiqsut, Kaktovik, and Barrow about 1990. Information is available from recent subsistence scientific, private, and government sources. For example, ADF&G has done some detailed mapping of subsistence activities for these three North Slope s villages since 1990 but the mapping needs to be put in usable form. MMS assesses cumulative effects in EISs and, therefore, needs documentation on more current subsistence patterns for comparison between 1990 and the present. Exploration on the offshore, including the OCS, and much onshore development has taken place since 1990. Much oil and gas infrastructure has been built onshore since 1990. Northstar is the first offshore oil development connecting to the onshore developments centered at Prudhoe Bay and it began production in 2001. This study will coordinate with the documentation of subsistence activities at Cross Island, which is part of the ongoing “Arctic Nearshore Impact Monitoring In Development Areas” (ANIMIDA) study and continuation of that study. It will utilize information from the MMS-sponsored study which compiled GIS overlays of oil-industry and other human activities for the 1979-1998 period in the Beaufort Sea.

Objective Develop a Geographic Information System (GIS) to map and analyze changes in and potential interactions between subsistence activities and oil industry activities.

Methods

1. Consult with key organizations to refine the scope of work for the study and to plan for conduct of the study. Such organizations may include the NSB Planning and Wildlife Management Departments, AEWG, Inupiat Community of the Arctic Slope, the Native Villages of Barrow, Nuiqsut and Kaktovik, and ADF&G Subsistence Division, and others as appropriate
2. Compile information regarding subsistence geospatial patterns from MMS sponsored and other studies conducted in Nuiqsut, Kaktovik, Barrow and Wainwright during the 1990s. Assess the quality of existing geo-spatial data and convert to GIS format where possible.

3. Compile current information on subsistence activities and use of resources for Nuiqsut, Kaktovik, Barrow, and Wainwright as available from recent work conducted by scientific, private, and government entities. Gather primary source data regarding current subsistence effort, and use of resources from knowledgeable key informants resident in Nuiqsut, Kaktovik, and Barrow. The data collection effort will coordinate with other relevant MMS studies.
4. Generate maps depicting where subsistence activities are currently taking place and at what level of intensity. Products will show potential changes in harvests, access to resources, competition for resources, costs, effort, and levels of risk.
5. For each subsistence activity map, provide context describing in standardized and specific terms the nature and source of the data.
6. Develop overlay maps depicting changes in subsistence activities and changes in oil and gas activities. Develop analysis to address potential cumulative-effect dynamics occurring between subsistence and oil and gas activities. Develop descriptive context to augment the analysis.
7. Review and evaluate effectiveness of current federal and state mitigation associated with oil and gas activity regarding potential displacement of subsistence resources and resource users.
8. Review graphic and written analysis with key informants and key organizations including but not limited to those identified in 1 above. Disseminate ongoing and final products of study to local residents through village workshops and integrate workshop feedback into the final analysis.
9. Input all final spatial information on subsistence and industry activity into a GIS format.
10. Make resulting information available to the public on CD-ROM.

Date Information Required: The final report and set of maps is due in December 2007.

Revised date: September 2007

ENVIRONMENTAL STUDIES PROGRAM: ANNUAL STUDIES PLAN 2008

Region: Alaska

Planning Areas: Beaufort Sea and Lower Cook Inlet

Title: Researching Technical Dialogue with Alaskan Coastal Communities: Analysis of the Social, Cultural, Linguistic, and Institutional Parameters of Public/Agency Communication Patterns

MMS Information Needs to be Addressed: Since MMS primarily communicates to a diverse public through the preparation of regulatory measures, EISs, and other documents, an analytic investigation of alternative communication processes and their effects on key constituents is needed. This study will evaluate the effectiveness of various communication strategies, explore prospects for altering future communication efforts, and seek to make agency communication more effective in the Alaska region. By reducing miscommunication with stakeholders, this study will enhance the ability of the public to participate more fully in the NEPA process. Information is needed by FY2006.

Total Cost: \$300,000

Period of Performance: FY 2004-2007

Conducting Organization: EDAW, Inc.

Background: Technical dialogue plays an important role in shaping OCS decisions, yet relatively little research has been devoted to investigate the communication processes between technical professionals and citizen stakeholders. Some research of this nature has been done, but not in Alaska, where distinctive resource management issues and distinctive social, cultural, linguistic, and institutional differences exist. Previous social research indicates that differing knowledge bases and paradigms routinely complicate the communication efforts of federal institutions in Alaskan coastal communities. Some agencies have already made significant progress in efforts to assess and improve the effectiveness of their written communication methods with the public.

The proposed research would specifically investigate the effects of MMS written communication efforts in selected coastal communities and try to improve communication processes with local stakeholder groups. It would systematically identify and analyze potential communication obstacles and then pursue remedies through pilot-testing a series of experimental “newsletters” on targeted focus groups. Is MMS successfully communicating the messages that it intends to communicate? Does a particular communication have any measurable effect on relevant local understandings? Are unintended messages being communicated? Can MMS improve communication techniques through cost efficient measures? Can issues of public trust be addressed through a more effective written communication process?

If specific written communication problems can be identified through controlled testing, the study would then seek to provide both a rationale and a method to explore potential changes in future agency communication strategies with regard to:

- message content
- mechanisms of message delivery
- timeliness of communication
- availability and use of supporting materials and information

Objectives

1. Assess the measurable effectiveness of MMS written communication methods with various communities of coastal Alaska.
2. Identify potential obstacles in MMS written communication efforts and develop a strategy for their amelioration.
3. Generate specific recommendations for improved written communication methods and for their implementation in agency processes.
4. Improve prospects for public/agency communication and collaboration in resource management issues of the Alaskan OCS.

Methods

1. Analyze and catalogue the record of public comments from Cook Inlet and the Beaufort Sea to assess the scope and character of manifest communication issues and regional opinions about offshore oil development and MMS regulatory processes.
2. Conduct a literature search to assess alternative federal agency written communication efforts with local populations that are relevant to MMS goals and processes.
3. Identify appropriate samples of study participants in communities on the North Slope and the Kenai Peninsula.
4. Devise a cost effective procedure to create focus groups to assess public knowledge and attitudes about the OCS regulatory environment, the communication of scientific and technical information, and key agency messages.
5. Work with MMS management and staff to prepare new (theory-driven) textual materials to disseminate agency statements under controlled and variable circumstances, including the preparation and distribution of various “newsletters” to compare their effectiveness as measured across a range of key variables.
6. Monitor changes in understanding, perceptions of OCS management, and durability of opinions among study participants because of pilot-test materials.
7. Continue to test and monitor communication efforts in a limited and controlled newsletter format until a model based upon “lessons learned” can be implemented.
8. Coordinate communication processes with other relevant MMS studies.

Date Information Required: A final report is due October 2007.

Revised date: August 2007

ENVIRONMENTAL STUDIES PROGRAM: ANNUAL STUDIES PLAN 2008

Region: Alaska

Planning Areas: Beaufort Sea / Chukchi Sea

Title: Study of Sharing Networks to Assess the Vulnerabilities of Local Communities to Oil and Gas Development Impacts in Arctic Alaska

MMS Information Needs to be Addressed: The information from this will be used for NEPA analysis and documentation for Beaufort Sea and Chukchi Sea Lease Sales and DPPs.

Total Cost: \$785,000

Period of Performance: FY 2007-2010

Conducting Organization: UAF, Resilience and Adaptation Program

Description:

Background Many previous MMS studies have documented various aspects of subsistence harvest throughout Coastal Alaska. These studies have identified and hypothesized patterns of change within subsistence-oriented behaviors that occur in association with local changes in income level, demographics, access to resources, and wildlife population/habitat change. Subsistence issues always dominate the public testimonial record, amply demonstrating the continued importance of food harvest, distribution, and consumption to coastal communities and the persistence of their concern over potential cumulative impacts from oil and gas development on social and cultural continuity.

Over the years, MMS has produced a wealth of information about household subsistence harvests by quantity, location, species, and month of harvest. But our research has not yet explored systematically the equally important latter half of the subsistence process: the complex social dynamics of sharing and consuming resources after they are harvested. In Native communities, the distribution and exchange of subsistence resources have traditionally operated under complex codes of participation, partnership, and obligation. It is thus plausible that incremental changes in subsistence activities could have corresponding social system effects.

Objectives This study will:

1. Explore, quantify, and document the social dynamics and significant changes of subsistence resource distribution and consumption for residents of selected coastal communities of the Beaufort Sea and Chukchi Sea.
2. Quantify (through baseline and trend data) and explain (through ethnographic fieldwork) any identifiable changes in the social distribution of subsistence resources over time and geographic space.
3. Evaluate from the empirical research the need for further research by assessing whether any documented changes in subsistence activities might feasibly produce substantial changes in the dietary behaviors and health status of identifiable Native groups (such as elders, single women, children, adolescent males, unskilled hunters, etc.).

Methods

1. Conduct a literature search on the social dynamics of distributing and consuming subsistence resources in the Arctic region of Alaska; Identify what has been documented to date.
2. Evaluate the utility of building upon previous data sets to establish the needed statistical validity and power to establish adequate baseline and trend data for this study.
3. Prepare a strategic survey instrument that is both statistically and socially appropriate, and obtain OMB approval to use it.
4. Coordinate with local communities and appropriately conduct the surveys where feasible.
5. Conduct supplementary ethnographic fieldwork to secure the reliability of collected survey data and to obtain the “emic” perspective necessary to interpret and explain survey results.
6. Assess the field data and estimate confidence in / significance of changes in distribution or consumption of subsistence resources.
7. Explain any documented changes by reference to fieldwork and published literature.
8. Conduct post-fieldwork meetings with appropriate individuals in surveyed communities to cross-check and review fieldwork results.
9. For statistically significant observed relationships, assess the plausibility of linkages between a) regional changes in subsistence and oil development activities and b) changing dynamics in the social distribution and consumption of subsistence resources; assess the need for further research to explore any implications for changing dietary behaviors and health status for identifiable members of coastal communities.
10. Report the results to participating communities through public meetings or workshops.

Date Information Required: A final report is due January 2010.

Revised date: September 2007

ENVIRONMENTAL STUDIES PROGRAM: ANNUAL STUDIES PLAN 2008

Region: Alaska

Planning Areas: All

Title: Social and Economic Assessment of Major Oil Spill Litigation Settlement for the Alaska OCS Region

MMS Information Needs to be Addressed: The potential social costs of major coastal oil spills are a public concern associated with OCS development in the U.S. Insofar as the effects of EVOS continue to frame community response to oil and gas development, comprehensive understanding of the event and its various effects are of MMS information needs to be addressed: Alaska OCS Region. This study will be used in EA's and EISs for predicting and mitigating social effects potentially resulting from major oil spills and resulting oil spill litigation. This information will be used for NEPA analysis and documentation for Beaufort Sea Lease Sales, Cook Inlet Lease Sales, Chukchi/Hope Basin Lease Sales, and DPPs.

Total Cost: \$252,000

Period of Performance: FY 2003-2008

Conducting Organization: Impact Assessment, Inc.

Description:

Background Major oil spills such as the 1978 Amoco Cadiz and 1989 Exxon Valdez oil spill (EVOS) events led to a variety of documented social and economic effects. But spill-related litigation and settlement processes and their effects have not been a common topic of socioeconomic research. Regarding EVOS, social scientists speculate that final settlement and distribution of award monies will lead to various beneficial and detrimental secondary effects in addition to those related to the original spill and cleanup events and subsequent phases of litigation. The nature and intensity of such effects hypothetically relate to socioeconomic, demographic, and other attributes of recipients, and to the nature of experience with the spill and litigation.

A recently completed MMS-sponsored study about EVOS, its cleanup and litigation, which collected social impacts information and analysis, provides a comprehensive qualitative overview of general information which will provide useful background to the present quantitative effort.

Objectives Analyses of data collected in spill-affected communities soon after the EVOS event report that existing social problems were heightened in relation to the influx of spill clean-up monies and resources, particularly in rural-Native communities where access to subsistence resources was limited. Subsequent analyses suggest that larger communities have benefited from opportunities such as eco-tourism that were not extant before the spill. It may be hypothesized that spill clean-up and restoration monies and resources served to amplify social, demographic, and economic trends and attributes of the awardees in all cases at individual, familial, and community levels of analysis. The objective of this study is to test this hypothesis given potential future influx of monies and resources via final litigation settlement.

Methods The study will require compilation and analysis of existing data, collection of new

pertinent information, coordination with similar research conducted in the region, detailed comparative analysis, and development of summary conclusions. The methods are:

1. Compile and summarize existing data and scholarship regarding pre- and post-EVOS socioeconomic conditions and trends on Kodiak Island. Continue to monitor annually updated public access data for changes in demographic trends throughout the study period.
2. Secure ethnographic research access from appropriate local authorities in two different Kodiak village communities. Also secure ethnographic research access to the City of Kodiak.
3. Conduct ethnographic fieldwork in all three Kodiak locations. The fieldwork will involve community level participant-observation in relevant public forums, as well as open ended conversations with a sample of community households in each location from different levels of socioeconomic strata. The fieldwork is intended to gather information about potential changes in key socioeconomic indicators such as: residency and migration patterns, occupational profiles, patterns of investment and return, specialization vs. diversification in commercial fishing operations, specialization vs. diversification in traditional subsistence activities, and other selected social practices.
4. Conduct focus-group forums in all three fieldwork locations to supplement and compare with insights gained from step 3 above. It is expected that different community-level concerns and issues relevant to the litigation settlement process will surface in a focus-group forum that go unexpressed at household level conversations.
5. Analyze the various data compiled above to develop a descriptive comparative analysis of the interim socioeconomic effects and expectations of the litigation experience in each community under investigation. Report the findings at the end of project Phase One (prior to final spill litigation settlement/award distribution).
6. After a final litigation settlement is reached, conduct a second round of fieldwork to gather comparable data for the same categories of variables from all three communities. Analyze the data and report the findings at the end of project Phase Two (some months after the final distribution of settlement awards).
7. Produce a detailed written summary analysis that is responsive to the original hypothesis of the project. Report on major insights and general recommendations relevant to the effective management of future potential oil spills and related litigation and settlement.

Date Information Required: A final report is due after final EVOS litigation settlement, which is still pending as of August 2007; interim study report has been submitted.

Revised date: September 2007

ENVIRONMENTAL STUDIES PROGRAM: ANNUAL STUDIES PLAN 2008

Region: Alaska

Planning Areas: Beaufort Sea

Title: Continuation of Arctic Nearshore Impact Monitoring in Development Area (cANIMIDA)

MMS Information Needs to be Addressed: Northstar construction started during the ANIMIDA study and production started in November 2001. Liberty, if initiated, could start construction sometime during the period of cANIMIDA. Interagency reviews of related EISs and Development and Production Plans recommend monitoring effects of Northstar and the possible Liberty development. There is a continuing, ongoing need for this monitoring information during the performance period of the study, which will coincide with production from Northstar and possible Liberty construction. The information will be used for NEPA analysis and documentation for Beaufort Sea Lease Sales and DPPs.

Total Cost: \$3,764,000

Period of Performance: FY 2003-2008

Conducting Organization: Battelle; LGL, Alaska; Applied Sociocultural Research

Description:

Background The Arctic Nearshore Impact Monitoring in Development Area (ANIMIDA), a five-year study started in 1999, has provided baseline data and monitoring results for chemical contamination, turbidity, and subsistence whaling in the vicinity of Northstar and Liberty development sites. Northstar is in State waters, but includes production of some OCS oil through directional drilling. Liberty, if approved, will be the first offshore OCS development project in the Beaufort Sea or elsewhere in the Alaska OCS. ANIMIDA monitoring for Northstar includes pre-construction, and construction, and early production periods. The last field sampling for ANIMIDA is scheduled for spring 2003. This study started field work in FY 04, with an initial planning phase and Core Contractor funded and procured under FY 03 appropriations.

Objectives This study will gather long term monitoring data which will provide a basis of continuity and consistency in evaluation of potential effects from site-specific, recently initiated development and upcoming production in the Beaufort Sea OCS. Currently, these site-specific areas include the Northstar and Liberty areas, other prospects would be included if proposed for development. Priority monitoring issues will be established through public and interagency comment, and coordinated with lessees and other organizations. At minimum, we expect cANIMIDA to continue the following ANIMIDA objectives:

1. Hydrocarbon and metal characterization of sediments, bivalves and amphipods in the study area.
2. Annual assessment of subsistence whaling near Cross Island.
3. Sources, concentrations, and dispersion pathways for suspended sediment.

4. Monitoring the Boulder Patch.
5. Characterization of anthropogenic contaminants in upper tropic biota.

Methods Field logistics for both phases include helicopter support and small vessel (e.g., MMS Launch 1273) support in the “open” water season and snow machine support in winter/spring. Samples will be collected from construction gravel pits, artificial islands, rivers, barrier islands, and sediment from ANIMIDA offshore stations and along the proposed Liberty pipeline route.

Turbidity, total suspended sediment, current velocity measurements are being made in the vicinity of construction, spoils dumps and other sites including local rivers and the Boulder Patch. Sediment and suspended sediment samples will be analyzed for PAH, trace metals, and supporting chemistry using methods consistent with prior ANIMIDA analyses. Biota sampling (species and contaminants measured) will be based on results and recommendations from ANIMIDA. Kelp productivity will be monitored in the Boulder Patch and will use the inherent optical properties of the ice and water to evaluate the effect of sediment resuspension on kelp productivity. Optical-related measurements will include spectral irradiance, light scattering coefficients, and total suspended solids. The reporting program for Cross Island whaling, which records information on whaling locations, success, and whaler perceptions, will be supported. Field programs will be scheduled in 2003-2006. Year 5 (FY2007) will be devoted to reporting of monitoring results.

Date Information Required: Annual reports are due 2005 and 2006 and 6 final reports are due in 2007-2008.

Revised date: September 2007

ENVIRONMENTAL STUDIES PROGRAM: ANNUAL STUDIES PLAN 2008

Region: Alaska

Planning Area: North Aleutian Basin

Title: North Aleutian Basin Information Status and Research Planning Meeting

MMS Information Need(s) to be Addressed: MMS has not prepared an EIS for the North Aleutian Basin since 1985; therefore much of the data is outdated. The Dept. of Interior's Proposed OCS Oil and Gas Leasing Program 2007-2012 considers a North Aleutian Basin oil and gas lease sale for 2011. A related studies planning meeting will define concepts of studies needed for the potential OCS environmental assessments of possible industry activity in this planning area. Study findings will be used in pre- and post-sale NEPA analysis, ongoing ESA Section 7 Consultations, review of EPs, DPPs and other reviews for exploration decision making and mitigation. Also, study results will be used in similar pre-lease analyses and documentation for a later North Aleutian Lease Sale in the *Outer Continental Shelf Oil and Gas Leasing Program 2007-2012*.

Total Cost: \$357,000

Period of Performance: FY 2006-2007

Conducting Organization: Argonne National Laboratory

Description:

Background: Stakeholders with concerns in this planning area are largely dependent on commercial and subsistence fishing that potentially could be affected by OCS oil and gas activity. They have a strong interest in protecting the environment and preserving the resources they depend on. They have expressed a desire to participate in the planning of environmental studies that can be used to describe the existing environment and form a basis for assessing potential environmental effects. A studies planning meeting will allow all parties to identify past and existing studies and evaluate the need for additional studies in the most efficient and cost effective way.

MMS is considering one lease sales for this planning area in 2011, as indicated in the *Outer Continental Shelf Oil and Gas Leasing Program 2007-2012* (USDO, MMS. 2007). MMS held the last lease sale in this planning area in 1988 resulting in the issuance of 23 leases. This offshore area has excellent hydrocarbon potential, especially for natural gas. Studies exclusive to this planning area tapered off about 1992 because of Congressional moratoria and Presidential withdrawal for leasing in the NAB. More recently, some local leaders have indicated interest in oil and gas leasing on State lands of the Aleutian Peninsula adjoining this planning area. The Congressional moratorium was lifted in FY 2003, and the Presidential withdrawal was lifted in 2007.

This planning area includes more than 50,000 square miles--a very substantial geographic area with significant environmentally sensitive resources, thus requiring extensive environmental study. New studies need to be done because previous results of offshore environmental studies

are approaching 20 years old and the status of many resources may have changed. Needed is collection of a full range of updated multidisciplinary information; physical oceanography, fate and effects, endangered species, living resources, and socioeconomics.

Also, parts of the area have important fisheries and are habitat to various marine mammals and waterfowl. Several marine mammal species are known to feed in or near this planning area; these include: ESA-listed (e.g., North Pacific right, fin, humpback, and sperm whales, and Steller's sea lions); recently delisted (e.g., gray whales); and proposed for listing (e.g., sea otters). A designated Critical Habitat for Steller's sea lions is within this planning area and one for Steller's eiders is nearby. Several agencies have conducted recent studies related to these issues, but not directly related to the potential effects of oil and gas activities.

Our intent is to use the results of this project to consider what additional studies, if any, should be initiated as soon as possible with FY 2007 funds, and what studies would be important to initiate in subsequent fiscal years.

Objectives: Evaluate study concepts needed for describing the existing environment and forming a basis for assessing potential environmental effects in this planning area.

Methods:

1. Conduct a literature search, coordinating with other agencies, entities, and local stakeholders to obtain information on recent and ongoing studies since 1985 and information prior to 1985.
2. Hold a meeting with subject matter experts, knowledgeable local stakeholders, relevant agency representatives, and MMS staff to achieve the objectives. The plan is to hold the meeting in Anchorage. Travel costs will be significant part of holding the meeting. We estimate 20 local stakeholders attending the meeting. Study topics will include physical oceanography and circulation modeling, endangered species, marine mammals (e.g., sea otters, pinnipeds), fish, birds, and social and economic systems.
3. Prepare proceedings of the meeting to include scientific peer and stakeholder review.

Date Information Required: MMS hosted the meeting from November 28-December 1, 2006, and subsequent workshop reports are due by October, 2007.

Revised date: September 2007

ENVIRONMENTAL STUDIES PROGRAM: ANNUAL STUDIES PLAN 2008

Region: Alaska

Planning Areas: Beaufort Sea

Title: Beaufort Sea and North Slope Pipeline GIS Database

MMS Information Needs to be Addressed: The Oil-Spill-Risk Analysis (OSRA) is a cornerstone to regional EISs environmental assessments, and oil-spill-contingency planning. Oil-spill issues constitute a significant portion of public comments submitted on sale or development EISs in the Alaska OCS Region. This information also provides a corner stone for analyzing the spatial extent of cumulative impacts of oil pipeline development through time. MMS will use the information from this study in preparing NEPA analysis and documentation for Beaufort Sea Lease Sales, DPPs, and in reviewing oil-spill-contingency plans.

Total Cost: \$363,000

Period of Performance: FY 2002-2008

Conducting Organization: Michael Baker, Jr. Inc.

Description:

Background The MMS has primarily used the historical spill record on the OCS as an indicator of future spill occurrence rates on the OCS. This spill record does not include pipeline spills shoreward of the OCS, in State waters, or on land. The MMS intends to calculate spill rate occurrence based on Regional considerations, such as the Alaska North Slope production and pipeline experience, and to include all major pipeline spills, both onshore and offshore in environmental impact assessment. The first step in this process was a prior MMS-sponsored 1999-2000 study which collated available information on oil spills of at least 100 barrels (bbl) and provided preliminary evaluation of spill occurrence rates.

One objective of this prior study that could not be accomplished was to evaluate usefulness of pipeline length as predictor or co-predictor (with pipeline throughput) for North Slope and Trans-Alaska Pipeline System (TAPS) spillage. This objective required concomitant pipeline segment throughput and pipeline segment length information at yearly or better intervals. The prior study did not have the available resources to collect the comprehensive data on field gathering lines necessary to complete the analysis. Construction of a database of that information base was beyond the scope of that study.

Objectives This study is in two Phases. Phase II will not be funded unless significant information is deemed obtainable through the efforts of Phase I.

Phase I:

1. Establish how much of the construction history (length, location) and throughput history can be reconstructed from industry, government, mapping and/or other sources. Include onshore North Slope, offshore Beaufort, and TAPS pipelines.
2. Establish whether supporting information on pipeline segment characteristics (diameter, special protective measures, inspection measures, special spill detection measures, etc) can be obtained.
3. Develop a written plan for obtaining these data and placing them in a GIS database.

Phase II:

1. Implement the strategy developed in Phase I to obtain pipeline data.
2. Develop GIS database.

Methods

Phase I:

1. Establish potential data sources and develop communications links.
2. Establish inventory of data and data sources.
3. Establish contacts for all known data sources.
4. Establish cooperative agreements with major potential users of the data.
5. Provide written permission to access the data.
6. Develop written plan for obtaining data and constructing GIS database.

Phase II:

1. Implement strategy for obtaining data.
2. Implement strategy for constructing GIS database:
 - a. Consistent with the MMS corporate database structure.
 - b. Capable of point and click identification of specific pipeline segments and characteristics.
 - c. Capable of display of existent pipeline by year.

Date Information Required: The final GIS database is due December 2007.

Revised date: August 16, 2007

ENVIRONMENTAL STUDIES PROGRAM: ANNUAL STUDIES PLAN 2008

Region: Alaska

Planning Areas: All Alaska Planning Areas

Title: Minerals Management Service/University of Alaska-Fairbanks/State of Alaska/Coastal Marine Institute – Management

MMS Information Needs to be Addressed: By adopting this cooperative agreement, improved leasing decisions and EIS analyses pertinent to lease sales in the Beaufort Sea, Cook Inlet, Gulf of Alaska, and Chukchi Sea/Hope can be made. Final reports will be available for lease sales and post-sale decisions; interim data products and inputs will be used to address information needs. Topical areas to be addressed under the Coastal Marine Institute have been identified through this Annual Study Plan, previous Alaska Region study plans, and the Framework Issues. The study also will develop information that addresses public concerns raised during outreach efforts.

Total Cost: \$563,000

Period of Performance: FY 1998-2008

Conducting Organization: CMI, UAF

Description:

Background This study provides management of a large ongoing program of scientific research into framework issues related to lease sales identified in the MMS *Final Outer Continental Shelf Oil and Gas Leasing Program 2002-2007*. It is a cooperative program between MMS and the University of Alaska, with State of Alaska participation. The Coastal Marine Institute (CMI) is expected to leverage additional scientific results and logistics capability at levels comparable to the MMS contribution. The Coastal Marine Institute will update and expand our understanding of OCS environmental information and address future needs related to the offshore oil and gas program in Alaska.

Objectives The purpose of the CMI is to generate scientific information for MMS and State of Alaska decision makers that is consistent with the needs outlined by the Framework Issues. The Framework Issues are:

1. Scientific studies for better understanding marine, coastal or human environments affected or potentially affected by offshore oil and gas or other mineral exploration and extraction on the OCS.
2. Modeling studies of environmental, social, economic, or cultural processes related to OCS gas and oil activities in order to improve scientific predictive capabilities.
3. Experimental studies for better understanding of environmental processes, or the causes and effects of OCS activities.
4. Projects which design or establish mechanisms or protocols for sharing data or scientific information regarding marine or coastal resources or human activities in order to support prudent management of oil, gas and marine mineral resources.

5. Synthesis studies of scientific environmental or socioeconomic background information relevant to the OCS gas and oil program.

Methods A proposal process is initiated each year with a request for letters of intent to address one or more of the Framework Issues. The proposals are requested from university researchers and other scientific researchers in State agencies. A Technical Steering Committee made up of scientific representatives of the cooperators reviews letters of intent and proposals to be evaluated for possible funding. External peer reviews may be requested for new projects. Principal investigators give presentations at ITMs, scientific conferences, and various public meetings.

Date Information Required: Information products are required from 1 year to 6 months prior to proposed lease sales. Also, the information collected is required to be used in post-lease decisions such as exploration plan reviews and approvals, and potential development-stage environmental impact analyses and related approvals, or in the implementation of lease-sale mitigating measures that require scientific information for implementation.

Revised date: September 2007

ENVIRONMENTAL STUDIES PROGRAM: ANNUAL STUDIES PLAN 2008

Region: Alaska

Planning Areas: All Alaska Planning Areas

Title: Management, Logistics, and Warehouse Storage of Oceanographic Equipment

MMS Information Needs to be Addressed: Without funding of this program-support element, it would not be possible to maintain or deploy the 36-foot MMS Launch 1273 that provides a mobile, cost-effective, and specialized research vessel for a variety of biological and oceanographic studies throughout the coastal waters of Alaska. Costs for certain studies would increase significantly if more expensive marine-support alternatives were chartered.

Additionally, it would not be possible to maintain an equipment warehouse that allows us to re-use and share equipment effectively among projects and agencies. This is a critical program-support element related to studies that support all current leases.

Total Cost: \$450,000

Period of Performance: FY 2007-2009

Conducting Organization: GSA-administered lease for warehouse, Kinnetic Laboratories, Inc. for MMS Launch 1273

Description:

Background The MMS, Alaska OCS Region, has responsibility for equipment management in support of Alaska studies. In 1996 the General Services Administration (GSA) obtained a new storage facility for ESP use. The equipment is stored in a small warehouse in Anchorage, where it is maintained and made available for ongoing projects. This support element also provides funds for maintenance of the MMS Alaska Region Launch 1273, a small research vessel needed for various oceanographic studies, as well as funds for other equipment maintenance and shipping. Also under this project MMS will support Alaska ESP equipment management and other storage needs.

Objectives The purpose of this program-support element is to efficiently manage and store oceanographic equipment and provide other support to ESP needs

Methods The General Services Administration arranges for an appropriate warehouse facility for our use.

Launch 1273 was commissioned in 1983. MMS contractors will use it for the cANIMIDA, the study "Beaufort Sea Nearshore Currents" (FY 2005-07), and other oceanographic studies in the Arctic. MMS plans to contract all management of launch 1273 in support of Arctic environmental studies starting in FY 2007. We include the costs of Launch 1273 in the costs above.

Date Information Required: Not applicable.

Revised date: September 2007

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ENVIRONMENTAL STUDIES PROGRAM: ANNUAL STUDIES PLAN 2008

Region: Alaska

Planning Areas: All Alaska Planning Areas

Title: Conference Management and Reports on MMS Results

MMS Information Needs to be Addressed: This study will help to resolve environmental and technical issues for MMS program managers and to increase public confidence in the data used by the OCS program. Workshops are needed for NEPA analysis and documentation for Beaufort Sea Lease Sales, Chukchi/Hope Basin Lease Sale if nominations are received, and DPPs. The need for the transfer of studies information is ongoing. The dates will be coordinated with lease sales.

Total Cost: \$200,000

Period of Performance: FY 2007-2010

Conducting Organization: TBD

Description:

Background As discussed in Section 1.1.1 Background of this plan, the Alaska Environmental Studies Program (ESP) has organized many meetings on environmental studies information. During the past decade, the main priorities have been small workshops for resolution of environmental issues and Information Transfer Meetings (ITMs) for the exchange of studies information among Principal Investigators and the general public. In addition to the transfer of information through meetings, the ESP has transferred information through ITM proceedings, reports and publications on MMS results. The Alaska ESP has also organized small meetings on a limited range of topics called Information Update Meetings (IUMs). The Alaska ESP has also organized workshops with experts and interested parties on selected topics oriented to formulating concepts for a new study to address a study need.

Objectives The objectives are to produce ITMs, IUMs, small workshops, and publications on OCS environmental studies information.

Methods The primary method is to coordinate meetings and workshops and assist with preparation of publications. Coordination includes organizing appropriate speakers and participants and logistics. FY 2007-2010 components may include an ITM in FY 2008.

Date Information Required: Final proceedings are due within 60 to 90 days after meetings and workshops have been held.

Revised date: September 2007

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ENVIRONMENTAL STUDIES PROGRAM: ANNUAL STUDIES PLAN FY 2008

Region: Alaska

Planning areas: Chukchi Sea, Beaufort Sea

Title: Assessing the Cumulative Extent of Offshore Human Activities in the Alaskan Arctic

MMS Information Needs to be Addressed: MMS, in 2002, completed a study which compiled geospatial data on oil-industry human activities from 1979 through 1998 in the Beaufort Sea. Identifying and documenting the sources and characteristics of human activities in the Alaska Beaufort and Chukchi Seas is essential for cumulative effects analysis and mitigating effects on bowhead whales and the people who rely on them for subsistence. Study findings will be used in post-sale NEPA analysis, ongoing ESA Section 7 Consultations, review of EPs, DPPs and other reviews for post-sale and post-exploration decision making and mitigation. Also, study results will be used in similar pre-lease analyses and documentation for later Chukchi Sea Lease Sale(s) in the *Outer Continental Shelf Oil and Gas Leasing Program 2007-2012*. Whether, when, and in which Planning Areas Lease Sale(s) may be held depends on decisions of the Secretary of Interior for the forthcoming *Final Outer Continental Shelf Oil and Gas Leasing Program 2007-2012*

Period of Performance: FY 2008–2011

Description:

Background Bowhead whales (*Balaena mysticetus*) are the most important subsistence resource for many coastal villages adjacent to the Chukchi and Beaufort Seas. Bowheads are important to these communities for fulfillment of cultural and nutritional needs. The MMPA protects the subsistence hunt from “unmitigable adverse impacts”. Subsistence communities are concerned that whales may shift migration and movement patterns primarily due to industrial or other anthropogenic activities, making hunting more difficult and less productive.

Subsequent to the 2002 MMS study cited above, researchers attempted a retrospective statistical analysis of covariance of human activities, sea ice, and bowhead whale distribution using those data. That analysis was unsuccessful, in some respects, because records on certain industrial activities were not complete, were of inadequate resolution, or otherwise not available to the database. However, recent industry-sponsored field studies in the Beaufort Sea have shown that bowheads may react at substantial distance from nearshore industry activities (i.e. greater than 20 kilometers). Multiple sound sources may cause whales to shift areas of use or other behavioral change, making the whales more difficult to hunt or retrieve when harvested.

With increasing interest in potential offshore oil and gas development in the Chukchi and Beaufort seas, other increased domestic vessel traffic, and possible future international shipping routes through the range of bowhead whales, there is a continued need to further document anthropogenic marine activities for cumulative effects assessments and analysis.

The MMS funding share is approximately 50 percent of the estimated total joint funding needed to complete this study. Joint funding may be established via NSSI, NOAA/ NMFS, and/or other agencies. The MMS portion of the budget will include the database development, and incorporation of MMS-supplied information on offshore oil and gas activity, predominately from Federal OCS activities. It will also include maintaining and supporting the database for the study period.

Objective Create and maintain a database on anthropogenic activities in the Chukchi and Beaufort Seas for future use in cumulative effects analysis and for use in developing ESA- and MMPA-related mitigation for development-related activities.

Methods

1. Enhance the existing MMS Human Activities Database and input processes to archive diverse data on the locations, characteristics, timing, and frequency of anthropogenic activities within the Chukchi and Beaufort Seas.
2. Populate the database with available information on activities associated with oil and gas exploration, development, and production, primarily in Federal OCS waters; secondarily in State of Alaska offshore waters (e.g., geophysical work, drilling, construction, production and other MMS activities)
3. Voluntarily accept data on other marine anthropogenic activities from interested individuals or organizations (e.g., shipping, cruise ships, local traffic, icebreaking, fishing, subsistence, research etc.) and enter it into the database if budget allows.
4. Provide data report summaries in formats and frequency useful to environmental assessment analysts, other Federal agencies, and the public.

Date Information Required: Annual interim reports are due 2009-2010 and a final report and database will be due in 2011.

Revised Date: September 2007

Section 2.2 Profiles of Studies Proposed for FY 2008

Section 2.2 Profiles of Studies Proposed for Fiscal Year 2008 NSL

Table 1. Alaska OCS Region Studies Proposed for the Fiscal Year 2008 NSL

Page #	Discipline	Title
131	SS	Continuation of Impact Assessment for Cross Island Whaling Activities – Beaufort Sea
133	MM	COMIDA: Distribution and Relative Abundance of Marine Mammals: Aerial Surveys
135	PO	COMIDA: Chemical and Hydrocarbon Monitoring
137	SS	COMIDA: Impact Monitoring for Offshore Subsistence Hunting
139	HE	COMIDA: Chukchi Sea Benthic Monitoring
141	SS	Subsistence Study for North Aleutian Basin, Phase I
143	HE	Juvenile and Maturing Salmon Use of the North Aleutian Basin Lease Area
145	HE	Spatial and Temporal Mapping of Nearshore Juvenile Fish and Larval Crab
147	SS	Aggregate Effects Research and Environmental Mitigation Monitoring of Oil Operations in the Vicinity of Nuiqsut
AQ = Air Quality FE = Fate & Effects HE = Habitat & Ecology IM = Information Management MM = Marine Mammals PS = Protected Species PO = Physical Oceanography SS = Social Sciences		

ENVIRONMENTAL STUDIES PROGRAM: STUDIES PROPOSED FOR FY 2008

Region: Alaska

Planning Area: Beaufort Sea

Title: **Continuation of Impact Assessment for Cross Island Whaling Activities**

MMS Information Need(s) to be Addressed: Offshore production at the Northstar facility started in November 2001. The Liberty prospect continues to indicate promise of future production on the OCS. Long-term study efforts to monitor potential effects of such development activities have occurred through the ANIMIDA and cANIMIDA projects, 1999-2007. There remains a continuing, ongoing need to monitor Cross Island whaling activities for potential impacts over the next five years. The information will be used for NEPA analysis and documentation for Beaufort Sea Lease Sales and DPPs.

Cost Range (in thousands) \$169 - \$270

Period of Performance: 2008-12

Description:

Background: The Northstar facility is in State waters, but includes production of some OCS oil through directional drilling. The Liberty prospect may access OCS oil deposits through directional drilling from an onshore facility. 2007 marks the last field season for previous ANIMIDA and cANIMIDA multi-disciplinary monitoring efforts in the near-shore Beaufort Sea environment. This proposed study, however, intends to extend the long-term ethnographic monitoring effort for subsistence whaling activities that occur from the base camp at Cross Island.

Objectives: This study will gather long-term monitoring data to help the MMS assess whether OCS oil development activities at Northstar and/or Liberty result in changes to bowhead whale subsistence hunting practices, or to hunting success at Cross Island. The first objective is to understand Cross Island subsistence whaling variation over time. The second objective is to evaluate the relationship of offshore oil and gas industrial activities to whaling variability.

Methods: This study continues the essential methods established during the ANIMIDA and cANIMIDA phases of research. It calls for systematic observational and interview data collection from local informants about: a) number of whales taken; b) GPS location of whale strikes, with direction and distance from Cross Island; c) number of crews, composition of crews, total number of crew; d) periodic "census" of whaling participants on Cross Island, e) duration of whaling season by active days; f) timing of whaling; g) length of trips and area searched while whaling; h) records of catch per unit effort; and i) observations of whaling participants. The study will also record systematic and observational/interview data collection on a) non-whaling subsistence activities on and near Cross Island; b) observations of local subsistence users. Hard copy maps should be appended as necessary for clarification of location information. The recorded data should be presented in an annual report using tabular information on harvest levels and locations of subsistence resources taken on or near Cross Island.

Revised Date: September 2007

ENVIRONMENTAL STUDIES PROGRAM: STUDIES PROPOSED FOR FY 2008

Region: Alaska

Planning Area: Chukchi Sea

Title: COMIDA: Distribution and Relative Abundance of Marine Mammals:
Aerial Surveys

MMS Information Need(s) to be Addressed: This study will constitute a key component of Chukchi Sea environmental studies pertinent to Chukchi Sea Lease Sale 193 scheduled for 2007. Industry has expressed strong interest in leasing in this area, likely followed by exploration and possibly development. The COMIDA Workshop in November 1-3, 2006 recommended the monitoring of marine mammal distribution and relative abundance. This study is needed to support post-lease NEPA analysis, ESA Section 7 consultations, and Development and Production Plans (DPPs) for Outer Continental Shelf (OCS) activity in the Chukchi Sea. The monitoring described in this study profile needs to be initiated as soon as possible with results to be available in annual reports and a final report in 2011. MMS analysts and decision makers will use the information in NEPA analysis and documentation for Lease Sales, EPs and DPPs and in post-sale and post-exploration decision making in the Chukchi Sea.

Cost Range: (in thousands) \$2,400-3,600

Period of Performance: FY 2008 – 2011

Description:

Background: Bowhead whales (*Balaena mysticetus*), gray whales (*Eschrichtius robustus*), beluga whales (*Delphinapterus leucas*), Pacific walrus (*Odobenus rosmarus divergens*), polar bears (*Ursus maritimus*), and bearded seals (*Phoca fasciata*), and several other species of ice seals, are known to occupy the Chukchi Sea, at least during some seasons. All of these species are subject to changes in environmental variables such as oceanographic currents, sea temperature, sea ice cover, prey availability, and anthropogenic impacts. Moreover all of these species are used for subsistence by Eskimos both in Russia and the US and form an important part of the diet and cultural base for most people in villages along the Chukchi coast. Having a good understanding of the seasonal distribution, relative abundance, and habitat use of marine mammals in the Chukchi Sea is fundamentally important to evaluating the potential environmental impacts associated with oil and gas exploration and development and other anthropogenic activities. Reliable, up-to-date information of this type is currently unavailable for marine mammal populations in the Chukchi Sea. Aerial surveys of marine mammals are an efficient tool because they offer quick coverage of large marine areas. Past surveys are available for comparison with new data to assess whether changes in distribution or abundance have occurred since the earlier surveys were completed.

Objectives:

- Document the distributions and relative densities of marine mammals in the Chukchi Sea Planning Area.
- To the extent possible, delineate the areas that are most important to marine mammals during critical seasons of their annual life history cycles such as molting, calving/pupping, and feeding.

Methods: Aerial line transects surveys will be flown in the Chukchi Sea Program Area during two time periods: late-July to early-August and October to early-November. Methodology shall follow protocols used by the MMS Bowhead Whale Aerial Survey Project so that data are comparable with earlier surveys in the Chukchi Sea.

Revised Date: September 2007

ENVIRONMENTAL STUDIES PROGRAM: STUDIES PROPOSED FOR FY 2008

Region: Alaska

Planning Area: Chukchi Sea

Title: COMIDA: Chemical and Hydrocarbon Monitoring

MMS Information Need(s) to be Addressed: This study will constitute a key component of Chukchi Sea environmental studies pertinent to Chukchi Sea Lease Sale 193 scheduled for 2007. Industry has expressed strong interest in leasing in this area, likely followed by exploration and possibly development. The COMIDA Workshop in November 1-3, 2006 recommended that monitoring of sediment metal and hydrocarbon parameters start as soon as possible, to attempt to obtain two years of data prior to exploration drilling. MMS analysts and decision makers will use the information in NEPA analysis and documentation for Lease Sales, EPs and DPPs and in post-sale and post-exploration decision making in the Chukchi Sea.

Cost Range: (in thousands) \$1,290-\$1930

Period of Performance: FY 2008-2011

Description:

Background: Earlier Minerals Management Service/Outer Continental Shelf Environmental Assessment Program (MMS/OCSEAP)-sponsored monitoring design workshops for the Beaufort Sea and Bering Sea recommended multiyear contaminant baselines prior to offshore development. The Oceanography/Fate and Effects working group of the COMIDA Workshop considered multi-year monitoring of sediment metals, hydrocarbons, and other anthropogenic compounds to be a priority. The MMS Scientific Committee recommended an adaptive initial two year sampling program using sediment core dating to capture interannual variation and normalization techniques to minimize sample variability.

Among the primary concerns about offshore oil and gas are anthropogenic sources of metals and hydrocarbons. Information presented at the COMIDA Workshop indicates a significant amount of metal information may be available, but there's a lack of modern hydrocarbon data in the planning area.

Objectives:

- To establish baseline for hydrocarbons and Environmental Protection Agency Priority metals to be able to detect changes as the result of future oil and gas activities.
- To initiate time trend analyses through both a monitoring project and sediment core analyses.
- To identify natural or other anthropogenic sources of contaminants to the study area.
- To initiate and develop a conceptual food web related to bioaccumulation and risk of trophic transfer of potential oil industry contaminants.

Methods: MMS anticipates substantial collaboration and coordination with 1) Chukchi Sea Offshore Monitoring in Drilling Area (COMIDA) projects: Chukchi Sea Benthic Monitoring and Distribution and Relative Abundance of Marine Mammals: Aerial Surveys and 2) Alaska

Monitoring and Assessment Program (AKMAP) which may include sharing logistical platforms, methods, sampling design and/or samples. We anticipate coordination result will an a modified sediment triad approach, with overlapping sampling areas for the COMIDA shipboard studies, and overlap of these sampling areas with aerially observed areas of concentrated marine mammal feeding.

For baseline and time trends, use results of data-mining task to fine tune contaminant list, sampling locations, and sentinel benthic organisms. Use rigorous statistical design for both sampling locations and replication when establishing baseline. Sample fine-grain surface sediments, biota at risk, and control sites. Use dated cores to capture interannual variability and normalization techniques to minimize effects of sample variability. Sampling design will be adaptive to incorporate locations of concentrated marine mammal feeding and their prey within the COMIDA area. Provide Quality Assurance/Quality Control (QA/QC) with inter-laboratory comparisons and reference standards.

To identify natural or other anthropogenic sources of contaminants to the study area, conduct limited analyses of contaminant sources such as water column, air, drilling mud, river input, seeps, or shoreline erosion. Provide QA/QC as for sediment and biota analyses.

A conceptual food web model related to bioaccumulation and trophic transfer of potential oil industry contaminants will be part of initial study planning, based on literature review and data-mining. The model will be risked-based, conceptually considering mechanism, magnitude, and likelihood of contaminant transfer. The model will continue to be developed and updated throughout COMIDA, incorporating COMIDA results and other information, and will also be used as a tool to refine sampling strategy during COMIDA and recommend post-COMIDA monitoring strategy.

Revised Date: September 2007

ENVIRONMENTAL STUDIES PROGRAM: STUDIES PROPOSED FOR FY 2008

Region: Alaska

Planning Area: Chukchi Sea

Title: COMIDA: Impact Monitoring for Offshore Subsistence Hunting

MMS Information Need(s) to be Addressed: This study will constitute a key component of Chukchi Sea environmental studies pertinent to Chukchi Sea Lease Sale 193 scheduled for 2007. Industry has expressed strong interest in leasing in this area, likely followed by exploration and possibly development. The COMIDA Workshop in November 1-3, 2006 recommended the monitoring of offshore subsistence hunting. The MMS needs to establish an early baseline in the area and to monitor on an annual basis any significant changes in subsistence activities over time. In particular, monitoring efforts should be directed toward the hunt for marine mammals, including bowhead and beluga whales, walrus, polar bears, and seals. MMS analysts and decision makers will use the information in NEPA analysis and documentation for Lease Sales, EPs and DPPs and in post-sale and post-exploration decision making in the Chukchi Sea.

Cost Range: (in thousands) \$380-\$460

Period of Performance: FY 2008-2011

Description:

Background: The oil and gas industry has expressed strong interest in leasing in this Planning Area under Sale 193, which may be followed by further exploration and possibly development. In order to assure methodological continuity over time for a potentially large exploration area, appropriate planning and implementation of post-lease monitoring baselines are needed. There is very little up-to-date information about offshore subsistence activities along the Chukchi coast, and there is acute need for more information in the vicinity of Wainwright and Point Lay, where development might make landfall.

Objectives: This study will gather long-term monitoring data to allow the MMS to assess whether OCS oil development activities in the Chukchi Sea will result in changes to offshore subsistence hunting practices. The first research question is whether subsistence hunting in the Chukchi Sea displays significant variation over time. The second question is whether such variation can be attributed to offshore oil and gas industrial activities.

- Monitoring Hypotheses 1: Offshore subsistence hunting patterns in the vicinity of Wainwright and Point Lay do not vary significantly from year to year.
- Monitoring Hypotheses 2: Variation in offshore subsistence hunting patterns are not related to offshore oil and gas activities.

Methods: This project will entail extensive community engagement. Early procedures will involve issue nomination and/or confirmation from the North Slope Borough Fish and Game Management Committee and community representatives. Researcher must establish a protocol or mechanism to facilitate community participation and a meaningful role in the technical aspects of monitoring efforts. Use of focus groups and community dialogue will help to establish acceptable fieldwork procedures for systematic observations and data collection,

including: harvesting patterns and numbers; locations of strikes, with direction and distance from shore; number of hunting groups and composition; duration of hunting activities by active days; length of hunt and area searched; estimated costs per unit effort; report of any accidents or mishaps; and report of weather conditions and ice conditions. Much of the technical data may be recorded by Global Positioning System (GPS) instruments that the project will provide to cooperating local hunters, and may be supplemented by ethnographic observation and conversation. Researchers will then analyze collected information and provide a summary report at the end of each hunting season, with review opportunities by respective host communities to achieve collaborative results.

Revised Date: September 2007

ENVIRONMENTAL STUDIES PROGRAM: STUDIES PROPOSED FOR FY 2008

Region: Alaska

Planning Area: Chukchi Sea

Title: COMIDA: Chukchi Sea Benthic Monitoring

MMS Information Need(s) to be Addressed: This study will constitute a key component of Chukchi Sea environmental studies pertinent to Chukchi Sea Lease Sale 193 scheduled for 2007. Industry has expressed strong interest in leasing in this area, likely followed by exploration and possibly development. The COMIDA Workshop in November 1-3, 2006 recommended that benthic monitoring begin in the Chukchi Sea as soon as possible, to obtain two years of baseline data prior to exploration drilling. MMS analysts and decision makers will use the information in NEPA analysis and documentation for Lease Sales, EPs and DPPs and in post-sale and post-exploration decision making in the Chukchi Sea.

Cost Range: (in thousands) \$1,179-\$1,441 **Period of Performance:** FY 2008 - 2011

Description:

Background: The November 2006 COMIDA workshop described the importance of benthos in the Chukchi ecosystem. Our knowledge of the benthic fauna along Alaskan arctic shelves is largely based on a series of offshore leasing surveys between the 1970's and early 1990's in the Bering, Chukchi and Beaufort Seas. A review of this information revealed "hot spots" of high benthic biomass in several regions of the Chukchi Sea, particularly in the northeastern Chukchi lease sale area between Pt. Lay and Icy Cape. The high abundance of bottom fauna was correlated with high pelagic primary production, possibly associated with the ice-edge and most of which reached the seabed un-grazed.

Given the short food chains and dependence of many apex predators on sea ice, the shallow shelf ecosystems in the Chukchi Sea are expected to be vulnerable to environmental change, particularly as sea ice extent declines and seawater warms. Recent changes in seabird and marine mammal distributions described in the COMIDA workshop may reflect undocumented changes in benthic production in the Chukchi Sea as well as changes related to increased seasonal retreat of the ice pack.

Monitoring needs to be initiated in order to establish a current benthic community baseline prior to new oil and gas exploration activities. It also needs to be initiated to help distinguish among changes due to development, climate, and food web structure.

Objectives: To test the below monitoring hypotheses:

1. H1: There are no significant effects on benthic community structure and productivity due to oil and gas exploration.
2. H2: Oil and gas exploration and development will have no significant "downstream" effects on sensitive benthic biological communities. Additionally, the study will establish the current baseline for benthic community structure and productivity in the

- COMIDA area, including statistical evaluation of interannual and spatial variation.
3. Establish degree of variation associated with exploration and development activities, where possible.
 4. Locate and monitor “hot spot” areas characterized by high benthic biomass that are important feeding areas for upper trophic level organisms.

Methods: MMS anticipates substantial collaboration and coordination with 1) COMIDA: Chemical and Hydrocarbon Monitoring project and 2) AKMAP which may include sharing logistical platforms, methods, sampling design and/or samples.

Time-series sites and key indicator species will be selected in the COMIDA study area for continued monitoring during exploration and development periods. Selected hot spot benthic sites upstream, within the proposed area of development, and downstream will be selected for time-series studies of quantitative benthic parameters along with a vertical suite of water column measurements. Key benthic habitat characteristics (fauna, sediment type) of Chukchi Sea benthic fauna will be identified that are sensitive to industrial activities.

Standard quantitative methods for infaunal and epifaunal surveys, including abundance, community structure and biomass will be employed. Standard methods for sediment collection and analyses, including sediment grain size, microbial content, chlorophyll content; and development stressors (e.g., sediment re-suspension, water column turbidity, and Photosynthetically Active Radiation (PAR) will be employed. Additional sediment, water, and tissue samples may be collected as reference archival samples for the duration of the project or for use by the COMIDA: Chemical and Hydrocarbon Monitoring project for contaminant analyses.

Estimates of food web connectivity will be made by using stable isotopes (C-13, N-15), fatty acids, and QC/QA with inter-lab comparisons. Aspects of this analysis will be heavily coordinated with the planned study COMIDA: Chemical and Hydrocarbon Monitoring. Information on long-range or marine ecosystem level change will be accessed from other sources and used in results interpretation.

Revised Date: September 2007

ENVIRONMENTAL STUDIES PROGRAM: STUDIES PROPOSED FOR FY 2008

Region: Alaska

Planning Area: North Aleutian Basin

Title: Subsistence Study for North Aleutian Basin, Phase I

MMS Information Need(s) to be Addressed: The proposed North Aleutian Basin (NAB) sale area (or areas adjacent) supports very important commercial and subsistence fisheries, provides habitat to numerous marine mammals, and is an important migration and staging area for internationally important waterfowl. Subsistence is a major and sensitive component of the social and economic system of the area potentially affected by proposed offshore oil and gas leasing in the NAB. The information from this study will be used for pre- and post-sale NEPA/EIS analysis, documentation, and mitigation of potential effects of OCS exploration. Study results will also serve as community baselines to monitor and mitigate any significant future changes in subsistence activities over time.

Cost Range: (in thousands) \$280-\$340

Period of Performance: FY 2008-2010

Description:

Background: More than 20 communities in the SW Alaska-Bristol Bay area rely heavily on subsistence or commercial fisheries. For example, Dutch Harbor processes a peak of 70 million lbs per week - ½ the total US annual catch and is the largest seafood port in the world. It would be difficult to identify an area in the Bering Sea, or possibly anywhere in the world that has greater fisheries, protected species, or human use issues than this proposed sale area. The MMS-sponsored “North Aleutian Basin Information Status and Research Planning Meeting” recently identified 31 studies that could provide useful information to upcoming National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) Environmental Impact Statements, analysis of potential mitigation of impacts, and post-sale needs such as for use in NEPA reviews of exploration or development plans. Of those, this study profile has been identified by the Alaska OCS Region as a highly time-sensitive and important decision-applicable information need, and of such mission importance that it should be initiated as soon as possible to assure information availability if NAB remains in the proposed 5 year program. This study would provide key subsistence baseline data for the region. There is acute need for information in the vicinity of False Pass, Nelson Lagoon, Port Heiden, and other representative communities. Phase I of the study is intended to initiate data collection in those named communities most proximate to the proposed sale area where exploration activities may soon occur. Later phases are anticipated that will increase the range of surveyed communities to establish a broader regional baseline, as potential exploration or development in the NAB achieve greater definition.

Objectives:

1. Gather current household and community data on subsistence harvest and sharing activities.
2. Supplement survey data with local ethnographic and qualitative context, including household economics and local/traditional knowledge.

3. Identify predominant patterns of subsistence activities by household and community, and identify approximate ranges of variation.

Methods: All phases of this study shall be conducted in close collaboration with the MMS and relevant stakeholder institutions at the regional and community level. Researchers will conduct a focused literature search to review and assess the current state of knowledge about subsistence food harvest and distribution behaviors in the region of interest. The researchers will create and implement a survey instrument as appropriate for the study objectives, and obtain formal approval to use it from the US Office of Management and Budget. The researchers shall also conduct focused ethnographic fieldwork on subsistence food harvest and sharing behaviors in host communities. The researchers shall comprehensively analyze the quantitative and qualitative field data to achieve interpretation and explanation of relevant behaviors and submit the full analysis in a final technical report.

Revised Date: September 2007

ENVIRONMENTAL STUDIES PROGRAM: STUDIES PROPOSED FOR FY 2008

Region: Alaska

Planning Area: North Aleutian Basin

Title: Juvenile and Maturing Salmon Use of the North Aleutian Basin Lease Area

MMS Information Need(s) to be Addressed: Local residents, highly dependent on salmon for both economic and subsistence livelihoods, are concerned about oilspill and other impacts on salmon in the lease area. Very little is known about how much of the ocean life cycle of salmon is spent in the proposed lease area. MMS analysts and decision makers will use the information in NEPA analysis and documentation for Lease Sales, EPs and DPPs and in post-sale and post-exploration decision making in the NAB.

Cost Range: (in thousands) \$480-\$720

Period of Performance: FY 2008-2010

Description

Background: It would be difficult to identify an area in the Bering Sea, or possibly anywhere in the world, that has greater fisheries use issues than the North Aleutian planning area. Bristol Bay includes eight major river systems that collectively support the largest commercial sockeye salmon fishery in the world. The Kvichak River is home to the single largest salmon run and the Nushagak River hosts the largest king salmon run in Alaska. Annual commercial catches average nearly 24 million sockeye salmon, 69,000 chinook, 971,000 chum, 133,000 coho, and 593,000 pinks. On average, individuals in Bristol Bay communities harvest 315 pounds per person, as their main source of food.

Nearshore areas are seldom surveyed as fish habitat. While current fish surveys do sample within parts of the potential lease area during late summer and early fall, they do not sample during the late winter to early summer period nor in all parts of the proposed lease area.

A survey targeting the important sockeye, chinook, coho, pink, and chum salmon migratory from Bristol Bay watersheds in the nearshore and potential lease area, from late winter to early summer, is needed to fully evaluate the potential effects of offshore exploration and development. The survey would also sample the primary prey of salmon- young-of-the-year pollock and several similarly sized forage fish species (i.e., capelin, sand lance, sandfish, and rainbow smelt).

Objectives:

1. Identify salmon use of the lease area during late winter and early summer and combine with existing information from other seasons.
2. Combine information with nearshore fishes sampled with similar methods in the annual NMFS surveys in August – September (fall).
3. Develop maps of seasonal and spatial distribution of juvenile and maturing salmon within the lease area for use in NEPA analysis, particularly oilspill impact analysis.

Methods: Conduct two years of seasonal fish use and habitat assessment with a surface trawl (top 15 m of the water column) in waters 20 m depth or greater. This project would implement surveys in May and July to assess the late winter and early summer distribution, relative abundance, diet, energetics, and size of juvenile salmon, their prey, their predators, and other forage fish on the shelf (> 20 m to 100 m) of the NAB. The surveys will also document physical oceanographic and biological characteristics (age, diet, size, growth, habitat type) of salmon and make cost-efficient collections of other fish species (forage fish and pollock) incidentally caught.

Revised Date: September 2007

ENVIRONMENTAL STUDIES PROGRAM: STUDIES PROPOSED FOR FY 2008

Region: Alaska

Planning Area: North Aleutian Basin

Title: Spatial and Temporal Mapping of Nearshore Juvenile Fish and Larval Crab

MMS Information Need(s) to be Addressed: Information on seasonal distribution, abundance, and habitat use are necessary to assess oil spill risks to sensitive lifestages of fish and crab for North Aleutian Basin NEPA analyses. The information from this study will be used for pre- and post-sale NEPA/EIS analysis and documentation, and by MMS analysts for mitigation of potential effects of OCS exploration and development in the NAB.

Cost Range: (in thousands) \$324 - \$396 **Period of Performance:** FY 2008-2010

Description:

Background: It would be difficult to identify an area in the Bering Sea, or possibly anywhere in the world that has greater fisheries use issues than the North Aleutian planning area. Crab, a highly valued commercial fisheries and subsistence resource, are extremely sensitive to oil at very low concentrations. Furthermore, the juvenile and larval stages lifestages of fish and crab are the most vulnerable. Loss of a single juvenile year-class could affect future commercial fisheries and ecological productivity. However, information on spatial and temporal patterns of sensitive life stages in the nearshore North Aleutian Basin is lacking or out of date, especially in light of ecological changes that have occurred in recent decades.

The MMS-sponsored “North Aleutian Basin Information Status and Research Planning Meeting” recently identified studies that could provide useful information to upcoming National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) Environmental Impact Statements (EIS), analysis of potential mitigation of impacts, and post-sale needs such as for use in NEPA reviews of exploration or development plans. Of those, this study profile has been identified by the Alaska OCS Region as a highly time-sensitive and important decision-applicable information need, and of such mission importance that it should be initiated as soon as possible to assure information availability pursuant to the proposed 5 year program.

Objectives:

1. Identify spatial and seasonal location of larval and juvenile fish and crab larvae settling areas.
2. Develop Geographical Information Systems (GIS) based maps and attribute tables of sensitive fish and crab lifestages for oil spill risk analysis.
3. Identify high priority locations for mitigation or deferral areas under consideration in environmental assessments.

Methods: Geographically delineate the location and timing of larval nurseries, juvenile rearing,

and crab settling areas through aerial digital imaging and Light Detection and Ranging (LiDAR). Perform ground truthing of digital imaging and LiDAR (a process similar to ground truthing acoustic fish surveys) through use of local fishing vessels. Provide GIS -mapped layers for EIS analysis of potential sensitive areas.

Revised Date: September 2007

ENVIRONMENTAL STUDIES PROGRAM: STUDIES PROPOSED FOR FY 2008

Region: Alaska

Planning Area: Beaufort Sea

Title: Aggregate Effects Research and Environmental Mitigation Monitoring of Oil Industry Operations in the Vicinity of Nuiqsut

MMS Information Needs to be Addressed: The study will serve to verify and/or improve the effectiveness of pre-lease mitigation strategies and post-lease operations for future development activities on the OCS. MMS analysts and decision makers will use the information in NEPA analysis and documentation for Lease Sales, EPs and DPPs and in post-sale and post-exploration decision making in the Beaufort Sea.

Cost Range: (in thousands) \$280-\$350 **Period of Performance:** FY 2008-2010

Description:

Background: The recent completion of several oilfield development projects, both onshore and offshore, in the vicinity of subsistence use areas for the village of Nuiqsut creates an opportunity to study and evaluate empirically the effectiveness of specific mitigation measures and processes in village Alaska. Other agencies, including federal and state Social research can ascertain and document a wide range of information about some of the following pertinent questions:

- What is the track record for implementing mitigation plans over the life of a project?
- Have formal mitigation efforts been effective in reducing anticipated effects?
- What types of mitigation effort seem to work best to reduce social conflict?
- Have informal mitigation mechanisms emerged, and with what effect?
- What is the cumulative effectiveness of regional mitigation across multiple projects?
- How do various responsible agencies actually monitor and measure mitigation effects?
- Have industry operations been responsive to community feedback?
- What scientific parameters are appropriate to evaluate mitigation retrospectively?
- What specific data sets are most useful to collect before, during, and after a project?
- Are there significant social nuances to the mitigation process that merit further research?

This study will proceed as an inter-agency project, with at least collaborative manpower contributions from both federal and state agency representatives. Other cooperative funding may be established through coordination with NSSI, BLM, and/or the state of Alaska and private industry.

The study is intended to pilot-test the prospects for a more comprehensive future undertaking by limiting the initial scope of research to a few recent exploration and development projects. The projects to review would likely include Northstar, McCovey, Endicott, Alpine and satellites, NPR-A exploration, and the most recent fields in Kuparuk (Meltwater and Tarn). The most substantial topics would likely derive from mitigation efforts effecting the human environment in and around the Colville Delta. For example, Alpine provides some concrete manifestations of publicly contested outcomes that might warrant focused research in the proposed study. Nuiqsut residents

have asserted prominent discrepancies between pre-development guarantees and post-development realities with regard to many specific issues. The study would encompass research and documentation of both objective and subjective interpretations of mitigation effects.

Objectives:

1. Systematically identify the formal and informal mechanisms that relevant actors have negotiated and implemented in Development and Production Plans or Exploration Plans to mitigate specific anticipated impacts from oil development in the vicinity of Nuiqsut and its subsistence area, both onshore and offshore.
2. Develop a rigorous analytic method to evaluate the social effectiveness of mitigation measures and their predictability as they pertain to North Slope residents.
3. Establish an empirical basis to distinguish offshore/onshore oil related social impacts.
4. Provide socio-cultural insights into the challenge of mitigation to enhance government performance in predicting, monitoring, and managing the oil development process.

Methods: Project sponsors will need to establish an appropriate steering committee across federal/state agencies to facilitate the study execution and to achieve a specific division of labor. Researchers will conduct a literature search to investigate and annotate the documented social nuances of mitigating social impacts within the framework of NEPA. Researchers will record a concise history of recent oilfield exploration and development near Nuiqsut. This may involve literature search, interviews, and fieldwork. Researchers will investigate and document the history of negotiated mitigation measures for all oil related exploration and development activities near Nuiqsut. They will identify and analyze both the formal and informal mitigation mechanisms that have emerged over time. Researchers will quantify industry/community interactions in relevant categories of analysis. Researchers will analyze the collected data to develop an objective narrative of events and interactions, including alternative stakeholder interpretations of past interactions to emphasize relevant subjective features of the mitigation process. Researchers will then summarize the findings and provide explicit analysis to improve agency understanding and management of the social process of mitigating impacts from oil development.

Revised Date: September 2007

Section 2.3 Profiles of Studies Presently Proposed for FY 2009

2.3 Profiles of Studies Presently Proposed for the Fiscal Year 2009 NSL

Table 2. Alaska OCS Region Studies Proposed for the Fiscal Year 2009 NSL

Page #	Discipline	Title
151	PS	Migration and Habitat Use by Spectacled Eiders in the Eastern Chukchi Near- and Offshore Environment
153	MM	Polar Bear Habitat Use and Availability, Movements, and Dispersal in Nearshore Areas of Central Beaufort Sea
155	PS	Nearshore Monitoring of Spectacled and Steller's Eiders and Other Avian Species in Peard and Ledyard Bays: Aerial Surveys
157	PO	Modeling of Circulation in the North Aleutian Basin (Phase II)
AQ = Air Quality FE = Fate & Effects HE = Habitat & Ecology IM = Information Management MM = Marine Mammals PS = Protected Species PO = Physical Oceanography SS = Social Sciences		

ENVIRONMENTAL STUDIES PROGRAM: STUDIES PROPOSED FOR FY 2009

Region: Alaska

Planning Area: Chukchi Sea

Title: Migration and Habitat Use by Spectacled Eiders in the Eastern Chukchi Near- and Offshore Environment

MMS Information Need(s) to be Addressed: Research focusing on the distribution and timing of use by the Threatened (ESA) spectacled eider was identified as an information need at the COMIDA workshop held on Nov. 1-3, 2006. This information will be used for Section 7 consultations and future NEPA analyses. The information obtained from this research will contribute in development of mitigation measures/strategies to reduce potential impacts.

Cost Range: (In-thousands) \$440-\$660

Period of Performance: FY 2009-2013

Description:

Background: Basic information on timing and duration of use within the Chukchi Sea Planning Area is necessary to better define parameters used to model the impacts of perturbations and ultimately population effects. Recent improvements in satellite telemetry have yielded some information on the distribution and movements of long-tailed ducks and king and common eiders, many of which stage, migrate or molt in the Eastern Chukchi Sea. In 1996 the spectacled eider was listed by USFWS as Threatened Species. When the petition to list was submitted, studies began in 1993 to map and document the distribution, timing of migration, and wintering areas of the three populations. At that time, the molting, staging, and wintering areas of spectacled eiders in the Arctic and North Pacific Oceans were unknown. Subsequently, Ledyard Bay, Point Lay, and Peard Bay were identified as areas used by migrating, molting, and staging eiders that bred on the Indigirka River Delta, Russia; Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta, western Alaska; and the Prudhoe Bay region. Information on the timing and use of areas by spectacled eiders during fall migration, staging, and molting is now dated and limited because of small sample sizes. There is little information available about the timing of spring migration or locations of spring staging areas.

The results of this study will complement recent and on-going studies of long-tailed ducks, common eiders, and king eiders breeding or molting on the North Slope. In combination, these study results will provide a more complete picture of how sea ducks use the region. These and ancillary data could be used to address portions of High Priority Tasks identified by the Spectacled Eider Recovery Team.

Objectives:

1. Map and document spatial distribution, species composition, and timing of use, and residence times of sea ducks, particularly spectacled eiders.
2. Document spatial distribution of male and female spectacled eider during autumn migration and staging, the molt (flightless) period, spring migration and staging, and

summer. In addition, document fidelity of individuals to specific locations and annual variation in timing of use over a 3-year period.

3. Map and document the timing of migration and resident times of individual spectacled eiders.
4. Evaluate the fidelity of birds to areas within the eastern Chukchi Sea.
5. Model environmental, climactic, and biological parameters to define factors influencing the timing of migration and resident times of individuals.

Methods: This study will use implantable satellite transmitters to document spatial distribution and timing of use by spectacled eiders. Each individual tagged animal will supply two years of data, thus assessments of individual and population affinity and variation will be made. Also using satellite telemetry, scientists will document both local and long-distance movements of individual spectacled eiders during migration; they will identify spring and autumn staging areas, and molting sites. After examining measures of bathymetry, weather, ice, and bird status, the project will develop models to represent factors influencing timing of movements and distribution of individual spectacled eiders during spring, summer (molt), and autumn. A workshop will be convened of appropriate personnel from the USFWS, UAF, USGS, MMS, and other government agencies, non-government organizations, and the Canadian Wildlife Service to develop and initiate an integrative program to fully describe use of the eastern Chukchi Sea by sea ducks. The workshop will facilitate cooperation with other investigators, integrate the location data from satellite transmitters and aerial surveys for long-tailed ducks, and king, Steller's, and common eiders from recent and on-going projects and new spectacled eiders data to document spatial distribution, species composition, and timing of use by sea ducks, especially during spring migration and staging when aerial surveys are problematic.

Revised Date: September 2007

ENVIRONMENTAL STUDIES PROGRAM: STUDIES PROPOSED FOR FY 2009

Region: Alaska

Planning Areas: Beaufort Sea, Chukchi Sea

Title: Polar Bear Habitat Use and Availability, Movements, and Dispersal in Nearshore Areas of Central Beaufort Sea

MMS Information Need(s) to be Addressed: A jointly-funded study could address information needs identified in a 2005 MMS funded study by USFWS, “Beaufort Sea Polar Bear Monitoring Workshop”. It would provide useful information on the sub-population of polar bears summering in areas of increasing oil and gas activities along the Alaskan Arctic coastline. New information will support NEPA analysis and documentation for Beaufort and Chukchi Sea Lease Sales, Draft Production Plans, Marine Mammal Protection Act (MMPA) permitting, and development of related mitigation.

Cost Range: (in thousands) \$1,280-\$1,920
(MMS Portion)

Period of Performance: FY 2009-2013

Description:

Background: Polar bear use of terrestrial habitat along the Beaufort Sea coastline of Alaska has increased in recent years, with up to 10% of the polar bears inhabiting the southern Beaufort Sea remaining on land during the open water period. Simultaneously, long-term expansion of oil and gas development is being contemplated in the southern Beaufort Sea and northern Chukchi Sea. Polar bear-human interactions are likely to increase because areas of importance to significant numbers of polar bears for resting, feeding, and traveling are becoming coincident with areas of high interest for oil- and gas-related development. Similarly, in Chukotka, Russia, and western Hudson Bay, Baffin Bay, and other areas of Canada, polar bears are being found with increasing frequency and greater numbers on land during the fall open water period.

Results from aerial surveys as well as a recent study monitoring polar bears feeding on bowhead whale carcasses at Barter and Cross islands indicates that all age/sex classes of polar bears are present along shore during the fall open water period and that approximately 50 percent of the bears are represented by family groups. Large numbers of bears have been observed near Barter Island, Cross Island, and Barrow. Industrial operators in the Prudhoe Bay area report an increasing trend in the numbers, frequency, and duration of polar bear use during the open water period.

Partnership opportunities, such as with other DOI Bureaus, may be available and will be explored as a potential means for initiating this study.

Objectives:

1. Evaluate the implications of extended use of land during the open water period to polar bear health, behavior, and population status.
2. Estimate whether potential changes in the health and behavior of polar bears are likely to be influenced in the future by oil- and gas-related activities along the Beaufort Sea (and

Chukchi Sea) coastlines.

3. Develop a mitigation strategy to ensure that industrial activity and changing environmental conditions do not interact to the detriment of the polar bear population.

Methods: The investigator will conduct a thorough literature review and develop hypotheses about implications 1) to the management and stability of the polar bear population, and 2) to the health and behavior of individual bears in specific demographic groups of increasing numbers of polar bears remaining on land for extended periods during the open water period. Behavioral observations and aerial surveys in conjunction with appropriate technology satellite tags, radio-frequency tags, and similar tags will be used to monitor representative polar bears in Alaska that show a tendency to remain on land during the open water period. Movements, site fidelity, and limited life history data will be used to test specific hypotheses. Physical exams will be used to evaluate the health and physical condition of representative bears to test specific hypotheses. Predictions and observations will be reconciled and a plan developed to mitigate any expected negative interactions between polar bears and oil- and gas-related development in a changing physical environment.

Revised Date: September 2007

ENVIRONMENTAL STUDIES PROGRAM: STUDIES PROPOSED FOR FY 2009

Region: Alaska

Planning Area: Chukchi Sea

Title: Nearshore Monitoring of Spectacled and Steller's Eiders and other Avian Species in Peard and Ledyard Bays: Aerial Surveys

MMS Information Need(s) to be Addressed: Information on marine bird distribution, and in particular distribution, abundance, and timing of use by the Threatened (ESA) spectacled and Steller's eiders, is important for review of various exploration permits, development plans, Section 7 consultations, and future NEPA analyses. The information need addressed by this study was identified as a need at the COMIDA Workshop held on Nov. 1-3, 2006. MMS analysts and decision makers will use the information in NEPA analysis and documentation for Lease Sales, EPs and DPPs and in post-sale and post-exploration decision making in the Chukchi Sea.

Cost Range: (in thousands) \$1,064-\$1,596 **Period of Performance:** 2009-2012

Description:

Background: In the northeastern Chukchi Sea, especially Peard and Ledyard Bays, there is important nearshore spring and fall staging habitat and late-summer/early-fall molting habitat for a variety of shorebirds and waterfowl. The area offshore Ledyard Bay is an important foraging area for thousands of seabirds including common and thick-billed murres, black-legged kittiwakes, and other seabirds that nest in colonies at Capes Thompson, Lewis, and Lisburne. Ledyard Bay has been defined by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) as Critical Habitat (66 CFR 25) for the threatened spectacled eider. An aerial survey conducted in August 1994 (USFWS) documented 101 (August 18) and 603 spectacled eiders (August 19), respectively, in Ledyard and Peard Bays. It should be noted that each survey represented one (1) day of effort in each of the bays. Obviously, these single-day surveys represent rather small 'snapshots' in time and therefore only provide cursory information regarding timing of use by spectacled eiders in these two areas.

Though several avian studies were completed in this region, most were done 15-20 years ago under OCSEAP, and this time gap makes inferences about potential impacts of offshore activities less certain. Therefore, it is important that MMS expand other monitoring to provide current and more precise estimates of abundance, spatial distribution, and timing of use (i.e., peaks) by spectacled eiders and Steller's eiders and other coastal water birds in Peard and Ledyard Bays. If funded, this study will be closely coordinated with the ongoing study titled "Monitoring Marine Birds of Concern in Eastern Chukchi Nearshore Area."

The information obtained from the planned aerial surveys will contribute greatly in development of mitigation measures/strategies to reduce potential impacts to migratory bird populations from proposed offshore oil and gas activities and any onshore facilities, pipelines, or other associated structures necessary to transport oil and gas.

Objectives:

1. Document abundance, spatial distribution, and timing of use for spectacled eider and Steller's eider and other coastal water birds using Peard and Ledyard Bay in the northeastern Chukchi Sea.
2. Identify important areas used by staging and molting spectacled eider and Steller's eider, as well as other avian species using the Chukchi nearshore environment during the spring-summer (May-September); 2008-2010.

Methods: Project scientists will conduct periodic low-level (45-50 m) aerial surveys (10 replicates surveys, twice/mo. from May-Sept.) along transects established perpendicular to the shoreline following standard methodology for *Monitoring Beaufort Sea Waterfowl and Marine Birds-Aerial Survey Component* (MMS 2002-002). Coverage in these areas would likely require an increased number of transects (ca. 5 km apart) to adequately sample relatively large numbers of birds. Length and distribution of transects will be determined prior to surveys and surveys will be done on roughly a 2-week sampling interval beginning on or about 15 July (6 to 8 surveys/yr.). Data on species abundance, spatial distribution, composition, and timing of use will be analyzed following established methods. Reports and other deliverables will be timed to optimize input into OCS Lease Sale 193 post-sale and future pre-sale decision needs.

Revised Date: September 2007

ENVIRONMENTAL STUDIES PROGRAM: STUDIES PROPOSED FOR FY 2009

Region: Alaska

Planning Area: North Aleutian Basin

Title: Modeling of Circulation in the North Aleutian Basin (Phase II)

MMS Information Need(s) to be Addressed: Oil spill trajectory analysis for impact assessment is needed for the North Aleutian Basin (NAB) Planning Area. Oil Spill Risk Analysis (OSRA) is a cornerstone foundation for evaluating alternatives in OCS oil and gas leasing EIS preparation and for evaluating mitigation, such as oil spill contingency plans. MMS analysts and decision makers will use the information in NEPA analysis and documentation for Lease Sales, EPs and DPPs and in post-sale and post-exploration decision making in the NAB.

Cost Range: (in thousands) \$1,600-\$2,400

Period of Performance: FY2008-2011

Description:

Background: The planning area is characterized by diverse, abundant, and environmentally sensitive resources. MMS does not have a functional oil spill trajectory model for the NAB Planning Area. Previous MMS contractors (RAND Corporation and Applied Science Associates) did develop circulation and oil spill trajectory models for the northern Bering Sea in the late 1970's and through the late 1980's are no longer functional, available to MMS or state-of-the-art. A planned Phase I study will use an off-the-shelf coupled circulation model to provide input to the MMS OSRA. A second phase study is envisioned which, coupled with NAB specific physical oceanographic studies and mesoscale meteorological modeling, would provide more comprehensive post-sale model development and application.

Objectives: Starting from the Phase I or other existing coupled ocean circulation model:

1. Incorporate improved and concurrent oceanographic, mesoscale meteorological modeling and bathymetric data into an existing ocean circulation model.
2. Demonstrate model skill at representing the physical processes in the circulation within the domain.
3. Adapt the existing model for use in the oil spill trajectory analysis.

Methods: Improve and adapt specifically for the NAB a numerical ocean model that includes sea ice processes, tides, eddies, coastal currents, bathymetry, and atmospheric forcing, with an emphasis on surface currents in the NAB. Methods will also include hind-cast of 10-20 years. The modelers will work closely with a concurrent oceanographic field team and with mesoscale meteorology model developers to maximize synergy. Model output (coupled surface circulation, ice motion, wind fields) must be suitable as input to MMS Oil Spill Risk Analysis.

Revised Date: April 2007

SECTION 3.0 TOPICAL AREAS FOR FY 2009

This section presents a general forecast of significant topical issues and concerns to be addressed by proposed studies for FY 2009 and beyond. In general, these topics conform with the research themes of the *National Strategic Plan 1998-2002* (USDOJ, MMS, ESP, 1998). Due to the great differences existing between Alaskan environments and other OCS areas, the uniqueness of issues in Alaska has dictated the need to anticipate new topical areas for needed implementation within the Alaska ESP. These projects will focus on MMS mission needs within the context of increasing industrial development and potential trends in changing climates. Specific geographic emphases are likely to change due to potential changes in leasing or development schedules.

Many of the studies proposed for FY 2008 and FY 2009 address the topical areas described below. These will be re-assessed as part of the FY 2008 planning process.

As discussed in Section 1.2.1 of this document, MMS released its *Final Proposed Program Outer Continental Shelf Oil and Gas Leasing Program 2007—2012* in April 2007 (USDOJ, MMS, In Press.). This program includes proposed lease sales in four planning areas within Alaska, two of which (the Chukchi Sea Planning Area and the North Aleutian Basin Planning Area), have not been the focus of studies for more than a decade or two. It will be important for MMS to continue monitoring studies and other priority studies of key species and marine communities. Studies of bowhead whales will continue to be a priority for the region. Additionally, many studies of other sensitive marine mammals, including North Pacific right whales, polar bears, pinnipeds, and other marine mammals will continue into 2009. Additional studies may be brought online which address ringed seals, kelp communities, fish and migratory waterfowl. Studies will vary from those aimed at determining spatial and temporal habitat use patterns, habitat description and monitoring, and evaluations of health over time. Studies aimed at understanding potential impacts to subsistence species and subsistence practices will continue to be important. Additional studies of the physical environment such as current regimes and ice characteristics will be proposed to support interpretation of data from living resource investigations and to provide a better understanding of the fate and dispersion of OCS discharges.

3.1 Physical Oceanography

One of the emerging issues in the Alaska OCS Region is the need for better, finer scale circulation and oil spill models and higher resolution data for the nearshore portions of the Beaufort Sea. Multiple offshore oil fields have been developed (Endicott and Northstar), exploration efforts may accelerate, and development plans potentially can be submitted. MMS will be completing a nearshore Beaufort Sea ice-ocean circulation model. Construction of such a system requires formation of a user group, higher data density, and ability to assimilate such data into the model in real-time. The Region will be working toward forming a users group to provide surface radar mapping capabilities and data for the nearshore Beaufort Sea and other Alaskan waters as needed. Over the past 25 years, oceanographic radar techniques have been developed and improved to the point that detailed, gridded, 2-dimensional maps of surface circulation can be provided and recorded in real time and directly assimilated into real-time models.

Additional improvements will also be needed in sea-ice aspects of the modeling. The resolution of ice models and ice data needs to be increased to address the fine scale interactions necessary to model oil spill trajectories in the nearshore Beaufort Sea and Chukchi Sea, including within and among the barrier islands. Ice models currently in use by MMS and others use relatively simple thermodynamics and ice thickness distribution, approximating the ice as slabs of a one to few thicknesses plus open water. While sufficient as a first approximation of the arctic ice pack, this treatment lacks the ability to sufficiently resolve the spectrum of ice thickness from thin new ice to thick-ridged ice to landfast ice. In addition, these ice models are based on empirical ice physics valid at a 100-km scale and extrapolated to smaller grid dimension. The MMS will work to improve the state of the art in ocean-ice modeling and to produce either a stand-alone model or one that can be coupled to and or nested in existing ice/ocean models.

The Alaska OCS Region has a significant research effort using high frequency radar to map water surface circulation and currents in real time in the 2006 to 2008 time period. However, considerable research remains to derive surface current data within acceptable scientific standards, particularly during marginal ice season.

3.2 Fate and Effects

The Region has collected baseline biological and chemical monitoring data in the vicinity of the Liberty Prospect and Northstar since 1999, as part of the studies *Arctic Nearshore Impact Monitoring in the Development Area* (ANIMIDA) and *Continuation of Arctic Nearshore Impact Monitoring in the Development Area* (cANIMIDA). The summer of 2007 was the last field season for cANIMIDA. BPXA put its plan for developing the Liberty Prospect on hold in January 2002; as of September 2007, it is pursuing options for development and production through directional drilling from onshore. Offshore development is still possible at this site or others in the central Beaufort.

In addition to site-specific monitoring, there is a need to re-examine the regional pollutant levels in the U.S. Beaufort Sea. The MMS set up the Beaufort Sea Monitoring Project (BSMP) in the 1980's to monitor sediment quality. The BSMP monitors trace metal and hydrocarbon levels in sediments and benthic biota at specific locations on a regional basis. The ANIMIDA and cANIMIDA projects have resampled BSMP stations locally near Northstar and Liberty, but not elsewhere. Regional BSMP sampling has not been done since 1989 and needs to be repeated.

Where possible through national or international-level coordination or joint industry efforts, additional information on fate (weathering) of oil spills would also be useful – for example, field experiments on the weathering of oil in broken ice.

3.3 Endangered and Protected Species

Production at the Northstar site and OCS activities possible at other sites may lead to risks of oil spills from buried pipelines, other discharges, noise from various industrial and support activities and increased human interaction with arctic offshore species. Species protected under the ESA, MMPA, and Migratory Bird Treaty Act are of particular concern if impacted by such factors.

Study of the effects of oil and gas activon protected mammals, and the need for continued monitoring of endangered species are expected to be continued – as well as assessment of how any changes in the bowhead whale migration’s distance from shore could relate to subsistence success (see below). Future bowhead studies are expected to continue to explore use of satellite tagging for information on bowhead whale residence times in development areas and information on bowhead behavior in response to industrial noise. Also needed, will be continuation of vital region-wide fall monitoring of the migration by the MMS Bowhead Whale Aerial Survey Project and additional knowledge it obtains on bowhead feeding patterns.

Effects of construction activities on polar bears, especially on denning bears and concerns about the adequacy of information about all age/sex categories of the bear population will need to be addressed by additional research. Several ongoing studies are expected to lead to recommendations for additional information regarding polar bears and continued study of the bear population’s vulnerability to oil spills through improved models.

Other key subsistence species potentially exposed to short-term or cumulative impact factors include beluga whales, ringed seals, and bearded seals for which behavioral or monitoring studies may be needed.

3.4 Waterfowl in Lower Cook Inlet

Information on waterfowl abundance and species composition in predominant bays of Lower Cook Inlet is needed. A study by the USGS identified the Upper Cook Inlet as an extremely important migration and wintering area for shorebirds. Major portions of the Western Sandpiper, Dunlin, and Rock Sandpiper populations either migrate through or winter in Cook Inlet, and at least four major bays in the Upper Cook Inlet qualify as Western Hemispheric Shorebird Reserve Network sites. Assessing the relative importance of bays in the Lower Cook Inlet will complement the previous study and improve evaluation of potential impacts of oil and gas exploration, development and production.

Steller’s eiders, common eiders, surf scoters, white-winged scoters, black scoters, long-tailed ducks, and harlequin ducks all winter, stage, or molt in lower Cook Inlet marine habitats. Steller’s eiders are listed as a threatened species and population estimates for long-tailed ducks, scoters, and common eiders are also indicating long-term declines. Causes of these declines are unknown. Winter and spring survey data in lower Cook Inlet are incomplete and sporadic. Distribution and abundance information is needed to better evaluate risk to populations or habitats from oil and gas activities, to better evaluate species status population trends, and to further understand causes of declines. MMS can also use such information for oil-spill contingency planning, establishing baseline information for long-term monitoring and mitigation planning, and establishing survey protocols for long-term monitoring.

3.5 Effects on Unique Marine Benthic Communities

Pipeline construction and other activities may generate sediment plumes that could potentially impact the unique “Boulder Patch” benthic community, known to cover an extensive area to the northwest of the Liberty site in Stefansson Sound. This is a boulder-strewn seabed area with a

kelp-dominated community. Similar areas are known to exist to the east in Camden Bay. Some kelp plants in the Boulder Patch are up to 40 years old. One of the ongoing studies in the cANIMIDA project focuses on kelp productivity and will use inherent optical properties of ice and water to estimate the potential effect of sediment resuspension on kelp productivity. Optical-related measurements will include spectral irradiance, light scattering coefficients, and total suspended solids. Results of this work will be used to formulate future information needs related to this issue. Research on invertebrate and vertebrate components of this community and refined development of monitoring protocols are anticipated for the future.

3.6 Marine Fish Migrations, Recruitment and Essential Fish Habitat

Nuiqsut villagers are concerned that OCS activities have affected arctic cisco populations in the Colville River and reduced subsistence utilization. Until consistent time-series data regarding wind-driven recruitment of young-of-year arctic cisco and recruitment of that population are available, offshore oil and gas development might be considered a potential impact-causing factor. Thus, additional research on near-shore arctic fisheries and recruitment to Colville River populations should be considered.

Proposed and recent pipeline construction in the Beaufort nearshore have led to concerns about effects of trenching and back-filling on fish populations and habitats. Several important fish species used for subsistence migrate through or are found in the Northstar and Liberty areas, including arctic and least cisco, Dolley Varden char, and humpback and broad whitefish. Also, intermittent occurrences of pink and chum salmon may be found in Beaufort coastal waters. As a result of the Magnuson Fishery Conservation and Management Act, Beaufort waters are considered as Essential Fish Habitat for endemic salmonids. Future research on salmonid reproduction in drainages to the Beaufort Sea may be necessary in order to clarify environmental assessment and mitigation needs.

3.7 Subsistence

Residents of the North Slope coastal communities frequently express concern about cumulative impacts of offshore and onshore developments on their subsistence lifestyle. Relative to existing oil and gas operations, the villages of most pressing current concern are Kaktovik, Nuiqsut, and Barrow. Consideration of cumulative impacts is an increasingly important issue for MMS in preparing NEPA documents. Some of the concerns of the Inupiat are access to hunting and fishing areas being limited by oil industry infrastructure, reduced harvests, increased hunter efforts, and increased hunter cost. How and to what degree subsistence activities have been affected by industry infrastructure and industry activity is a concern that may be addressed by research.

There is also, related to the long-term study of the cumulative effects of oil industry on subsistence, a broader set of issues concerning how the Inupiat society has been potentially affected. Relevant issues include a broad range of topics, such as the changing relationship between the cash economy and household subsistence activities, changing levels of anxiety and stress at multiple levels of organization, potential changes in sharing of subsistence resources, and potential changes in the recruitment of youth into subsistence activities. Social indicators

should be studied to serve as a basis for estimating long-term cumulative impacts.

3.8 Natural Gas Pipeline

One of the routes for the natural gas pipeline considered by industry is from Prudhoe Bay, northward to about 4 miles offshore, eastward 300 miles, then southward along the Mackenzie River, and finishing at Calgary, Alberta. Most of the offshore portion would be on the U.S. OCS. (The other major alternative is onshore.) If the preferred route is on the OCS, MMS would be responsible for issuing permits. A buried gas pipeline (as opposed to an oil pipeline) under the seafloor of the Beaufort Sea is a new issue. If the Beaufort OCS is the preferred route, the Alaska Region may need to conduct environmental studies on a variety of environmental issues.

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Contributing Authors, Analysts and Support Staff

Jeffrey Gleason, Wildlife Biologist
Tim Holder, Socioeconomic Specialist, Former Coordinator for Annual Studies Plan
Warren Horowitz, Oceanographer
Ida Menge DeBock, GIS Technician
Charles Monnett, Marine Ecologist
Richard Newman, Oceanographer
Dick Prentki, Oceanographer
Lisa Rotterman, Wildlife Biologist, Current Coordinator for Annual Studies Plan
Caryn Smith, Oceanographer
Ruthie Way, Program Coordination Analyst
Kate Wedemeyer, Fisheries Oceanographer
Dee Williams, Environmental Studies Section Chief
Lori Williamson, Secretary