

POTENTIAL CMI STUDIES, MMS ALASKA ENVIRONMENTAL STUDIES PROGRAM

Region: Alaska

Planning Areas: All

Type: Joint Study

Title: Workshop Evaluate and Mitigate Impacts from Invasive Species

MMS Information Need(s) to be Addressed: This study will identify high latitude biological invasive species, pathways, and mitigations MMS-Alaska Region needs to comply with Executive Order #13112.NEPA, and the Magnuson-Stevens Act (*e.g.*, Essential Fish Habitat), and aid decision-making by management with respect to suitable mitigations.

Period of Performance: One Year

Description:

Background: Invasive species are estimated to be second only to habitat alteration as a factor in the endangerment and extinction of native aquatic species. Invasive species are a major threat to ecosystems and the people that depend upon them. Invasive species may also adversely affect Essential Fish Habitat of fish species managed under the Magnuson-Stevens Act. Offshore exploration and production structures and vessels are not in place in Alaska. Structures and vessels must be brought to Alaska via the sea. Non-native organisms settled on these vessels and structures could be transplanted to Alaska. Shipping is known as a means of transferring aquatic organisms on a global scale. Studies have documented the role of ballast water and hull fouling as major vectors for these transfers to new areas.

Executive Order #13112 requires that all Federal agencies “prevent the introduction of invasive species; detect and respond rapidly ...; monitor invasive species populations accurately and reliably; ...”, and specifically requires (Sec. 2(a)(3)) that agencies shall “not authorize, fund, or carry out actions that it believes are likely to cause or promote the introduction or spread of invasive species in the United States or elsewhere....”

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, ADF&G Invasive Species Program, Cook Inlet Regional Citizens’ Advisory Council, Prince William Sound Regional Citizens’ Advisory Council, Aquatic Bioinvasion Research & Policy Institute have all expressed explicit interest in collaborating on an invasive species workshop.

Objectives:

1. Identify existing information sources and expertise on (a) high latitude biological invasions, particularly in marine waters, and (b) OCS exploration and production (*e.g.*, structures and vessels) as vectors for the transfer of invasive species
2. Identify and assess pathways for invasive species transfer associated with OCS exploration and development in Alaska, and the potential impacts of such transfers.

3. Identify and assess effective means to mitigate impacts identified in 1 and 2 (above).

Methods:

1. Conduct an intergovernmental/academic/industry meeting to determine potential co-sponsorship of the workshop before seeking final approval.
2. Contact knowledgeable information sources and expertise on marine bioinvasions and OCS operations (1 & 2 above).
3. Convene a workshop of participants from among the identified sources of information (incl. industry, agency, academic, and the involved citizenry) to review and assess the information on OCS operations and their link to potential transfers of invasive species.
4. Summarize potential impacts associated with OCS-related invasive species transfers.
5. Develop recommendations for priority mitigation measures to minimize such impacts.
6. Identify data deficiencies for potential future research.

Date Information is Required: Products are anticipated available for use in one year for Environmental Assessments and for exploration, development, and production plans pursuant to past lease sales.