

*POTENTIAL CMI STUDIES, MMS ALASKA ENVIRONMENTAL STUDIES PROGRAM*

**Region:** Alaska

**Planning Area(s):** Beaufort Sea, Chukchi Sea, North Aleutian Basin, Cook Inlet

**Title:** Planning for Opportunistic Oilspill Impact Assessment

**MMS Information Need(s) to be Addressed:** The study would provide a better basis for analysis of the potential effect of an offshore oil spill under the National Environmental Policy Act and for formulation of mitigation measures.

**Period of Performance:** One to Two Years

**Description:**

Background: Many of the impacts of oil spills happen in the first three days after the oil is spilled. In the past 20 years, two major marine oil spills, the *Exxon Valdez* and the *Selendang Ayu*, have occurred in Alaska.

Because of an existing study plan, MMS was able to implement a study of the sociological impact of the *Selendang Ayu* spill in the Aleutian Islands of Alaska. Had a protocol existed for the immediate implementation of physical and biological sampling, MMS would have a better understanding of the physical and biological effects of oil spills in the frigid waters of Alaska.

Information produced by such initial oil spill studies would potentially supply MMS with information needed to address issues that result from unlikely but potentially catastrophic oil spills.

Objectives:

1. Develop a protocol for sampling during the first week of an Alaska marine oil spill.
2. Develop interagency working agreements or other instruments necessary to implement immediate sampling should an oil spill occur in marine waters.

Methods:

1. Interview MMS NEPA analysts about information needed at onset of an oil spill.
2. Develop sampling protocols to meet those information needs.
3. Develop appropriate framework with Coast Guard and other relevant agencies that will allow and facilitate immediate implementation of the sampling protocols.

**Date information is required:** Draft protocols and implementing agreements are due the end of year 1. Final protocols and implementing agreements are needed by end of project.