



Minerals Management Service

People Promoting Energy, the Environment, and the Economy

FACT SHEET

January 16, 2009

Atlantic G&G Programmatic EIS

- MMS is announcing its intent to prepare a Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement (PEIS) to evaluate potential environmental effects of multiple geological and geophysical (G&G) activities in the Outer Continental Shelf (OCS) waters of the Atlantic.
- G&G surveys provide information used by industry and government to evaluate the potential for offshore oil, gas, and methane hydrate resources and geologic hazards. The oil and gas industry needs accurate data on the location, extent, and properties of hydrocarbon resources, as well as information on shallow geologic hazards and seafloor geotechnical properties, in order to explore, develop, produce, and transport hydrocarbons safely and economically.
- MMS requires that G&G permit applications be submitted for all exploration activities that occur on nonleased acreage or acreage leased by someone other than the company initiating the activity. These applications are reviewed for completeness of required information and compliance with all existing Laws (i.e., National Environmental Protection Act (NEPA), Marine Mammals Protection Act (MMPA), Endangered Species Act (ESA), Coastal Zone Management Act (CZMA) and several other relevant Laws), prior to permit issuance.
- The PEIS is proposed for the Atlantic in light of multiple applications for permits received by MMS and industry's expressed interest in expanding activities into the Atlantic offshore waters. This PEIS will also review advances in G&G technology and improved knowledge of acoustic impacts on marine life. This PEIS will determine whether significant impacts to Atlantic resources could occur as a result of G&G activities, and where needed, outline mitigation and monitoring measures that will reduce or eliminate the potential for impacts to the environment.
- No National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) programmatic documents have been performed for G&G activities in the Atlantic OCS. Previous programmatic NEPA documents for G&G activities in the Gulf of Mexico have been performed by the U.S. Department of the Interior, Minerals Management Service and the U.S. Department of the Interior, Geological Survey.

- The first step in preparing a PEIS is to publish a Notice of Intent to Prepare a Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement in the Federal Register. This step initiates the scoping process and also seeks interest from other Federal agencies, and State, tribal, and local governments to consider becoming cooperating agencies in the preparation of the PEIS.
- Through the scoping process, MMS seeks input on the scope of the PEIS, and assistance in determining the significant issues and alternatives for analysis.
- If a PEIS is funded and started in early 2009, MMS estimates completion by late 2010. Without funding, completion of the PEIS would be uncertain.
- The NOI will be published in the *Federal Register* on January 21, 2009. The public may submit comments during the next 60 days by using MMS' Public Connect online commenting system or by mail to:

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