



NEWS RELEASE

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Minerals Management Service
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Minerals Management Service Schedules Public Meetings on Development of OCS Oil and Gas Leasing Program Environmental Impact Statement

Washington, DC – The Interior Department’s Minerals Management Service (MMS) announced today it will hold a series of public scoping meetings in March and April 2006 on the Draft Proposed 5-Year Outer Continental Shelf (OCS) Oil and Gas Leasing Program for 2007-2012. The meetings will be held in key coastal cities in the Gulf of Mexico, mid-Atlantic, and Alaska.

In accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act, the MMS will prepare an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the 2007-2012 OCS oil and gas 5-year leasing program. The EIS will address the potential impacts of the adoption of the proposed 5-year program, which was issued for review and comment in draft form in a February 10, 2006, Federal Register notice.

“We invite and encourage public participation in these important meetings,” said MMS Director Johnnie Burton. “Public input will ensure that MMS fully considers all aspects of the development of the vast domestic oil and gas resources off our coasts will allow us to do so in an environmentally sensitive manner.”

The meetings will provide an opportunity for interested citizens and organizations to provide input on the scope, significant issues, and alternatives to be considered in the environmental impact statement (EIS) for the Proposed 2007-2012 OCS Oil and Gas Leasing Program.

The proposed sales will constitute a significant element of the national energy strategy. The MMS requests comments on information regarding issues and alternatives that should be evaluated in the EIS, including significant environmental issues concerning OCS oil and gas leasing, exploration, and development. The comments will be reviewed by the MMS to determine the scope of the EIS.

MMS will accept written comments on the EIS for the Proposed 2007-2012 OCS Oil and Gas Leasing Program through April 11, 2006. You may submit your comments electronically through MMS’s Public Connect on-line commenting system at <https://ocsconnect.mms.gov>, or

by mail to Mr. James Bennett, Chief, Branch of Environmental Assessment, Minerals Management Service, 381 Elden Street, Mail Stop 4042, Herndon, Virginia 20170.

MMS, an agency of the U.S. Department of the Interior, manages offshore oil and gas exploration as well as renewable and alternative energy sources such as wind, wave, and solar on 1.76 billion acres of the Outer Continental Shelf while protecting the human, marine, and coastal environments. The OCS provides 30 percent of oil and 21 percent of natural gas produced domestically, and sand used for coastal restoration. MMS collects, accounts for, and disburses mineral revenues from Federal and American Indian lands, and contributes to the Land and Water Conservation Fund and other special use funds, with Fiscal Year 2005 disbursements of approximately \$9.9 billion and more than \$153 billion since 1982.

MMS Main Website: www.mms.gov

MMS: Securing Ocean Energy and Economic Value for America

The public scoping meetings for the development of the proposed 5-year OCS leasing program EIS are scheduled as follows:

Alaska

March 6, 2006 – Inupiat Heritage Center, Barrow, Alaska, 7:00 p.m.

March 7, 2006 – Qargi Center, Kaktovik, Alaska, 7:00 p.m.

March 8, 2006 – Kisik Community Center, Nuiqsut, Alaska, 6:00 p.m.

March 9, 2006 – Arctic Slope Native Association Building, Wainwright, Alaska, 3:00 p.m.

March 13, 2006 – City of Dillingham Council Chambers, Dillingham, Alaska, 7:00 p.m.

March 21, 2006 – King Salmon Civic Center, King Salmon, Alaska, 7:00 p.m.

March 22, 2006 – City of Sand Point Council Chambers, Sand Point, Alaska, 7:00 p.m.

March 23, 2006 – Cold Bay Community Center, Cold Bay, Alaska, 7:00 p.m.

April 5, 2006 – Suite 101, 3801 Centerpoint Dr., Anchorage, Alaska, 5:00 p.m.

Gulf of Mexico

March 28, 2006 – Wyndham Greenspoint, 12400 Greenspoint Drive, Houston, Texas, 1:00 p.m.

March 29, 2006 – Hampton Inn and Suites, New Orleans-Elmwood, 5150 Mounes Street, Harahan, Louisiana, 1:00 p.m.

March 30, 2006 – Riverview Plaza Hotel, 64 South Water Street, Mobile, Alabama, 7:00 p.m.

Mid-Atlantic

April 4, 2006 – Doubletree Hotel, 880 Military Hwy., Norfolk, Virginia, 3:00 p.m. and 7:00 p.m.

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