



NEWS RELEASE

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Minerals Management Service
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Minerals Management Service Issues Proposed 5-Year Plan and Draft Environmental Impact Statement for 2007-2012 OCS Oil and Gas Leasing Program

21 sales in 7 planning areas proposed

WASHINGTON – The Interior Department’s Minerals Management Service (MMS) today released for comment a proposed plan for the 2007-2012 Outer Continental Shelf (OCS) leasing program and the associated Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS). This is the second draft of a new leasing plan to succeed the current program that expires on June 30, 2007. MMS will accept comments on the proposed plan through November 24, 2006. The DEIS is open for comment until November 22, 2006.

The proposed program includes a total of 21 OCS lease sales in seven of the 26 OCS planning areas – four areas off Alaska, two areas in the Gulf of Mexico, and one area in the Atlantic.

MMS estimates of total undiscovered technically recoverable resources (UTRR) are 67.9 billion barrels of oil and 340.4 trillion cubic feet of natural gas from all planning areas where sales are under consideration in the 2007-2012 Proposed Program, though only a portion of some of the planning areas are included in the proposal.

As in the draft proposed program, issued by MMS in February 2006, the proposed program includes a special interest sale in the Mid-Atlantic Planning Area off the coastline of Virginia in late 2011. This proposed program area excludes a 25-mile coastal buffer from leasing consideration, as there is no existing oil and gas activity in the area and the State has made no request to include leasing closer to shore. Also, there is no leasing proposed in a wedge-shaped No-Obstruction Zone, to avoid conflicts with navigation activities in and out of the Chesapeake Bay. Current presidential withdrawals or congressional moratoria have placed more than 85 percent of the OCS around the lower 48 states off limits to energy development, including all areas off Virginia.

In the Central and Western Gulf of Mexico Planning Areas, the two areas of highest resource potential and interest, the proposed program remains the same as the draft proposed program with the exception of the exclusion of a small area in the Central Gulf that is east of the military line (86° 41' W).

The program continues to schedule annual areawide lease sales, and proposes a sale in 2007 of a portion of the area that was identified for Sale 181 in the 5-year program for 1997-2002. As a result of the reconfiguration of some planning areas to follow new administrative lines, some of the areas formerly included in the Eastern and Western Gulf Planning Areas are now part of the Central Gulf Planning Area. There are no lease sales scheduled in the reconfigured Eastern Gulf Planning Area. The original Sale 181 area is not under presidential withdrawal and has not been subject to congressional moratoria. In addition, the area being considered for leasing will not include the area within 100 miles of the Florida coast that used to be part of the Eastern Gulf Planning Area.

In the Alaska Region, the program proposes multiple lease sales in the Beaufort and Chukchi Seas and North Aleutian Basin Planning Areas. Multiple sales are consistent with the Governor of Alaska's recommendations. Two of these areas are modified from the draft proposed program. In the Chukchi Sea, the proposed program removes from leasing consideration a 25-mile buffer area along the coast, as there is no existing oil and gas activity in the area and the State has made no request to include leasing closer to shore. For the North Aleutian Basin, in response to comments from the governor and the majority of local governments and tribal organizations, this program proposes sales only in the area offered in Sale 92, which was held in 1988.

The North Aleutian Basin Planning Area is currently withdrawn by presidential order under section 12 of the OCS Lands Act. However, the Governor of Alaska has requested that the president modifies his withdrawal to exclude the North Aleutian Basin planning area, and allow the scheduling of lease sales in the Sale 92 area in the 2007-2012 program. The Cook Inlet Planning Area is included on the schedule as a special interest sale, which will take place only if enough interest is shown by industry in answer to a nomination call.

The 2007-2012 OCS oil and gas leasing program will be the seventh prepared since Congress passed the OCS Lands Act in 1978, which requires the Secretary of the Interior to prepare and maintain five-year programs for offshore oil and natural gas leasing. The current leasing program runs through June 30, 2007. MMS plans to issue the proposed final program and final EIS for the 2007 – 2012 leasing plan in the spring of 2007. Sixty days later, the Secretary may approve the new 5-year program to go into effect as of July 1, 2007.

Comments on the proposed program are due to MMS by November 24, 2006. The MMS will accept comments submitted to our electronic commenting system, which may be accessed at <http://www.mms.gov/5-year/2007-2012main.htm>. You may also mail comments and information to: Renee Orr, 5-Year Program Manager

Minerals Management Service (MS-4010), Room 3120
381 Elden Street, Herndon, Virginia 20170

Please label your comments "Comments on Draft Proposed 5-Year Program for 2007-2012,"

Comments on the Draft EIS are also due to MMS by November 22, 2006. The DEIS is available on the MMS website at <http://www.mms.gov/5-year/>. You may comment electronically using MMS's Public Connect online commenting system at <http://occonnect.mms.gov>. You may also mail comments to: 5-Yr DEIS

Attention: Mr. James F. Bennett, Chief, Branch of Environmental Assessment
 381 Elden Street, Mail Stop 4042
 Herndon, Virginia 20170-4817.

Envelopes or packages must be marked “2007-2012 Oil and Gas Program Draft Environmental Impact Statement”.

Proposed Program for 2007-2012—Lease Sale Schedule for Available Areas

Sale No.	Area	Year
204	Western Gulf of Mexico	2007
205	Central Gulf of Mexico	2007
193	Chukchi Sea	2007
206	Central Gulf of Mexico	2008
207	Western Gulf of Mexico	2008
208	Central Gulf of Mexico	2009
209	Beaufort Sea	2009
210	Western Gulf of Mexico	2009
211	Cook Inlet	2009
212	Chukchi Sea	2010
213	Central Gulf of Mexico	2010
215	Western Gulf of Mexico	2010
216	Central Gulf of Mexico	2011
217	Beaufort Sea	2011
218	Western Gulf of Mexico	2011
219	Cook Inlet	2011
221	Chukchi Sea	2012
222	Central Gulf of Mexico	2012

Proposed Program for 2007-2012—Potential Lease Sale Schedule for Areas Subject to Restrictions*

Sale No.	Area	Year
214	North Aleutian Basin	2010
220	Mid-Atlantic	2011
223	North Aleutian Basin	2012

*Lease sales would only be held if the President chooses to modify the withdrawal in both areas and Congress discontinues the annual appropriations moratorium in the Mid-Atlantic.

-- MMS --

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