



NEWS RELEASE

U.S. Department of the Interior
Minerals Management Service
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MMS Issues Draft Environmental Impact Statement and Holds Public Hearings on Proposed Sales for 2007-2012

Sales Proposed in Western and Central Planning Areas

NEW ORLEANS – The Minerals Management Service (MMS) announced the availability of the draft environmental impact statement (EIS) and dates of public hearings on 11 proposed oil and gas lease sales in the Gulf of Mexico. The sales are included in the proposed Outer Continental Shelf (OCS) Oil and Gas Leasing Program: 2007 -2012 (5-Year Program). There are five proposed sales in the Western Planning Area (WPA) and six proposed Central Planning Area (CPA) Sales.

The Notice of Availability of the Draft EIS published in the *Federal Register* opens a 45-day comment period that ends January 2, 2007. Copies of the draft EIS are available through the MMS Gulf of Mexico Region, Public Information Office, or via at the MMS website at <http://www.gomr.mms.gov/homepg/regulate/envIRON/nepa/nepaprocess.html>.

This EIS provides an environmental analysis of the effects of OCS oil and gas development in the proposed areas. MMS invites Federal, State, and local government agencies, and other interested parties to submit comments on the draft EIS.

The preferred method for commenting is electronically using MMS's new Public Connect on-line commenting system at <https://occonnect.mms.gov>. Comments may also be submitted electronically to the MMS e-mail address: environment@mms.gov.

Written comments must be enclosed in an envelope labeled "Comments on the Multisale EIS" and mailed (or hand carried) to:

Minerals Management Service
Regional Supervisor, Leasing and Environment (MS 5410)
Gulf of Mexico OCS Region
1201 Elmwood Park Boulevard
New Orleans, Louisiana 70123-2394

(MORE)

In addition, five public hearings will be held in order to give interested parties an opportunity to comment on the draft EIS. The public hearings are scheduled for Houston, TX and Mobile, AL on December 5th, New Orleans, LA and Panama City Beach, FL on December 6th, and Larose, LA on December 7th.

Oral and written statements will be taken at the hearings. Although time limits may be set on oral testimony to allow for all speakers to participate, all written statements submitted at a hearing will be considered part of the hearing record and given equal weight with comments provided via OCS Connect at: <https://ocsconnect.mms.gov>.

—MMS—

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