

MMS ENVIRONMENTAL STUDIES PROGRAM: ONGOING STUDIES

Region: Alaska

Planning Area: Beaufort Sea

Title: Continuation of Impact Assessment for Cross Island Whaling Activities (AK-08-01)

MMS Information Need(s) to be Addressed: Offshore production at the Northstar facility started in November 2001. The Liberty prospect continues to indicate promise of future production on the OCS. Long-term study efforts to monitor potential effects of such development activities have occurred through the ANIMIDA and cANIMIDA projects, 1999-2007. There remains a continuing, ongoing need to monitor Cross Island whaling activities for potential impacts over the next five years. The information will be used for NEPA analysis and documentation for Beaufort Sea Lease Sales and DPPs.

Total Cost: \$225,000

Period of Performance: 2008-2012

Conducting Organization: TBD

MMS Contact: [Chief, Alaska Environmental Studies Section](#)

Description:

Background The Northstar facility is in State waters, but includes production of some OCS oil through directional drilling. The Liberty prospect may access OCS oil deposits through directional drilling from an onshore facility. The last field season for previous ANIMIDA and cANIMIDA multi-disciplinary monitoring efforts in the near-shore Beaufort Sea environment was 2007. This proposed study, however, intends to extend the long-term ethnographic monitoring effort for subsistence whaling activities that occur from the base camp at Cross Island.

Objectives This study will gather long-term monitoring data to help the MMS assess whether OCS oil development activities at Northstar and/or Liberty result in changes to bowhead whale subsistence hunting practices, or to hunting success at Cross Island. The first objective is to understand Cross Island subsistence whaling variation over time. The second objective is to evaluate the relationship of offshore oil and gas industrial activities to whaling variability.

Methods This study continues the essential methods established during the ANIMIDA and cANIMIDA phases of research. It calls for systematic observational and interview data collection from local informants about: a) number of whales taken; b) GPS location of whale strikes, with direction and distance from Cross Island; c) number of crews, composition of crews, total number of crew; d) periodic "census" of whaling participants on Cross Island, e) duration of whaling season by active days; f) timing of whaling; g) length of trips and area searched while whaling; h) records of catch per unit effort; and i) observations of whaling participants. The study will also record systematic and observational/interview data collection on a) non-whaling

subsistence activities on and near Cross Island; b) observations of local subsistence users. Hard copy maps should be appended as necessary for clarification of location information. The recorded data should be presented in an annual report using tabular information on harvest levels and locations of subsistence resources taken on or near Cross Island.

Current Status: Under procurement

Final Report Due:

Annual field reports due in November after fall harvest. Final report is due in 2012.

Publications Completed: None

Affiliated WWW Sites: <http://www.mms.gov/alaska/>

Revised Date: March 2008