



U.S. Department of the Interior
Minerals Management Service
Alaska OCS Region

News Release

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MMS ANNOUNCES CALL FOR INFORMATION FOR BEAUFORT SALE 144

The Department of the Interior's Minerals Management Service (MMS) today announced a Call for Information and Nominations and Notice of Intent to Prepare an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for an oil and gas lease sale, Sale 144/Beaufort Sea offshore Alaska's north coast. The sale is tentatively scheduled for late 1993. Sale 144 is the first MMS offshore sale in the proposed 1992-1997 Comprehensive Natural Gas and Oil Resource Management Program to be held off Alaska.

The MMS Regional Director Alan D. Powers noted that decisions on specific blocks to be offered for leasing or possible special environmental protection measures to be applied to leases will be made after completion of a comprehensive evaluation. "This will include preparation of a draft EIS, public hearings, preparation of a final EIS, issuance of a proposed Notice of Sale, consultation with the Governor of Alaska, and consideration of all comments," Powers said.

As part of the MMS's effort to increase public involvement, the Alaska OCS Region conducted an "Information Base Review" workshop in April 1991. The MMS asked scientists and concerned citizens to review the existing information on the Beaufort Sea to ensure that the information is accurate. This scientific information forms the base of the EIS. During the two-day workshop, 68 people reviewed the wide range of information and ongoing studies in the Beaufort area. These discussions and presentations will help MMS assess the current program and point to additional studies which might be undertaken.

This Call and Notice of Intent are early steps in the new Area Evaluation and Decision Process to offer tracts for lease on the outer continental shelf. These initial information gathering steps ensure that all interests and concerns regarding the specific sales are communicated to the Department. The Call requests nominations from industry on areas of interest and comments from all interested parties about particular geological, environmental, biological, archaeological and socioeconomic conditions or conflicts, or other information which might bear upon the potential leasing and development of particular areas. Comments are also sought on possible conflicts between future oil and gas activities that may result from the proposed sales and approved local coastal management plans. The Notice of Intent initiates a scoping process used in preparation of the EIS, and is designated to involve Federal, State, and local government and other interested parties.

Nominations and responses on the Call are due no later than 60 days after the June 13, 1991, publication date in the Federal Register. Written comments on the scope of the EIS, significant issues which should be addressed, and alternatives which should be considered will be accepted until 45 days following the June 13, 1991 publication in the Federal Register. Forward comments to the Minerals Management Service, Alaska OCS Region, Regional Supervisor, Leasing and Environment, 949 East 36th Avenue, Anchorage, Alaska 99508-4302.

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NOTICE TO EDITORS: A DETAILED FACT SHEET IS ATTACHED.

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