



NEWS RELEASE

U.S. Department of the Interior
Minerals Management Service
Office of Public Affairs

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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MMS to hold Public Hearings on Proposed Chukchi Sea Draft EIS

Anchorage - MMS will hold public hearings on the draft environmental impact statement (DEIS) for Proposed Chukchi Sea Sale 193, tentatively scheduled for November 2007. The DEIS was announced in the Federal Register on October 16, 2006. MMS will hold public hearings on the North Slope in conjunction with hearings on the Proposed 2007-2012 5-Year Program DEIS and in Anchorage.

Public hearings are scheduled for:

Wainwright, Monday, November 13th, starting at 7 p.m. at the Robert James Community Center;

Point Lay, Tuesday, November 14th, starting at 7 p.m. at the Point Lay Community Center;

Point Hope, Wednesday, November 15th, starting at 7 p.m. at the Qalgi Center;

Barrow, Thursday, November 16th, starting at 7 p.m., at the Inupiat Heritage Center; and

Anchorage, Wednesday, December 6th, starting at 7 p.m., at the Centerpoint Building, 3801 Centerpoint Drive, First Floor Conference Room.

The DEIS evaluates a proposed OCS lease sale in Alaska's Chukchi Sea, tentatively scheduled for November 2007. The DEIS analysis focuses on the potential environmental effects of activities related to the sale, including seismic surveying, and exploration, development and production activities in the sale area. The MMS issued a Call for Information and Nominations in February 2005, asking industry to nominate focused areas of interest under a special interest sale process. The MMS decided to proceed with a conventional area-wide sale because of broad industry interest in the area.

In addition to the proposed action, the DEIS analysis several alternatives, including a "no lease sale alternative" and two alternatives that defer areas to protect both the wildlife and the subsistence harvest. The first deferral alternative removes 1,649 blocks from the sale area while the second alternative removes 795 blocks from the sale area. Both proposed deferrals remove critical habitat for marine mammals and spectacled and Stellar's eiders, and protect subsistence

hunting areas from the potential impacts of development. The Secretary of the Interior will select the final alternative, which will be included in the Proposed Notice of Sale.

Lease stipulations will be included in any leases issued as a result of Sale 193. The proposed stipulations being considered for the sale were developed with input from many interested parties, and are designed to allow companies to explore for oil and gas while protecting the environment. In addition to MMS's existing regulations that extensively cover safety, drilling and pollution prevention, the proposed stipulations are intended to address environmental effects that may occur because of development of the area's oil and gas resources. These stipulations call for protection of biological resources, including spectacled and Steller's eiders, use of pipelines rather than tankers, and methods to minimize interference with subsistence whaling and other subsistence harvesting activities.

The Chukchi Sea Planning Area is located offshore Alaska from Point Barrow south to Point Hope. It covers about 34 million acres and extends from about 15 to 200 miles offshore. The proposed sale area does not include the near-shore "polynya" area that is excluded from the current 2002-2007 MMS 5-Year Program. Water depths range from 95 feet to approximately 262 feet. A small portion of the northeast corner of the area slightly west of Point Barrow drops to a depth of approximately 9,800 feet.

Two sales have been held in the Chukchi Sea Planning Area. Sale 109 was held in 1988 with 350 leases issued. Sale 126 was held in 1991 with 28 leases issued. All of the leases have expired.

To request a copy of the DEIS or for more information about the hearing schedule, write to the Minerals Management Service at 3801 Centerpoint Drive, Suite 500, Anchorage, Alaska, 99503, or by email at akwebmaster@mms.gov, or call toll-free at 1-800-764-2627. The DEIS is available on CD-ROM, two-volume hard copy, or on the MMS webpage at www.mms.gov/alaska. The DEIS is available for viewing at libraries throughout the state. **The comment period ends on December 19, 2006.**

Comments on the DEIS may be submitted electronically on the MMS Public Connect website at <https://ocsconnect.mms.gov/pcs-public/>, to akeis@mms.gov or sent to the Minerals Management Service, Leasing and Environment Office, 3801 Centerpoint Drive, Suite 500, Anchorage, Alaska, 99503.

Relevant websites:

MMS Alaska OCS Region --www.mms.gov/alaska

MMS OCS Connect--<https://ocsconnect.mms.gov/pcs-public/>

MMS Alaska Region Comment Site – akeis@mms.gov

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