

FOR RELEASE: February 22, 1996

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**MMS ANNOUNCES PUBLIC HEARINGS ON DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL
IMPACT STATEMENT FOR PROPOSED 5-YEAR OCS OIL AND GAS LEASING
PROGRAM**

The Department of the Interior's Minerals Management Service (MMS) today announced public hearings on the draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the Proposed 5-Year Program for oil and natural gas activities on the Outer Continental Shelf (OCS) for 1997-2002. The announcement is to be published in the February 23, 1996, Federal Register. "MMS is convening these hearings to receive specific comments on the adequacy of the draft EIS," said MMS Director Cynthia Quarterman.

"Those comments along with additional information from both the public and private sectors will help us evaluate fully the potential environmental effects of the Proposed Program. MMS encourages the input of all interested parties. To facilitate this process, we've arranged for remote areas in Alaska to participate via teleconference." The public hearings are scheduled as follows:

PLACE: Barrow, Alaska

DATE/TIME: March 21, 1996 - 7:00 p.m.

LOCATION: Borough Assembly Chambers

NOTE: A teleconference will be held with the villages of Point Hope, Point Lay Wainwright, Kaktovik, and Nuiqsut simultaneously with the March 21 Barrow hearing.

PLACE: Houston, Texas

DATE/TIME: March 26, 1996 - 7:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m.

LOCATION: Wyndham Warwick Hotel 5701 Main Street, Houston

PLACE: New Orleans, Louisiana

DATE/TIME: March 27, 1996 - 1:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m.

LOCATION: MMS Gulf of Mexico Regional Office 1201 Elmwood Park Boulevard,
Room 115, New Orleans

PLACE: Mobile, Alabama

DATE/TIME: March 28, 1996 - 7:00 p.m. to 10:00 p.m.

LOCATION: Adam's Mark Hotel 64 South Water Street, Mobile

PLACE: Homer, Alaska

DATE/TIME: March 28, 1996 - 7:00 p.m.

LOCATION: City Council Chambers, Homer

PLACE: Yakutat, Alaska

DATE/TIME: April 3, 1996 - 7:00 p.m.

LOCATION: Yakutat High School Auditorium, Yakutat

PLACE: Anchorage, Alaska

DATE/TIME: April 9, 1996 - 12:00 noon

LOCATION: MMS Alaska Regional Office, Conference Room 949 East 36th Avenue, Anchorage

NOTE: A teleconference will be held with the communities of Cordova, Kenai/Soldotna, Ninilchik, Port Graham/Nanwalek, and Seldovia simultaneously with the April 9 Anchorage hearing.

PLACE: Kivalina, Alaska

DATE/TIME: April 11, 1996 - 1:00 p.m.

LOCATION: City Hall, Kivalina The contact person for the Alaska hearings is Robin Cacy, phone (907) 271-6070 or 1-800-764-2627.

The contact person for the hearings in Houston, New Orleans and Mobile is Janet Diaz, phone (504) 736-2540. Interested individuals, representatives of organizations and public officials who wish to testify at the public hearings are requested to notify the appropriate contact person at least five days prior to the hearing. Time limitations may make it necessary to limit the length of each oral presentation to ten minutes or less. Hearings will recess when all speakers have had an opportunity to testify. If there are no additional speakers, the hearing will adjourn immediately after the recess. An oral statement may be supplemented by a more complete written statement, which should be submitted to the hearing officer at the time of the oral presentation. After the presentation of oral statements by those who have preregistered, if time is available during the hearing period, other individuals will be given an opportunity to be heard. Written comments on the draft EIS, including comments from individuals unable to present oral statements or to attend the hearings, will be accepted until May 9, 1996. Written comments should be mailed to the Minerals Management Service, 381 Elden Street, MS 4320, Herndon, Virginia

22070-4817, Attention: Dick Wildermann. MMS will accept hand deliveries at the Department of the Interior, 1849 C Street, NW, Room 4227, Washington, DC 20240. Envelopes or packages should be identified as "Comments on the 1997-2002 Oil and Gas Program Draft EIS." The comment period for the draft EIS closes May 9, 1996. After the public hearing testimony and written comments on the draft EIS have been reviewed and analyzed, a final EIS will be prepared. MMS is the federal agency that manages the Nation's natural gas, oil and other mineral resources on the OCS, and collects, accounts for, and disburses about \$4 billion yearly in revenues from federal offshore leases and federal and Indian onshore mineral leases.

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EDITOR'S NOTE: The nationwide list of libraries with copies of the draft EIS, the Proposed 5-Year Program document, related Federal Register notices and news releases are available on MMS's home page on the Internet: {<http://www.boem.gov>}.