



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

NEWS RELEASE

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MMS STARTS PREPARATION OF NEW 5-YEAR OCS LEASING PROGRAM

The Minerals Management Service is soliciting input from interested and affected parties as part of the process for preparing a new 5-year outer continental shelf oil and gas leasing program for 2002-2007. A notice in today's [Federal Register](#) requests comments and suggestions for preparing the new program as well as information on issues and alternatives that should be addressed in the accompanying environmental impact statement.

The OCS Lands Act requires the Secretary of the Interior to prepare and maintain 5-year leasing programs. The new program will succeed the 5-year program for 1997-2002, which runs through June 30, 2002. The 5-year OCS oil and gas leasing program for 2002-2007 will be the sixth program prepared since the OCS Lands Act requirement was enacted in 1978.

"We are pleased to open this dialogue with the public and look forward to working with constituents and stakeholders in designing a new program that provides for sound management of the nation's offshore oil and gas resources in a manner that is responsive to the views and interests of those affected," said MMS Director Walt Rosenbusch. "While this is just the first step in a process that will play out over the next year and a half, it is significant because the comments and information we receive will provide a basis for framing the first draft of the next 5-year lease sale schedule. We hope to hear from a large and broad constituency."

The 5-year program establishes the size, timing and location of OCS oil and gas leasing activity for the period it covers. During the July 2002 to July 2007 timeframe, the areas of the OCS off the Pacific and Atlantic coasts, a portion of the area off Florida in the Gulf of Mexico and the North Aleutian Basin area off Alaska have been withdrawn from oil and gas leasing and cannot be considered. This is the result of a 1998 presidential directive issued under the authority of section 12 of the OCS Lands Act. Therefore, those areas will not be considered in the preparation of the 5-year program for 2002-2007, and only the remaining areas of the OCS will be analyzed to determine if they should be included in, or excluded from, the lease sale schedule. The MMS welcomes comments on the appropriateness of including or excluding such areas.

After reviewing all comments received from the public, the MMS will develop a draft proposed program. The draft program will propose a schedule of lease sales for public comment. Subsequent steps in the preparation process required under the OCS Lands Act call for preparation and public issuance of two more program proposals and a draft and final EIS before the Secretary of the Interior may approve the new program. Following is the schedule for completing preparation of the 5-year program for 2002-2007:

Date	Step
Dec. 12, 2000	Solicit comments and information (<i>Federal Register</i> Notice)
April 2001	Issue Draft Proposed Program (60-day comment period)
July 2001	Issue Proposed Program and Draft EIS (90-day comment period)

January 2002	Issue Proposed Final Program and Final EIS (60-day waiting period)
March 2002	Approve 5-Year Program for July 2002-July 2007

Comments responding to this solicitation are due by Feb. 1, 2001, and should be mailed to: 5-Year Program Manager, Minerals Management Service (MS-4010), Room 2324, 381 Elden Street, Herndon, Virginia 20170. Hand deliveries will be accepted at 1849 C Street, NW, Room 4230, Washington, D.C. Comments may also be submitted by email to MMS5-year.document@mms.gov. Comments on the scope of the EIS should be sent to MMS5-year.eis@mms.gov. For more information contact Ralph Ainger, 5-Year Program Manager, at (703) 787-1215.

The MMS, a bureau in the U.S. Department of the Interior, is the federal agency that manages the nation's natural gas, oil and other mineral resources on the outer continental shelf. The agency also collects, accounts for and [disburses over \\$5 billion per year in revenues](#) from federal offshore mineral leases and from onshore mineral leases on federal and Indian lands.

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MMS Internet website address: <http://www.boem.gov>