



November 14, 2011

Department of the Interior
Bureau of Ocean Energy Management, Regulation and Enforcement/BSEE
Attention: Regulations and Standards Branch (RSB)
381 Elden Street, MS-4024
Herndon, VA 20170-4817

Re: Oil and Gas and Sulphur Operations in the Outer Continental Shelf – Revisions to Safety and Environmental Management Systems

Submitted via the Federal eRulemaking Portal: BOEM-2011-0003

Dear Sir or Madam:

The Wilderness Society (TWS) appreciates this opportunity to submit comments on this proposed rule. TWS has more than 500,000 members and supporters nationwide.

As for my background, I have over 25 years of engineering experience in the private, governmental, and non-profit sectors, and I am a licensed professional engineer in Alaska. I have presented invited testimony to Congress on numerous occasions on oil and gas issues, and I served as a technical advisor on the Secretary of the Interior's report to the President delivered on May 27, 2010 which contained recommendations for new technical requirements following BP's *Deepwater Horizon* spill. Currently I serve on the Ocean Energy Safety Advisory Committee for the Department of the Interior.

In general, TWS supports the proposed rule as it strengthens the Safety and Environmental Management Systems (SEMS) programs for oil, gas, and sulphur operations in the Outer Continental Shelf. We support implementing stop work authority and instituting ultimate work authority provisions, requiring employee participation in the development and implementation of SEMS programs, establishing requirements for reporting unsafe working conditions, requiring independent third parties to conduct audits for SEMS programs, and creating additional requirements for conducting job safety analyses.

Specific Comments

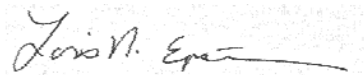
Prior to finalizing this rule, TWS believes the Bureau of Safety and Environmental Enforcement (BSEE) should explore the question of whether the Occupational Safety and

Health Administration's Process Safety Management (PSM) program¹ would provide a superior approach to attaining process safety compared to the SEMS approach. If PSM data show a significant and meaningful reduction in process safety accidents, BSEE should consider implementing PSM requirements or, as a less-desirable alternative, it should incorporate elements of such an approach into future SEMS rulemakings.

BSEE also needs to explore developing regulations which ensure worker and contractor qualification, as in the federal hazardous liquid pipeline safety program (49 CFR 195, Subpart G), in addition to including training requirements in the SEMS program. It is not enough for workers to be trained – they need to prove their capabilities and that should be documented.

In proposed section 30 CFR 250.1932, BSEE ought to require operators to fund a worker safety expert(s) to participate in SEMS program development and implementation. Such an expert should be selected by the workers, ideally by the applicable labor union.

Thank you very much for your attention to these comments.



Lois N. Epstein, P.E.
Arctic Program Director

¹ See <http://www.osha.gov/SLTC/processsafetymanagement/index.html>.