

APPENDIX B
FOCUS GROUP PROTOCOL

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INTRODUCTION

Two separate groups of newsletters will be presented to stakeholders in a series of focus groups. The first is a set identified as “**Offshore Perspective**” which provides a series of public comments on former federal Lease Sale Environmental Impact Statements and MMS responses to those comments. The purpose of presenting the “Offshore Perspective” series is to identify how responses to written comments are perceived by the public, to determine whether improvements can be made in the manner in which EIS responses to public comments are presented, and to influence the content of newsletters that will be used in further research to determine whether newsletters may provide information to address some of the concerns voiced by stakeholders. If MMS is to learn whether stakeholders harbor criticisms of MMS responses to their questions, stakeholders’ must be asked to share their opinions about MMS responses. It will be necessary to convene Focus Groups 1 and 2 of stakeholders on two (2) occasions each.

A series of newsletters have been established that will follow the Perspectives and presented to stakeholders. The content of the newsletters were based upon critical key issues that arose from research and comments through former lease sales. The four topics addressed in detail in the newsletters, known as “**Offshore Outlook**” include: production facility engineering, oil spill response and cleanup, oil spill modeling, and mitigation/community impact assessment. We will draw a panel from the 1st focus group which will be retested when the 2nd focus group is tested.

Because the public comment/MMS response section entails 6 pages of text, focus groups can not be expected to address in one session those materials as well as the 4 newsletters covering the topics of production facility engineering, oil spill response and cleanup oil spill modeling, and mitigation and assistance.

At the first sessions for Focus Group 1 and 2, the information in **Offshore Perspectives** shall be addressed. At the second sessions for Focus Groups 1 and 2 (and the panel drawn from Focus Group 1), the topics in the 4 **Offshore Outlooks** shall be addressed. In this way, focus group members will not be wearied, MMS can learn whether criticisms persist from earlier MMS responses to public comments on Draft EISs, and whether **Offshore Outlooks** will help to provide information while averting criticisms.

FOCUS GROUP 1

The first session will generate responses to public comments/MMS responses in regard to past Draft EISs (i.e., responses by MMS personnel to questions that have been posed by the public about oil-related activities). The analysis of public interaction with the agency seeks to learn whether, through the comment and response process, MMS has successfully assuaged public concerns; whether MMS responses communicate what

MMS sets out to communicate; whether stakeholders understand or want to understand MMS responses, and so on. To account for how the public understands that information, including responses from MMS, we will exercise some controls to determine whether occupation, age, marriage, duration of residence in their current community (and other demographic factors) influence how and in what ways MMS information is understood and what factors influence different understandings.

The second session with Focus Group1 will generate responses to questions pertaining to information provided by MMS to the public about oil-related activities. Focus group responses will allow us to assess public understanding of information provided in the four (4) newsletters to explain significant features of oil-related activities over which MMS exercises authority. The demographic factors for participants do not change.

A local technical assistant will provide a pool of potential stakeholders to the project team as Focus Group participants. Together, the project team and the local technical assistant will categorize and identify those to be invited into the focus group. The first focus group will consist of 10-12 participants.

Prior to the initial session with Focus Group 1, the 3 **Offshore Perspectives** (comprising 6 pages) will be provided to the participants and all persons selected for the group must be told to read the newsletters, write comments on them (if they wish to do so), and bring them to the first session. Written and voiced comments on the information in **Offshore Perspectives** will provide opportunities to modify, delete, or add topics for the second session of the focus group during which the 4 **Offshore Outlooks** are discussed. Whether or not topics are modified or new questions asked at the second session, MMS will likely gain useful information from responses, written and voiced, to the **Offshore Perspectives**.

The 4 **Offshore Outlook** newsletters are carefully constructed, economical, and rich with information. They will be excellent devices to determine what stakeholders have learned and whether they make negative or positive comments (or whether they are befuddled). Each is clear and each can generate questions that can be answered by MMS.

FOCUS GROUP 2

The process in drawing a sample is repeated for Focus Group 2, as are the two focus group sessions—the first devoted to **Offshore Perspectives** and the second devoted to **Offshore Outlooks**.

Panel

A panel of 4 or 5 respondents in Focus Group 1 will be reconvened at about the time Focus Group 2 is convened. The Panel will be asked to respond to the 4 **Offshore Outlook** newsletters again (not the **Perspectives**). This will provide us with measures of reliability while testing for threats posed by the ecological fallacy.

Below we provide a rationale as well as instructions about how the protocol questions are to be administered, recorded, and transformed into variable format (for statistical analysis), and how to avoid questions that are not within MMS' authority.

NUMBER OF INVESTIGATORS

Focus group sessions will be conducted by three investigators, one of whom is the principal person asking questions (conducting the interview). Two investigators will record responses (orally and with note pads). Each focus group member must be identified and separate response sheets must be prepared for each focus group member.

QUESTIONS AND RESPONSES

This protocol comprises a set of open-ended questions. It is the case that some questions can be answered by observation (sex, for example), whereas most, but not all, must be asked of every respondent. Another feature of protocol administration is that many questions are answered although the specific question has not yet been asked. That is, some questions prompt responses to questions that have not been asked, although are intended to be asked. When this occurs, the interviewer does not have to ask questions already answered. But the interviewer must record each person's response to every question for which an answer has been provided.

A special problem in the administration of protocol questions to focus group members is that one or another person in the group may chime in to amplify, agree with, or disagree with the person who has been asked a question. That is okay. We will record the responses of the person to whom the question was directed as well as the responses of the persons who chimed in.

Classification of Attributes

Following focus group sessions a very important feature of protocol administration is the manner in which information is moved from the open-ended response, which will likely be written in brief form by the interviewer or assistant, to an attribute choice in a variable. That is, the interviewer's first task is to be sure that every focus group member responds to every question and that a short-hand summary is recorded for each question for each respondent. Upon completing the protocol for the entire focus group, the interviewer must quickly assess the range of responses on each question, and then classify the responses by moving them from the short hand form to variable format. So, the second task is to create variables for each question and to rate the responses for each focus group participant on each variable.

Demographics

Demographic information must be collected for each focus group respondent. Demographic information facilitates understanding of differences (and similarities) in responses and will be useful for MMS as well as for our analysis.

For example, important demographic information about stakeholders is whether they engage in any subsistence harvesting and what contribution those resources make to the diets of members of their household. We will generate responses from which you can learn whether persons are occasional or very frequent harvesters, whether the resources provide a little or a lot to their household diets, whether the resources are shared with others and so forth. Questions will include:

1. Do you engage in subsistence harvesting? Yes, No
2. Depending on the responses above:
Do the products of subsistence harvests contribute Less than 10% , 10 to 25%,
More than 26% of your daily sustenance?

Other important demographic information includes: sex, age, ethnicity (native or nonnative), marital status, # of persons in household, employed (full, part, not), occupation, education (highest grade completed), length of residence in current community, most recent community other than current community in which the participant resided. *The respondents can fill these out on a sheet provided to them.*

Relevant Responses

When administering protocols, it is often the case that a focus group member will make a comment, or pose a question, that is germane, but not a question that is covered in the protocol. In such situations, we will record the person's comment and elicit responses to that question or comment from other members of the focus group. In this way it is possible to delete questions that have little import while developing questions considered important to focus group members.

Note on Affective Responses

Words such as 'satisfied' or questions about how a participant 'feels' about the information that has been provided to them by MMS will be avoided. Affective questions have low reliability, high reactivity, and poor longitudinal correlation strength. When respondents provide affective responses, we will ask them what they "know" or how they "know" or "understand" whatever topic they have addressed.

Experience with EISs

In the last section of the protocol we address whether focus group members have provided public responses to EISs and whether their input was answered with full disclosure by MMS personnel. We will also ask if the members of the focus group have not dealt directly with MMS through public responses to Draft EISs or in other ways, whether persons they know, first hand, have had dealing with MMS and whether their queries have received complete and informative responses.

ADMINISTERING THE PROTOCOLS

At the initial session with Focus Group 1,^a participants are to be informed that the interviewer, at the behest of MMS, wants to know what each person thinks about the information provided to them. The person conducting the session might say: "You have read the **Offshore Perspectives** in which personnel at MMS have responded to comments from persons such as yourselves in regard to ice conditions, restrictions on drilling, impacts on wildlife, and Alaska's environmental sensitivity, among other topics. Before we look at the specific topics in each these **Perspectives** somewhat more closely, we'd appreciate hearing your general responses to these newsletters

A similar introduction will be appropriate in regard to the four **Outlooks**: *safety of platform engineering* (Newsletter 1), *oil spill response and cleanup* (Newsletter 2), *oil spill modeling* (Newsletter 3), and *mitigation strategies for offshore oil development options* (Newsletter 4). Specific questions about information in the newsletters, the principal topics of the inquiry, shall be the last items addressed in the focus group session. It is these questions that will provide information as to whether the newsletters provide the information with which MMS seeks to inform the public.

The investigator wants to learn what the respondents think about the information provided to them in the 4 **Outlooks**: whether the newsletters have expanded and enhanced their knowledge and whether they dispel any questions the focus group members may have about those topics. The interviewer/investigator must make it clear that the response of each person on each topic is desired, and that the investigator will pose the questions, one at a time.

PROTOCOL QUESTIONS FOR OFFSHORE PERSPECTIVES #1-#3

General Question at the Outset of Each Focus Group Session

You have read three **Offshore Perspectives** we have prepared in regard to MMS responses to public concerns voiced about oil-related activities in arctic waters. Before we look at each of the three newsletters somewhat more closely, we'd appreciate hearing your general responses to the newsletters. Perhaps you have written down some comments that you'd like to share before we proceed?

^a Prior to asking any protocol questions, the investigator will explain to the participants that the Minerals Management Service in Anchorage and at the highest level of MMS management in Washington, D.C. do not make national energy policy, hence cannot answer questions that pertain to national energy policy, including decisions to have lease sales in the arctic ocean. MMS must evaluate all factors that threaten the environment and human populations in areas that may be affected by oil-related activities and develop state-of-the-art means for production and mitigation should lease sales be approved. This is important because some comments and responses in the mitigation newsletter topic address questions that are beyond MMS's sphere of authority.

Public Comment and Official Responses: The Environment and Platform Engineering

1. In regard to the *sensitivity of Alaska's environment*, do you think that MMS personnel provided sufficiently complete answers to comments from the public about threats posed by oil operations to the marine resources on which coast residents subsist?
2. A public comment addressed *threats to marine life and the marine ecosystem* from oil-related activities. Do you think it was sufficient for MMS to refer the persons who made those comments to sections in the EISs in which topics relevant to their concerns were covered?
3. Public commentators claimed that fierce climate conditions challenge current oil-extraction and transportation technologies in broken ice and open water. Once spilled, as in the Exxon Valdez foundering, it was claimed that oil was slow to percolate in arctic waters. Do you think that MMS's response about field tests in 2000 and 2002 fully addressed the comments about the relation between ice conditions and oil spills?
4. The State of Alaska commented to MMS that it supports drilling restrictions during open water periods and periods when ice thickness is not sufficient to support heavy equipment. Do you think that MMS fully responded to this comment?
5. MMS was asked whether it envisaged requiring oil spill response depots east and west of Deadhorse. Do you think that MMS's response answered the question posed to it?

Public Comment and Official Responses: Oil Spill Modeling, Response and Clean-up

1. In a public comment it is claimed that bowheads and other species are threatened by oil spills inasmuch as no more than 15% of oil that has escaped in a spill is ever cleaned up. MMS replied that the chance of a spill is no greater than 10% and the likelihood that species would come in contact with the oil is 2% or less. Do you think MMS's response is sufficient?
2. It was claimed that oil and gas-related activities, including spills, threatened the integrity of the arctic wilderness, including its coastal habitats. It was also claimed that should a spill occur, no fail safe means of cleaning-up the spill have been created. MMS provides an expansive response, citing demonstrations (equipment and tactic) in the Beaufort Sea that led to new tactics to improve effectiveness of clean-ups. Do you think that MMS's response adequately addressed the claims made by the commentator?
3. About MMS's decision to open Beaufort Sea to oil and gas leasing, one public comment claims that MMS has not sought and incorporated traditional knowledge of the arctic environment, including the animals that are part of it, the behavior of ice, and other items about which natives have learned and passed from generation to generation, nor has MMS given consideration to the health and welfare of the

environment and the animals and persons who subsist within it. Do you think the MMS response fully addresses those comments?

Public Comment and Official Responses: Mitigation and Community Impact Assistance

1. Public commentators have claimed the impacts of one sort or another are inevitable with oil and gas operations—on shore development as well as offshore development and production. Industrial noise, it is claimed, is responsible for altering the distribution of bowheads and other resources. MMS’s response is that it has reacted to these claims and created mitigating measures that reduce the threats to the environment and require lessees to avoid creating disturbances during migratory and harvest seasons. What do you think about the MMS response?
2. Public commentators have asked why, possibly, the Beaufort Sea is not under a congressional moratorium that protects it from oil and gas exploration and development, and why, possibly, local residents, the persons who will experience the deleterious consequences of oil-related operations, are not consulted prior to leasing? The MMS responds that it, MMS, does not make national energy policy, so it cannot change national energy policy. MMS advises that the policy is made by the Administration (the President of the U.S.) and Congress. Do you have questions about the response?
3. MMS is asked when a balanced account will be issued of the social and economic environment of the North Slope, a report that also contains a reasoned discussion of mitigation measures. MMS replies that a “reasoned discussion” of mitigation measures would appear at the lease sale EIS stage. Does the MMS response answer the questions posed?

Questions that do not Appear in the *Perspectives* but should be Asked

1. Have you personally contacted MMS to comment on Draft EISs or in some other capacity in which you have provided comment or sought answers to questions? If so, was the MMS response informative? Was your question(s) answered?
2. Do you know anyone who has provided public comment to MMS? If so, did that person (those persons) report to you that their questions were answered fully by MMS?
3. Do you think that EISs prepared for oil lease sales in the Beaufort Sea fail to account for cumulative effects of oil-related activities on the biological and physical environment?
4. Do you think that the Native Inupiat populations that will be most affected by oil-related activities in the Beaufort Sea will receive fewer revenues from oil sales than those to which they consider themselves entitled?

General Question at the Conclusion of Discussions of the Four Newsletters:

I have one final question which deals with the past history of public comments and MMS responses to Draft EISs to which I'd appreciate hearing your opinions. Do you think that MMS responses have sought to answer those comments fully.

PROTOCOL QUESTIONS FOR OUTLOOKS #1-#4

General Question at the Outset of each Focus Group Session:

You have read the four **Offshore Outlook** newsletters we have prepared in regard to oil-related activities in arctic waters. Before we look at each newsletter somewhat more closely, we'd appreciate hearing your general responses to these newsletters.

Newsletter # 1: Offshore Platform Engineering Safety

[Addressed to the focus group] You have read the newsletter on "Offshore Platform Engineering Safety." We wish to know whether the newsletter has improved your understanding of the wide range of safety features for offshore production, offshore pipeline integrity, and protection against ice forces? (gravel island in landfast ice vs. gravity based platform in multi-year ice)? Toward that end we'd like to get your responses to a few questions.

[Caveat: the EDAW investigator must be fully conversant with the information provided in the newsletter in regard to shallow ocean excavation sites—gravel islands, underwater berms around islands on the sea floor, filter cloths, broad gravel benches, safety shut-off valves, leak detection (underwater pipes) and location system sensitivity, smart pig tools, CIDs and SDCs. As the investigator/interviewer works his/her way through the topics among focus group members, if participants raise questions or issue comments considered germane, investigators should tally the comment (question) and seek responses from other participants. **Deep water.** Explain to focus group members that there have been no deep water (depths greater than 40 feet) oil production facilities in the Beaufort Sea to date.]

Shallow and Deep Water.

1. Does the information in the newsletter help you understand how oil production facilities can be constructed in the Beaufort Sea in shallow and deep water?

Summarize the response(s) for each participant.

2. Do you think that the engineering of shallow and deep water platforms provide reasonable safety against damage caused by physical forces?

Summarize the response(s) for each participant.

3. Do you think that gravel islands are adequate bases on which to position drill rigs in shallow water?

Summarize the response(s) for each participant.

4. Do you understand the measures to mitigate erosion to the bases of shallow water platforms?

Summarize the response(s) for each participant.

5. Was information provided that explained administrative checks made in advance of the construction of oil derricks and pipelines and the monitoring of the performances of those facilities through the duration of their activities?

Summarize the response(s) for each participant.

Newsletter # 2: Oil Spill Response and Cleanup

[Addressed to the focus group] You have read Newsletter 2 subtitled "Focus on Oil Spill Response and Cleanup." That newsletter explains that the MMS evaluates, implements, and regulates the best possible techniques for oil spill control in the arctic region. In general we want to know whether the newsletter improves your understanding of oil spill response and cleanup preparations in Alaska? Whether it helps you understand the special role and protections that are provided for residents of the North Slope Borough? Whether we have made clear the different cleanup strategies for different seasons of the year? And whether you understand why there are drilling restrictions in the autumn season?

1. Do you think the oil leak detection systems in offshore pipelines reduce the threat of environmental damage that can be caused by oil and gas leaks?

Summarize the response(s) for each participant.

2. Are you aware that oil industry operators in Alaska must maintain oil spill equipment bases and staging areas at high levels of readiness (for onshore and offshore facilities)?

Summarize the response(s) for each participant.

3. Do you know whether the North Slope Borough can influence decisions about responses to spills as spills occur?

Summarize the response(s) for each participant. [NSB can]

4. Do you know which environmental conditions are the least favorable for oil spill cleanup and which are most favorable for cleanup?

Summarize the response(s) for each participant.

5. Do you think it is likely that MMS will continue to fund research to improve technologies and tactics to detect, contain, and cleanup spilled oil?

Summarize the response(s) for each participant.

Newsletter # 3: Oil Spill Modeling

[Addressed to the focus group] In Newsletter 3 we seek to improve your understanding of the methods and purpose of oil spill modeling? One method, fault tree analysis, may appear to be unduly academic, yet we want to know whether you understand its value in foreseeing problems and averting them? We also seek to learn whether the newsletter helps you understand the relationship between production and modeling? And, finally, we want you to understand why risk estimates should not be greatly emphasized?

1. Upon reading the MMS newsletter "Focus on Oil Spill Modeling" did you understand what was meant by 'modeling' an oil spill, and why such models are used as probability estimators for each lease sale?

Summarize the response(s) for each participant.

2. Do you know why actual (empirical) oil spills in Arctic waters were not used as the basic data on which future spills could be forecast?

Summarize the response(s) for each participant.

3. The newsletter reports that oil spill modeling, in lieu of data from actual spills, is built on a foundation of uncertainty. Do you understand what is meant by "uncertainty" and how probabilities can be employed to estimate the occurrence of spills from offshore platforms and pipelines?

Summarize the response(s) for each participant.

4. In developing its oil spill models, MMS analyzes variation within and among many factors, including spill volume, the duration (or life) of an oil field, the type of oil production facility (deep water, shallow water), the type of pipeline through which oil is transported, and the cause of the spill. Is it clear to you why MMS evaluates these factors in predicting the likelihood of spills?

Summarize the response(s) for each participant.

5. Do you understand why MMS employs 'fault tree' analysis to provide information about what undesirable things might occur during oil operations, so provide information about the likelihood of occurrence of spills?

6. MMS points out that it employs 'extreme case scenarios or broad estimations of system vulnerability' for modeling purposes. This practice enhances safe planning and preparation, although forecasts derived from this practice may alarm the public unduly. Do you understand how and why the public may be alarmed by forecasts that assume extreme system vulnerabilities?

Summarize the response(s) for each participant.

7. MMS informs you that 'oil spill occurrence estimators' have many practical limitations. Nevertheless, they illustrate some of the managerial complexity involved in considering alternatives to site location, type of facility, large spill volume and so forth. Did the newsletter help you understand the utility and purposes of the oil spill occurrence estimators that they employ?

Summarize the response(s) for each participant.

Newsletter # 4: Mitigation Strategies for Offshore Oil Development Operations

You have read Newsletter # 4 pertaining to the federal, state and local benefits derived from oil and gas extraction in United States' offshore waters, protections of local environments vouchsafed by the federal government from oil-related activities, and mitigation measures should oil-related accidents occur. We wish to know whether the newsletter improves your understanding of the national mission of the MMS? Of the various ways government seeks to balance the burdens and benefits of oil production? Of new legislation that provides coastal impact assistance funds? Of the ongoing protections afforded by stipulations and monitoring programs?

1. A bundle of economic benefits may accrue to North Slope Borough and its residents from oil leasing and oil production in the Beaufort Sea. Should leasing and oil production occur, do you think that NSB residents will reap some benefits [e.g, employment? oil field service businesses? revenue transfers? multiplier effects of the oil industry?]

Summarize the response(s) for each participant.

2. Do you understand that the Alaska OCS Office of MMS is responsible for protecting against adverse impacts, and potential adverse impacts from oil and gas operations, to human subsistence activities?

Summarize the response(s) for each participant.

3. Do you think that the Alaska OCS Office of MMS will monitor impacts to North Slope residents should an oil-related accident occur in the Beaufort Sea and that it will aggressively mitigate those impacts, particularly to human subsistence activities? [MMS has access to impact assistance funds and the authority to administer those funds to mitigate the consequences of the spill, yet the newsletter does not explicate who will receive (and/or redistribute) funds in the CIAP over which Alaska OCS has authority]

Summarize the response(s) for each participant.

4. Do you think that MMS mitigation strategies, developed through consultation with the North Slope Borough and the Eskimo Whaling Commission will protect the marine mammals that reside within or migrate through the Beaufort Sea?

Summarize the response(s) for each participant.

5. Are there requirements for oil industries to provide evidence to MMS that they have engaged in cooperative planning to ensure that there is no unmitigated impact of oil and gas activities on Native subsistence activities involving marine mammals?

Summarize the response(s) for each participant.

6. What do you think about the legally enforceable "Conflict Avoidance Agreements" that must be developed between oil industry lessees and whalers?

Summarize the response(s) for each participant.

7. Were you aware, before reading Newsletter 4, that MMS has implemented an inspection program of oil industry operations which requires compliance with MMS regulations and mitigation measures, and that MMS shares information about specific inspections with local leaders?

Summarize the response(s) for each participant.

8. Do you think that existing statutes and regulations for environmentally sound offshore oil and gas operations, including deferral areas and conflict avoidance agreements, will adequately control and mitigate potential impacts on subsistence sea mammal hunting activities?

Summarize the response(s) for each participant.

General Question at the Conclusion of Discussions of the Four Newsletters:

I have one final question to which I'd appreciate hearing your opinions. In relation to the oil-related activities we have discussed, do you think the MMS mission is worthwhile in regard to these activities and to the persons who will be affected by these activities?