

FOR RELEASE: December 13, 1993 CONTACTS: Robin Cacy
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MMS ANNOUNCES CALL FOR INFORMATION
FOR ALASKA BEAUFORT SEA SALE 144(#30058)

The Department of the Interior's Minerals Management Service (MMS) has announced a Call for Information and Nominations and Notice of Intent to Prepare an Environmental Impact Statement (Call/NOI) for natural gas and oil lease sale 144 in Alaska's Beaufort Sea Planning Area. The sale is tentatively scheduled for late 1996.

"Publishing this Call/NOI in the Federal Register of Friday, December 10, is an early step in the two to three year process that may result in a natural gas and oil lease sale," said MMS Director Tom Fry. "Just as our commitment to the highest environmental standards is a top priority, so is the importance of this proposal. The resources that lie in the Alaska Beaufort Sea Planning Area may enhance investment in our domestic economy and yield broad economic benefits for all Americans."

Fry noted that this early planning and consultation step is part of the Area Evaluation and Decision Process and is important for ensuring that all interests and concerns are communicated to MMS for future decisions in the leasing process. "We are obligated, through our process, to evaluate any associated risk to the environment," he said.

The Call/NOI constitutes one of the initial data gathering steps assuring that all interests and concerns regarding specific sales are communicated to MMS. The Call, which outlines the area to be considered for leasing and the area MMS believes has hydrocarbon potential, requests nominations from industry on areas of interest and information from interested parties on environmental or special concerns. The Notice of Intent begins the "scoping" process used in preparation of the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) and is designed to involve Federal agencies, state and local governments, and other interested parties.

Fry said the interests and concerns of affected parties are an integral part of the lease process, and one of the reasons MMS has spent almost \$155 million in extensive studies conducted in and

around the proposed sale area.

The area of this Call, located in the Beaufort Sea Planning Area (and identified on the attached map) extends offshore from approximately 3 miles to 140 miles, in water depths of approximately 7 feet to 10,000 feet. The area available for nominations and comments consists of approximately 5,420 whole and partial blocks, covering nearly 29.5 acres.

Nominations and comments are due 45 days following publication in the Federal Register. Written comments on the scope of the EIS, significant issues which should be addressed, and alternatives which should be considered are also due within 45 days. Responses should be sent to:

Minerals Management Service
Alaska OCS Region
Regional Supervisor
Leasing and Environment
949 East 36th Avenue, Room 603
Anchorage, Alaska 99508-4302

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NOTICE TO EDITORS: A DETAILED FACT SHEET AND MAP ARE ATTACHED

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SALE 144, ALASKA'S BEAUFORT SEA PLANNING AREA
CALL FOR INFORMATION AND NOMINATIONS AND NOTICE OF
INTENT
TO PREPARE AN ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT

The Department of the Interior's Minerals Management Service (MMS) has issued a Call for Information and Nominations and Notice of Intent to Prepare an Environmental Impact Statement (Call/NOI) for offshore oil and gas lease Sale 144, tentatively scheduled for late 1995 in the Alaska Beaufort Sea Planning Area. This fact sheet contains a description of the are included in the Call/NOI, as well as relevant background information.

PURPOSE OF CALL/NOI

The Call/NOI is one of the initial information gathering steps to ensure that all interests and concerns regarding the specific sale are communicated to MMS for future decisions in the leasing process. This Call/NOI does not indicate a preliminary decision to lease in the area described below.

Information submitted in response to this Call/NOI will be used for several purposes including:

- * To further identify areas of potential for oil and gas development; and
- * To initiate the scoping process used in preparation of the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS), designed to involve Federal agencies, State and local governments, and other interested parties in aiding MMS in determining significant issues and alternatives to be addressed in the EIS.

Comments may be used to develop lease terms and conditions to ensure safe offshore oil and gas activities and to help resolve potential conflicts between offshore oil and gas activities and the State of Alaska's Coastal Management Program (CMP).

DESCRIPTION OF AREA

The area of this Call/NOI, located offshore the State of Alaska in the Beaufort Sea Planning Area as identified on the attached map, extends offshore from approximately 3 miles to 140 miles, in water depths from approximately 7 feet to 10,000 feet. The area available for nominations and comments consists of nearly 5,420 whole and partial blocks (about 29.5 million acres). Respondents may nominate and are asked to comment on any acreage within the entire Call area. A large scale map of the Beaufort Sea Planning Area (hereinafter referred to as the Call map) showing boundaries of the area on a block-by-block basis and a complete list of Official Protraction Diagrams (OPD's) are available from the Records Manager, Alaska OCS Region, Minerals Management Service, 949 East 36th Avenue, Room 502, Anchorage, Alaska 99508-4302, telephone (907) 271-6621. The OPD's may be purchased from the Records Manager for \$2 each. Current editions of the listed OPD's are based on the North American Datum of 1927.

LEASING HISTORY

There were 57 leases issued from the last Beaufort Sea Sale, Sale 124, held in June 1991, with approximately 18 leases issued in the general vicinity of the Kuvlum and Hammerhead prospects, which indicate continued industry interest in the Beaufort.

Currently, the only offshore production in the Beaufort Sea is from Endicott Field in State waters near Prudhoe Bay. Drilling on the Beaufort OCS has ranged from east of Kaktovik to Dease Inlet. Two discoveries, North Star and Sandpiper, are currently undergoing additional engineering and economic analyses for their development potential.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT

As required by the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969 (42 U.S.C. 4321 et seq.), MMS also is announcing its intent to prepare an EIS for Sale 144. The Notice of Intent also serves to initiate the "scoping" process, involving other Federal agencies, State and local governments, and other interested parties. Scoping helps MMS determine significant issues and alternatives to be addressed in the EIS. The EIS will focus on the potential environmental effects of leasing, exploration, and development on the blocks included in the area defined in the Area Identification as the proposed area of the lease sale.

Alternatives to the proposal which may be considered are: to delay the sale, cancel the sale, or modify the sale.

COMMENT PERIOD

Nominations and comments concerning the Call and scoping comments resulting from the NOI must be received no later than 45 days following publication of the Call/NOI in the Federal Register in envelopes labeled "Nominations for Proposed Beaufort Sea Lease Sale 144," or "Comments on the Call for Information and Nominations for Proposed Beaufort Sea Lease Sale 144," as appropriate. Comments are sought from all interested parties about particular geological, environmental, biological, archaeological, or social and economic conditions or conflicts, or other information which may bear upon the potential leasing and development of this particular area. An original standard Call map with indications of interest and/or comments must be submitted to:

Minerals Management Service
Alaska OCS Region
Regional Supervisor, Leasing and Environment
949 East 36th Avenue, Room 603
Anchorage, Alaska 99508-4302

TENTATIVE SCHEDULE

Final delineation of the area to be offered for leasing will be made at a later date in compliance with applicable laws including all requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (42 U.S.C. 4321 et seq.) as amended, and the OCS Lands Act, as amended, and with established departmental procedures. Approximate dates for actions and decision and consultation points in the planning process are:

Milestones	Dates
Comments Due on the Call	January 1994
Scoping Comments Due	February 1994
Area Identification	June 1994
Draft EIS/Proposed Notice of Sale Published	July 1995
Hearings on Draft EIS Held	September 1995
Governor's Comments Due on Proposed Notice of Sale	October 1995

Final EIS Filed with EPA	July 1996
Consistency Determination Signed	July 1996
Final Notice of Sale Published	November 1996
Sale	December 1996

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Subject: PR-12/13/93 CALL/NOI Sale 144(#30058)