

FOR RELEASE: March 22, 1995

CONTACT: Tom DeRocco
(202) 208-3983

PREPARATION OF THE 5-YEAR OUTER CONTINENTAL SHELF (OCS)
OIL AND GAS LEASING PROGRAM FOR 1997-2002

The U.S. Department of the Interior's Minerals Management Service (MMS) has set the following schedule for preparing the next 5-year program for 1997-2002. The schedule was developed to assure adequate opportunities for MMS to consult with constituents on the new program while allowing a timely and orderly transition from the current one.

Date	Step
November 16, 1994	A Federal Register notice was published soliciting comments for developing the new 5-year program
February 1, 1995	Comment period closed
May 1995	Receive recommendations from Alaska Regional Stakeholders Task Force
July 1995	Issue Draft Proposed Program (60-day comment period)
January 1996	Issue Proposed Program and Draft EIS (90-day comment period)
August 1996	Issue Proposed Final Program and Final EIS (60-day waiting period)
October 1996	Approve 5-year Program for July 1997-July 2002

BACKGROUND

The process started with the November 16, 1994, Federal Register notice requesting comments and suggestions for preparing the new program and for information on issues and alternatives that should be analyzed in the programmatic Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). The comment period was extended for a total duration of 77 days. More than 2,200 written responses were received from state and local

governments, environmental groups, industry, and individuals. All input is being considered in formulating the draft proposed program and determining the scope of the EIS.

The Alaska Regional Stakeholders Task Force was established to assist the MMS in defining the Alaska Region elements of the new program; Task Force findings and recommendations will be presented to the OCS Policy Committee by May 4, 1995. The Task Force report, as endorsed by the Policy Committee, is expected to play a key role in program formulation and EIS scoping.

Before the draft proposed program is issued, MMS regional and headquarters offices will conduct extensive outreach efforts nationwide to describe the overall 5-year program process, discuss formulation of the draft proposal, and continue the scoping of issues for the EIS. Subsequently, meetings will be scheduled to explain the draft proposal and to facilitate preparation and receipt of constituent comments responding to it.

Similar outreach efforts are planned for the other steps in the program preparation process. Such efforts will include hearings on the draft EIS that will be conducted during the 90-day comment period in each OCS region affected by the proposed program.

For further information contact Ms. Carol Hartgen, 5-Year Program Project Director, at (703) 787-1216.

-MMS-