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## U.S. Department of the Interior

Office of the Secretary  
Contact: Shane Wolfe, 202-208-6416  
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### **The Interior Department Releases Alternative Energy Environmental Impact Statement and Announces Offshore Alternative Energy Initiative**

*MMS Requests Information and Nominations of Areas for Alternative Energy Leases*

**WASHINGTON** – The Secretary of the Interior today released the Final Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement (FPEIS) for the Outer Continental Shelf (OCS) Alternative Energy and Alternate Use (AEAU) Program and announced an interim policy for authorization of the installation of offshore data collection and technology testing facilities in federal waters. A Notice of Availability of the AEAU FPEIS and a [Request for Information and Nominations](#) related to the interim policy are available in today's *Federal Register* reading room.

“Offshore Alternative Energy is a new and highly anticipated frontier for the nation, as well as a new regulatory program for the Department of the Interior and the Minerals Management Service,” Secretary Dirk Kempthorne said. “This is an important step in fostering a new industry offshore that will diversify our Nation’s power supplies and open up new avenues to supply renewable energy to areas that may otherwise have limited options onshore.”

The final programmatic EIS examines the potential environmental effects of the program on the OCS over the next 5-7 years and identifies policies and best management practices that may be adopted for the program. It assesses potential impacts from development, operation, and decommissioning of alternative energy or alternate use facilities and identifies key issues and mitigation measures that should be considered by subsequent site-specific reviews.

MMS issued a Notice of Intent to prepare the PEIS in May 2006, held scoping meetings in Spring 2006, issued a draft PEIS for comment in March 2007, held public hearings in Spring 2007, filed the final PEIS with the Environmental Protection Agency on November 2, 2007, and plans to issue a Record of Decision by the end of 2007.

The EIS is available at MMS’s EIS website at: <http://www.ocsenergy.anl.gov/>. A single printed or CD-ROM copy of the final programmatic EIS may also be obtained from:

Minerals Management Service  
Environmental Assessment Branch (MS 4042)  
381 Elden Street  
Herndon, VA 20170.

MMS is also announcing the establishment of an interim policy on Offshore Alternative Energy Resource Assessment and Technology Testing Activities. MMS will be accepting public comments and project nominations for the next 60 days related to the approval of meteorological or marine data collection facilities on the OCS that will be used to assess alternative energy resources (e.g., wind, wave, and ocean current) or test alternative energy technology.

After the 60-day period, MMS will begin the process of evaluating nominated areas of the OCS for leasing for data

collection and testing technology under this interim policy. MMS will continue to accept nominations under this interim policy until the final program regulations are in place.

“There’s a lot of interest in the program,” said Kempthorne. “Many stakeholders -- individuals, governmental, and nongovernmental organizations as well -- have recommended to MMS that we be expeditious in authorizing OCS alternative energy resource assessment activities. Expediting our resource data acquisition and technology testing results will benefit stakeholders through expanded knowledge of this developing energy frontier. It will also help to inform future decision-making with respect to the program.”

In an effort to assist the nomination process a forthcoming prototype web mapping viewer is being developed and is anticipated to be operational in mid-November 2007. This web mapping server will display specific features in areas, such as boundaries, fairways, etc.

MMS will accept comments and nominations through January 7, 2008 electronically through the [MMS Public Connect online commenting system](#), or by mail to:

Minerals Management Service  
Alternative Energy and Alternate Use Team (MS 4080)  
381 Elden Street  
Herndon, VA 20170

The interim policy will be in effect until MMS issues final rules for the AEAU program, which will regulate all program activities from that point forward. Under this interim policy the MMS may issue limited-term leases authorizing data collection and technology testing subject to compliance with relevant Federal statutes. Requestors must also obtain necessary approvals for the construction and placement of associated structures on the OCS lease area. Such leases will confer no priority rights to subsequently develop an alternative energy facility on the OCS for generating electricity or other produced energy for commercial sale or distribution. MMS is developing a lease form to be issued for public comment at a later date.

The Energy Policy Act of 2005 authorized MMS to establish the AEAU Program. Under this authority, MMS will regulate alternative energy projects and projects that involve the alternate use of existing oil and gas platforms on the OCS. Alternative energy includes, but is not limited to wind, wave, solar, underwater current and generation of hydrogen. Alternate uses of existing facilities may include aquaculture, research, education, recreation or support for offshore operations and facilities.

MMS is currently developing the AEAU program and associated regulations. MMS issued an Advance Notice of Proposed Rulemaking in December 2005 and plans to publish a Notice of Proposed Rulemaking for the program in Spring of 2008.

MMS intends to prepare a separate National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) analysis, tiered from the programmatic EIS, to evaluate the environmental impacts of the proposed regulatory framework for alternative energy and alternate use activities on the OCS.