Environmental Studies Program: Studies Development Plan | FY 2023–2024

Title	Cook Inlet Area-wide Recreation and Tourism Inventory (AK-23-02)
Administered by	Alaska Regional Office
BOEM Contact(s)	Jeffrey Brooks (jeffrey.brooks@boem.gov)
Procurement Type(s)	Contract
Conducting Organization(s)	TBD
Total BOEM Cost	TBD
Performance Period	FY 2023–2026
Final Report Due	TBD
Date Revised	August 5, 2022
PICOC Summary	
Problem	BOEM-authorized activities could affect ocean-dependent and ocean-enhanced recreation and tourism resources of Cook Inlet. Information on the characteristics, location, and timing of recreation and tourism for the Cook Inlet area are dated, which could result in inaccurate baselines and imprecise effects analyses.
Intervention	This study would develop information on the recreation and tourism resources of the Cook Inlet area.
Comparison	Study outcomes would be compared to results of similar studies conducted in other planning regions.
Outcome	Information would be used to describe the affected environment and potential effects, develop and implement mitigation of effects, and inform consultations.
Context	Cook Inlet Planning Area and adjacent coastal areas

BOEM Information Need(s): Understanding how recreation and tourism may be affected by Cook Inlet Outer Continental Shelf (OCS) energy development is important for assessing potential impacts. BOEM needs a baseline study regarding the relative importance of ocean-dependent and ocean-enhanced recreation and tourism for residents and visitors of the area and how these amenities could be affected by future OCS lease sales, exploration, and development. Results would be useful for describing the affected environment, analyzing potential impacts, developing and implementing mitigation measures, and informing consultations and public involvement.

Background: The Cook Inlet Planning Area and adjacent coastal areas encompass portions of three Alaska boroughs, Kenai Peninsula Borough (KPB), the Lake and Peninsula Borough, and the Kodiak Borough. Tourism and recreation are key sectors of the region's economy. Previously viewed as a mature industry with large positive impacts but modest or negative overall growth, it is now seen as a fast-growing sector as visitor's and resident's interests and local opportunities continue to grow and evolve (Kenai Peninsula Borough 2019). Much of the emerging recreation and tourism is taking place on public lands such as the Chugach National Forest, Kenai Fiords National Park, Katmai National Park and Preserve, the Kenai National Wildlife Refuge, and the Lake Clark National Park and Preserve.

The upper Cook Inlet area hosts a mature offshore energy sector in state waters. After a two-decade hiatus (no OCS lease sales were held from 1996 to 2017), recent industry interest and investment has focused on the state and OCS waters of the lower Cook Inlet. This renewed activity raised concerns for the potential effects of OCS development on the region's recreation and tourism sector, especially those ocean-dependent and ocean-enhanced activities. A few studies have been conducted on the effects of OCS development on recreation and tourism in Alaska, but these have been limited to specific sectors (*e.g.*, Kenai Peninsula sportfishing) (Criddle, *et al.* 1998) or have focused on the effects of catastrophic events, such as the *Exxon Valdez* oil spill (Fall 2001). The baseline information in these studies needs to be updated to capture changes that have occurred to the sector in the last 20 years.

Research in the Atlantic (Parsons and Firestone 2018; Smythe *et al.* 2018.), Gulf of Mexico (Eastern Research Group, Inc. 2014), and Pacific Regions (Hoelting and Burkardt 2017) has led to new insights on how routine OCS conventional, renewable energy projects, and technological disasters in all OCS regions could affect recreation and tourism (Industrial Economics, Inc. 2014). Baseline information has routinely been developed on this sector in these areas. This information, including geographic information in the Marine Cadastre, has been important in marine spatial planning to prevent and reduce conflicts. Developing similar information for Alaska-specific conditions would contribute to comprehensive OCS-wide data on this sector.

Objectives:

- Establish a baseline of ocean-dependent and ocean-enhanced recreation and tourism activities, amenities, and associated expenditures (*e.g.*, those that are dependent on or sensitive to coastal and marine resources).
- Identify the preferences that visitors and residents consider to be of value when making recreational choices and how these preferences might differ based on geographic location within the study area or between residents and non-residents.
- Document trends to better understand how the recreation and tourism industry has responded to Cook Inlet offshore energy infrastructure projects.
- Provide a framework for monitoring the spatial and temporal aspects of recreation and tourism.

Methods: BOEM anticipates a three-year study. In year one, researchers would assemble baseline data on the dimensions of ocean-dependent and ocean-enhanced recreation and tourism (i.e., activity, location, timing, level of participation, past expenditures) and the portion of recreation and tourism that would be sensitive to OCS activities. For year one, the synthesis of existing information and secondary data would be compiled using literature reviews, archival research, and examination of publicly available data. In years two and three, primary data would be collected using a combination of focus groups, surveys, interviews, and community workshops, which would require travel to hub cities and smaller communities; these methods would be used to measure current preferences, values, and expenditures of residents and visitors. Researchers would seek an Office of Management and Budget approval number for primary data collection efforts to comply with the Paperwork Reduction Act. Other methods could be adapted from studies in other regions (e.g., Garcia *et al.* 2012; Smythe *et al.* 2018).

Specific Research Question(s):

1. How could routine OCS activities and industrial accidents affect recreation and tourism in the Cook Inlet area?

2. What are the specific recreation and tourism resources, activities, and expenditures in the Cook Inlet area and when and where do these occur?
3. What measures could be used to monitor and mitigate effects to recreation and tourism?

Current Status: N/A

Publications Completed: N/A

Affiliated WWW Sites: N/A

References:

Criddle KR, Greenberg JA, Geier H, Hamel C, Herrmann M, Lee ST, Lewis CE. 1998. An economic assessment of the marine sport fisheries in lower Cook Inlet. In: University of Alaska Coastal Marine Institute Annual Report No.: 4. Report No.: OCS Study MMS 98–0062. p. 5–12.

Eastern Research Group, Inc. 2014. Assessing the impacts of the *Deepwater Horizon* oil spill on tourism in the Gulf of Mexico region. New Orleans (LA): U.S. Department of the Interior, Bureau of Ocean Energy Management. 192 p. Report No.: OCS Study BOEM 2014-661.

Fall JA, Miraglia R, Simeone W, Utermohle CJ, Wolfe RJ. 2001. Long-term consequences of the *Exxon Valdez* oil spill for coastal communities of southcentral Alaska. 350 p. Report No.: OCS Study MMS 2001-032.

Garcia F, Gouveia D, Healy E, Johnston E, Schlichting K. 2012. Atlantic region wind energy development: recreation and tourism economic baseline development. 35 p. Report No.: OCS Study BOEM 2012-085.

Industrial Economics, Inc. 2014. Economic inventory of environmental and social resources potentially impacted by a catastrophic discharge event within OCS regions. 196 p. Report No.: OCS Study BOEM 2014-669. https://www.boem.gov/sites/default/files/oil-and-gas-energy-program/Leasing/Five-Year-Program/2017-2022/Economic-Inventories-for-CDE.pdf

Hoelting K, Burkardt N. 2017. Human dimensions of climate change in coastal Oregon. 203 p. Report No.: OCS Study BOEM 2017-052.

Kenai Peninsula Borough. 2019. 2019 Kenai Peninsula Borough comprehensive plan. Soldotna, AK; [accessed 2022 May 4]. https://www.kpb.us/images/KPB/PLN/PlansReports/Comp_Plan/2019_KPB_Comprehensive_Plan.pdf.

Parsons G, Firestone J. 2018. Atlantic offshore wind energy development: values and implications for recreation and tourism. 58 p. Report No.: OCS Study BOEM 2018-013.

Smythe T, Smith H, Moore A, Bidwell D, McCann J. 2018. Methodology for analyzing the effects of Block Island Wind Farm on Rhode Island recreation and tourism activities. 300 p. Report No.: OCS Study BOEM 2018-068.