

U.S. Department of the Interior  
Minerals Management Service  
Office of Communications

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## *Special Information*

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**FOR RELEASE:**

January 7, 2000

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### **MMS To Issue Request for Interest and Information and Hold Public Meetings For Proposed Federal Sand and Gravel Sale Offshore Northern New Jersey**

The U.S. Department of the Interior's Minerals Management Service (MMS) will publish a Request for Interest and Information (RFII) in the January 10, 2000, *Federal Register* asking for comments, from both the public and industry, regarding a possible sand and gravel lease sale offshore northern New Jersey. In addition, MMS will hold information meetings in New Jersey to discuss the RFII on February 28, 2000, in the Bradley Beach Borough Hall, from 7 p.m. to 10 p.m., and on February 29, 2000, at the Holiday Inn, 1000 Roosevelt Avenue, Carteret, from 7 p.m. to 10 p.m.

This RFII is being issued in response to a request from a private company for a sand and gravel commercial lease sale offshore northern New Jersey. The company first requested the commercial lease sale in 1996. The MMS published a RFII in 1996. After the company advised MMS that they were pursuing other sources of sand and gravel, MMS deferred further action on the RFII. But in 1998, and again in 1999, the company requested that MMS end deferral of the competitive lease sale process and prepare an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS).

Because a significant amount of time has passed, the MMS has decided to issue another RFII and to limit the area under consideration to a much smaller one than that identified in the 1996 request. This smaller, more focused area reflects comments received on the earlier RFII. The area under consideration (see attached map) is in Federal waters beginning three nautical miles from shore and extending southward 12 nautical miles from slightly north of Long Branch to slightly south of Belmar.

In particular, MMS is asking for comments, information and indications of interest addressing the following:

- Commercial, navigational, recreational, and multiple-use considerations; environmental concerns, including information on biological and physical resources; archaeological resources; and social and economic issues;
- Potential conflicts with approved local coastal management plans and possible steps that MMS could take to avoid or mitigate these conflicts; and

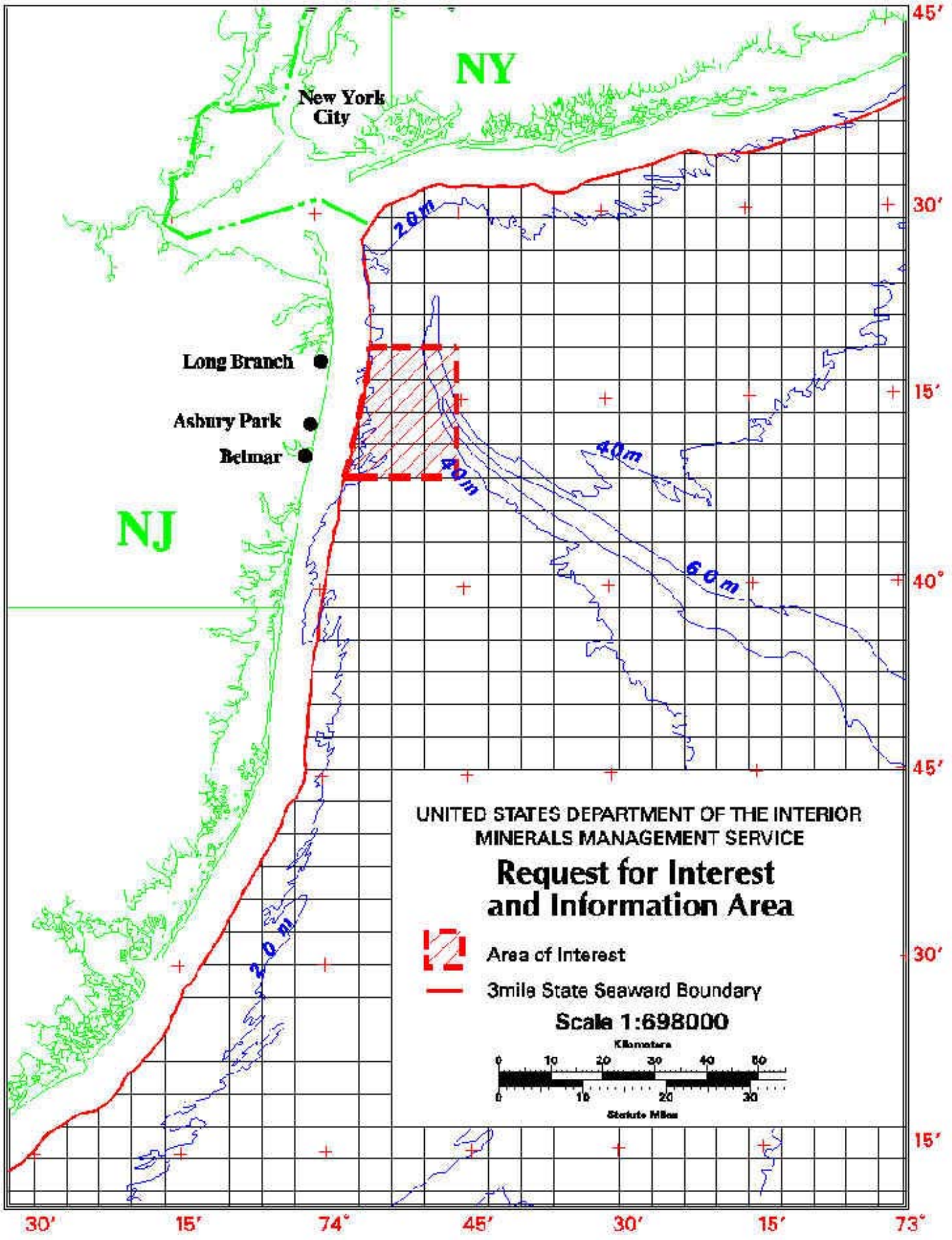
- Indications of interest from industry respondents specifying blocks or areas within the RFII area that are of particular interest for consideration in a possible Outer Continental Shelf (OCS) sand and gravel lease sale

The RFII is an early step in a public-participation process that requires a thorough environmental analysis and compliance with the State's coastal zone management program. Issuance of the RFII does not mean any preliminary decision to lease in this area has been made. The MMS will request further public comment if a decision to prepare an EIS is made.

The MMS has completed an Environmental Report (ER) assessing possible consequences associated with using OCS sand for beach nourishment along the U.S. East Coast from northern New Jersey to the Virginia/North Carolina border. The public should be aware that the ER is not an EIS. However, it contains much of the information necessary for the MMS to do the project-specific assessments as required by the National Environmental Policy Act. A self-contained and separate appendix within the ER assesses potential environmental impacts of offshore mining for construction aggregate material. The appendix may provide useful information as parties prepare responses to this RFII. The ER, and the appendix are available through the MMS website at [www.mms.gov/intermar/marineac.htm](http://www.mms.gov/intermar/marineac.htm).

Written comments should be mailed, emailed or faxed by April 10, 2000 to Minerals Management Service, International Activities and Marine Minerals Division, 381 Elden Street, MS 4030, Herndon, VA 20170; fax: (703) 786-1284; email: [sgcomments@mms.gov](mailto:sgcomments@mms.gov). Questions should be directed to Ms. Renee Orr, Senior Program Coordinator at (703) 787-1376.

MMS is the Federal agency that manages the Nation's oil, natural gas, and other mineral resources on the OCS; and collects, accounts for, and disburses about \$4 billion in yearly revenues from offshore Federal mineral leases and from onshore mineral leases on Federal and American Indian lands.



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MMS Internet website address: <http://www.mms.gov>  
24 hour Fax-on-Demand Service:(202) 219-1703