

BOEM Releases Draft Supplemental SEIS for Chukchi Sea Sale 193

Responds to Issues Raised by U.S. District Court for Alaska

ANCHORAGE, Alaska – The Bureau of Ocean Energy, Management, Regulation and Enforcement (BOEM) today released a draft Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (SEIS) that addresses concerns raised by the U.S. District Court for Alaska in its July 21, 2010, decision regarding Chukchi Sea Lease Sale 193. This draft SEIS, which will analyze specific issues raised by the court, does not address whether additional environmental analysis should be undertaken with regard to future leasing and permitting actions.

“Alaska’s coastal waters hold rich fisheries and marine mammal communities, and environmental resources that support tourism and sustain Alaska Native nations, as well as significant oil and gas reserves. These frontier areas need additional scientific, environmental and spill risk analysis before any determinations are made as to future leasing and permitting. This draft SEIS, which follows a careful review of the issues raised by U.S. District Court for Alaska, is a step in that process, but more review is yet to come that looks at the Arctic region as a whole,” said BOEM Director Michael Bromwich.

The draft SEIS is posted at: <http://alaska.boemre.gov>. The Federal Register Notice announcing the draft will be published on October 15, 2010, at which time BOEM will begin accepting public comments.

Chukchi Sea Lease Sale 193 was held in February 2008. A coalition of environmental groups and Alaska Native organizations challenged the sale in court and, on July 21, 2010, the U.S. District Court for Alaska remanded the sale back to BOEM for further NEPA analysis. The court found that the EIS for the sale:

1. Failed to analyze the environmental impact of natural gas development, despite industry interest and specific lease incentives for such development;
2. Failed to determine whether missing information identified by the agency was relevant or essential under 40 C.F.R. § 1502.22; and
3. Failed to determine whether the cost of obtaining the missing information was exorbitant, or the means of doing so unknown.

To address the specific issues raised by the court, BOEM drafted the limited SEIS that is now being made available. BOEM will accept comments on the draft SEIS via the website, telephone, mail or e-mail through Nov. 30, 2010. BOEM is also in the process of scheduling a series of public hearings to collect public comments in Anchorage and in the communities closest to the Sale 193 area. Upon reviewing all of the public comments, BOEM will complete a final SEIS.

For persons without online accessibility, the draft SEIS can be viewed at the Alaska Resources Library and Information Service (3211 Providence Dr Ste 111, Anchorage) or by making a request in writing or via telephone to the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management, Regulation and Enforcement, Alaska OCS Region, 3801 Centerpoint Dr. Ste. 500, Anchorage, Alaska 99503-5820; telephone 907-334-5200.

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