



U.S. Department of the Interior  
Minerals Management Service  
Office of Public Affairs

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**NEWS RELEASE**

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**FOR RELEASE:**

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**MMS Starts Preparing Next 5-Year OCS Leasing Program**

The Minerals Management Service in the Department of Interior is beginning preparation of the next five-year Outer Continental Shelf oil and gas leasing program for 2002 through 2007. A notice in today's Federal Register requests comments and suggestions for both the five-year program and the accompanying environmental impact statement.

"We are pleased to open this dialogue with the public and look forward to working with constituents and stakeholders to develop a new program that provides for sound management of the nation's offshore oil and gas resources," said Walt Rosenbusch, MMS director. "This is an important first step in a process that will play out over the next year and a half. The information we receive will allow us to address our stakeholders' concerns as we develop the five-year lease sale schedule."

The preparation of the five-year program is a multi-staged process that consists of five major steps: 1) initial solicitation of comments and information; 2) draft proposed program released for public comment; 3) proposed program and draft EIS released for public comment; 4) proposed final program and final EIS submitted to the President and to Congress for review; and 5) Secretary of the Interior approval of the final program.

The program establishes the size, timing and location of OCS oil and gas leasing activity for July 2002 to July 2007. As a result of a 1998 presidential directive the OCS planning areas of the east and west coasts and Alaska's North Aleutian Basin have been withdrawn from oil and gas leasing and cannot be considered. Therefore, only the remaining areas of the OCS will be analyzed to determine if they should be included or excluded from the lease sale schedule. The MMS welcomes comments on the appropriateness of including or excluding such areas.

The 2002-2007 OCS oil and gas leasing program will be the sixth program prepared since the OCS Lands Act requirement was enacted in 1978. The OCS Lands Act requires the Secretary of the Interior to prepare and maintain five-year programs for offshore oil and natural gas leasing. The current program runs through June 30, 2002.

Following is the schedule for the 2002-2007 five-year program:

<b>Date</b>	<b>Step</b>
November 14, 2000	Solicit comments and information ( <i>Federal Register</i> Notice)
April 2001	Issue draft proposed program (60-day comment period)
July 2001	Issue proposed program and draft EIS (90-day comment period)
January 2002	Issue proposed final program and final EIS (60-day waiting period)
March 2002	Approve five-year program for July 2002-July 2007

Comments responding to this solicitation are due by February 1, 2001, and should be mailed to: 5-Year Program Manager, Minerals Management Service (MS-4400), Room 2324 Elden Street, Herndon, Virginia 20170. Hand deliveries will be accepted at 1849 C

Street, NW, Room 4230, Washington, D.C. Comments may also be submitted by email to 5-year.program@mms.gov. Comments on the scope of the EIS should be sent to 5-year.EIS@mms.gov. For more information contact Ralph Ainger, five-year program manager, at (703) 787-1215.

The MMS is the federal agency that manages the nation's oil, natural gas and other mineral resources on the OCS. The agency also collects, accounts for and disburses more than \$5 billion per year in revenues from offshore federal mineral leases and onshore mineral leases on federal and Indian lands.

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MMS Internet website address: <http://www.mms.gov>  
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