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MMS Alaska OCS Region

News Release

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Draft EIS for Proposed Beaufort Sea Sale Multiple Sale Proposal Available for Comment

The draft environmental impact statement that evaluates three sales proposed for the Beaufort Sea is available for public comment. The Minerals Management Service issued the draft multiple sales EIS on June 19, 2002. The comment period extends until September 20, 2002. The DEIS evaluates proposed Sale 186, scheduled for 2003; Sale 195 in 2005; and Sale 202 in 2007. MMS will hold public hearings in Barrow, Nuiqsut, Kaktovik, and Anchorage in late July.

MMS prepared a single EIS for all three proposed Beaufort sales. After completion of the Final EIS and the proposed Sale 186 in 2003, MMS will prepare either an environmental assessment or, if necessary, a supplemental EIS and a consistency determination for each subsequent sale, Sale 195 in 2005, and Sale 202 in 2007. The public will be asked to comment on each sale proposal.

The area under evaluation is in the Beaufort Sea, offshore Alaska's northern coast. It extends from 3 to approximately 60 nautical miles offshore in water depths generally ranging from about 25 to 200 feet. The area covers about 9.9 million acres and extends from the Canadian Border on the east to Barrow on the west.

The MMS has conducted 281 environmental, social, and economic studies about the effects of offshore petroleum exploration on the human and marine environment offshore Alaska. Of these, 62 are exclusive to the Beaufort Sea Planning Area.

There have been seven Federal sales conducted in the Beaufort Sea planning area since 1979. The MMS has issued 690 leases in the Beaufort Sea; 54 remain as active leases. All current leases are within 3 to 12 miles of the coast or barrier islands. Lessees have drilled 30 exploratory wells in the federal portion of the Beaufort Sea, all but one well in the sale area. MMS defined eleven as producible, including the Northstar and Liberty prospects. MMS estimates the Beaufort Shelf planning area contains 6.94 billion barrels of oil and 32.07 trillion cubic feet of gas in undiscovered pools. Of this total resource potential, 460 million barrels of oil

are anticipated to be leased, discovered, and developed as a result of a lease sale offering the entire program area. No natural gas resources are expected to be developed within the foreseeable future because there is no gas transportation system from the North Slope to market.

For more information about the public hearings, or to request a copy of the draft EIS write to the Minerals Management Service at 949 East 36th Avenue, Anchorage, Alaska, 99508-4302. The DEIS is also available on CD-ROM, three-volume hard copy, or on the MMS webpage at www.mms.gov/alaska.

MMS is the federal agency in the U.S. Department of the Interior that manages the nation's oil, natural gas and other mineral resources on the outer continental shelf in federal offshore waters. The agency also collects, accounts for and disburses mineral revenues from federal and Indian leases. These collections totaled nearly \$8 billion last year and more than \$110 billion since the agency was created in 1982. Annually, nearly \$1 billion from those revenues go into the Land and Water Conservation Fund for the acquisition and development of state and federal park and recreation lands.

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