

include estimates for equipment or services purchased: (i) Before October 1, 1995; (ii) to comply with requirements not associated with the information collection; (iii) for reasons other than to provide information or keep records for the Government; or (iv) as part of customary and usual business or private practices.

We will summarize written responses to this notice and address them in our submission for OMB approval. As a result of your comments, we will make any necessary adjustments to the burden in our submission to OMB.

Public Comment Policy: Our practice is to make comments, including names and home addresses of respondents, available for public review during regular business hours. Individual respondents may request that we withhold their home address from the record, which we will honor to the extent allowable by law. There may be circumstances in which we would withhold from the record a respondent's identity, as allowable by the law. If you wish us to withhold your name and/or address, you must state this prominently at the beginning of your comment. However, we will not consider anonymous comments. We will make all submissions from organizations or businesses, and from individuals identifying themselves as representatives or officials of organizations or businesses, available for public inspection in their entirety.

MMS Information Collection Clearance Officer: Jo Ann Lauterbach, (202) 208-7744.

Dated: March 14, 2003.

E.P. Danenberger,
Chief, Engineering and Operations Division.
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DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

Minerals Management Service

Outer Continental Shelf (OCS), Alaska Region, Chukchi Sea/Hope Basin

AGENCY: Minerals Management Service (MMS), Interior.

ACTION: Call for information and nominations (Call).

SUMMARY: The Secretary's decision to consider offering the Chukchi Sea/Hope Basin planning area in the OCS Oil and Gas Leasing Program for 2002-2007 provides for an 18-month "special-interest" process beginning with publication of this Call. Based on the information and specific nominations received as a result of this Call, a

decision will be made whether to proceed with a sale.

DATES: Nominations and comments on the Call must be received no later than 90 days after publication of this document in the **Federal Register**.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Please call Tom Warren at (907) 271-6691 in MMS's Alaska OCS Region.

SUMMARY INFORMATION: The objective of this "special-interest" leasing option is to foster exploration in a frontier OCS area of potential, but high economic cost, without investment of the considerable time and effort required for holding a typical lease sale. The general approach is to query industry regarding the level of interest in proceeding with a sale in the Chukchi Sea/Hope Basin where we would expect to offer focused areas of specific interest for exploration and to request nominations of such areas. However, we will proceed based on the comments and information we do receive. The lease sale is proposed to pursue the high resource potential of the Chukchi Sea area in conjunction with potential natural gas resources that may extend into the adjacent Hope Basin area. Comments are also being requested from the general public on this special-interest leasing process, including the terms and conditions of a sale. The MMS will consider all comments and nominations in the decision on whether and where within the Chukchi Sea/Hope Basin to proceed with leasing and on the terms and conditions of a lease sale proposal. A decision to offer a nominated area for leasing will be conditioned on an informal commitment from industry to explore the area leased within a specific time period.

This Call does not indicate a preliminary decision to lease in the area described below. If MMS decides to proceed with the sale process, MMS will make the final decision on the specific areas for possible leasing at a later date in the presale process and in compliance with the 5-year program and with applicable laws including all requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and OCS Lands Act (OCSLA). The MMS may adjust the dimensions of a nominated area after discussions with the nominating company.

Call for Information and Nominations

1. Authority

This Call is published pursuant to the OCSLA, as amended (43 U.S.C. 1331-1356, (1994)), and the regulations issued thereunder (30 CFR part 256 and 30 CFR part 260); and in accordance with the

OCS Oil and Gas Leasing Program 2002-2007, approved June 27, 2002.

2. Purpose of Call

The purpose of the Call is to gather preliminary information, to request nomination of specific areas of interest to industry, and to request comments on the terms and conditions of offering these special interest lands. The Call also serves to initiate public outreach to assist in preparation of the NEPA analysis for this proposal. This proposal is in keeping with section 102(9) of the OCSLA Amendments of 1978, which states as a purpose of the statute, "to insure that the extent of oil and natural gas resources of the Outer Continental Shelf is assessed at the earliest practicable time." The objective of the "special-interest" leasing process is to encourage exploration in a frontier OCS area for the discovery of oil and gas. This area might contain natural gas for potential use in local communities, as well as oil to meet national energy needs. The sale would offer for lease both oil and gas.

Comments, information, and nominations on oil and gas leasing, exploration, and development and production within the Chukchi Sea/Hope Basin are sought from all interested parties. Comments are also being sought on the terms, conditions, and economic incentives of a sale in the Chukchi Sea/Hope Basin. Industry and other interested parties are strongly encouraged to contact the Alaska OCS Region with questions or to discuss interest in the area. This early planning and consultation step is particularly important to this special interest process. The MMS will base its decision on whether to proceed with the presale process and the terms and conditions of a sale on the nominations and other information received in response to this Call. This process will ensure a decision that considers the concerns of all respondents in future decisions in this leasing process pursuant to the OCSLA and regulations at 30 CFR parts 256 and 30 CFR part 260. Commenters are also encouraged to submit comments and suggestions on the "special-interest" leasing process in general.

This Call is being issued in accordance with the OCS Oil and Gas Leasing Program 2002-2007, approved June 27, 2002. The program offers two sales in the Chukchi Sea/Hope Basin during the 5-year program. If no interest is expressed in response to this first Call, MMS will defer the sale for one year and reissue the Call the following year. This process will continue throughout the 5-year program until there is sufficient interest to proceed