

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 OCS 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. 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 Norton Basin are sought from all interested parties. Comments are also being sought on the terms, conditions, and economic incentives of a sale in the Norton 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 part 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 one sale in the Norton Basin during the 5-year program. This is the second Call

issued for the Norton Basin Program Area. The first Call was published in the **Federal Register** on January 22, 2002, and no interest was expressed.

3. Description of Area

The area subject to this Call is located offshore the State of Alaska in the northern Bering Sea, west and south off the coast of the Seward Peninsula. It consists of approximately 4,742 whole and partial blocks (about 10.1 million hectares or 25 million acres). It extends offshore from about 3 to approximately 320 miles in water depths from about 25 feet to approximately 650 feet.

A page size map of the area accompanies this Notice. A large scale Call map showing the boundaries of the area on a block-by-block basis is available without charge from the Public Information Office at the address given below, or by telephone request at (907) 271–6438 or 1–800–764–2627. Copies of Official Protraction Diagrams (OPDs) are also available for \$2 each. Alaska OCS Region, Minerals Management Service, 949 East 36th Avenue, Room 308, Anchorage, Alaska, 99508–4302, akwebmaster@mms.gov.

4. Instructions on Call

The Call for Information map and indications of interest and/or comments must be submitted to the Regional Supervisor, Leasing and Environment, at the above address.

The Call map delineates the area that is the subject of this Call. Respondents are requested to indicate very specific areas of interest in and comment on the Federal acreage within the boundaries of the Call area that they wish to have included in a proposed sale in the Norton Basin.

If you wish to comment, you may submit your comments by any one the following methods:

- You may mail comments to the Alaska OCS Region, Minerals Management Service, 949 East 36th Avenue, Room 308, Anchorage, Alaska 99508–4302.

- Comments may be submitted directly from the Internet at <http://www.mms.gov/alaska>. Please submit Internet comments as an ASCII file avoiding the use of special characters and any form of encryption. Please also include “Attn: Comments on Call for Information and Nominations for Proposed 2004 Lease Sale in Norton Basin” and your name and return address in your Internet message.

Finally, you may hand-deliver comments to the Alaska OCS Region, Minerals Management Service, 949 East 36th Avenue, Room 308, Anchorage, Alaska. Our practice is to make

comments, including names and addresses of respondents, available for public review during regular business hours. Individual respondents may request that we withhold their address from the rulemaking record, which we will honor to the extent allowable by law. Under certain circumstances we can withhold a respondent’s identity, as allowable by 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.

A. Areas of Interest to the Oil and Gas Industry. Industry must be candid and very specific regarding the areas they nominate if this process is to succeed. The purpose of this process is to identify and expect to offer only small, focused areas where industry has a significant interest in exploration. Nominations covering large-scale areas will not be helpful in defining these areas.

Nominations must be depicted on the Call map by outlining the area(s) of interest along block lines. Nominators are asked to submit a list of whole and partial blocks nominated (by OPD and block number) to facilitate correct interpretation of their nominations on the Call map. Although the identities of those submitting nominations become a matter of public record, the individual nominations are proprietary information and will not be released to the public. The telephone number and name of a person to contact in the nominator’s organization for additional information should be included in the response. This person will be contacted to set up a mutually agreeable time and place for a meeting with the Alaska OCS Regional Office to present their views regarding the company’s nominations.

B. Terms, Conditions, and Economic Incentives Pertaining to Lease Issuance. Respondents are requested to comment on the terms, conditions, and economic incentives pertaining to lease issuance for any leases that may be issued as a result of a sale in the Norton Basin. The MMS is aware of the lack of infrastructure and distance from shore to some of the blocks in this area and will consider these factors in designing any incentives. The following are being considered for use in this sale:

—Lease term of 10 years