

all requirements of the NEPA and the OCS Lands Act.

Request for Information

1. Authority

This request for information is published pursuant to the OCS Lands Act as amended (43 U.S.C. 1331–1356 (1994)) (OCS Lands Act), and the regulations issued thereunder (30 CFR part 256); and in accordance with the OCS Oil and Gas Leasing Program 2002 to 2007.

2. Purpose of Request

The purpose of the request for information is to gather information for Oil and Gas Lease Sale 195 in the Beaufort Sea, scheduled for March 2005. Information on oil and gas leasing, exploration, development, and production within the Beaufort Sea are sought from all interested parties. This early planning and consultation step is important for ensuring that all interests and concerns are communicated to the Department of the Interior for decisions in the leasing process pursuant to the OCS Lands Act and regulations at 30 CFR part 256.

The call published in the **Federal Register** on September 19, 2001, requested information and nominations from industry for Sales 186, 195, and 202 in the Beaufort Sea Planning Area. The MMS will use the information submitted in response to that call and any new information submitted in response to this request for information to determine the area that will be included in a NEPA analysis. It is not necessary to re-submit comments sent in response to the multiple-sale call or for industry to re-submit their areas of interest if your comments or indications of interest have not changed since that time. This process seeks to identify new areas of concern and areas of interest to industry.

3. Description of Area

The area located offshore the State of Alaska in the Beaufort Sea Planning Area is the subject of this request for information. It extends offshore from about 3 nautical miles to approximately 60 nautical miles, in water depths from approximately 25 feet to 200 feet. A small portion of the outer limits of the sale area north of Harrison Bay drops to approximately 3,000 feet. This area consists of approximately 1,898 whole and partial blocks (about 9.9 million acres). A page-size map of the area accompanies this notice. A large scale request for information map showing the boundaries of the area on a block-by-block basis is available without

charge from the Records Manager at the address given below, or by telephone request at (907) 271–6621. 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; <http://www.mms.gov/alaska>.

4. Instructions on Request for Information

The request for information map delineates the area that is the subject of this request. Respondents are requested to indicate interest in and comment on any or all of the Federal acreage within the boundaries of the request for information area that they wish to have included in Beaufort Sea Sale 195.

If you wish to comment, you may submit your comments by any one of 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.
- You may also comment via e-mail to akrfi@mms.gov. 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 Request for Information for Beaufort Sea Sale 195” and your name and return address in your Internet message. If you do not receive a confirmation from the system that we have received your Internet message, contact us directly at (907) 271–6621.
- Finally, you may hand-deliver comments to the Alaska OCS Region, Minerals Management Service, 949 East 36th Avenue, Room 308, Anchorage, Alaska 99508–4302.

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 record, which we will honor to the extent allowable by law. There also may be additional circumstances in which we would 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

The MMS requests industry to submit any new information, including nomination of blocks that are of significant interest for exploration, development, and production. Information and nominations submitted in response to the multiple-sale call for Sales 186, 195, and 202, published on September 19, 2001 (66 FR 48268), will also be considered as information and nominations for the Sale 195 area identification process.

Nominations must be depicted on the request for information 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 request for information map. Although the identities of those submitting nominations become a matter of public record, the individual nominations are proprietary information.

Nominators also are requested to rank blocks nominated according to priority of interest (e.g., priority 1 (high), or 2 (medium)). Blocks nominated that do not indicate priorities will be considered priority 3 (low). Nominators must be specific in indicating blocks by priority and be prepared to discuss their range of interest and activity regarding the nominated area(s). 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. Relation to Coastal Management Plans

Comments also are sought on potential conflicts with approved local coastal management plans that may result from the sale and future OCS oil and gas activities. These comments should identify specific coastal management plan policies of concern, the nature of the conflicts foreseen, and steps that MMS could take to avoid or mitigate the potential conflicts. Comments may be in terms of broad areas or restricted to particular blocks of concern. Commenters are requested to list block numbers or outline the subject area on the large-scale Request for Information map.