

ENVIRONMENTAL STUDIES PROGRAM: Ongoing Studies

Region: National

Planning Area(s): All

Title: Evaluation of the Relative Environmental Sensitivity and Marine Productivity of the Outer Continental Shelf (OCS)

Cost: (in thousands) \$600

Period of Performance: FY 2011-2013

Conducting Organization(s): URS Corporation (M11PB00048)

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Description:

Background: The Outer Continental Shelf Lands Act (OCSLA) mandates that BOEM conduct leasing on the OCS through five-year programs. The OCSLA also requires BOEM to conduct several analyses to evaluate the economic and environmental costs and benefits of OCS leasing. One requirement is to evaluate the relative environmental sensitivity and marine productivity of the 26 OCS planning areas. BOEM has traditionally performed a separate analysis of relative environmental sensitivity and another for marine productivity. The relative environmental sensitivity analysis prepared for the 2007-2012 Program was successfully litigated on the basis that its use of a single indicator of coastal oil spill sensitivity did not address the sensitivity of the marine environment. The remanded analysis used an approach that calculated planning area sensitivity by summing the individual sensitivity scores for the marine habitat, marine fauna, marine productivity, and coastal habitat components within and near the planning area. The remanded analysis also analyzed climate change effects on sensitivity.

Objectives: The objectives of this study are to develop and recommend options for replacing or supplementing previous BOEM methodologies, evaluate approaches and information sources, and conduct the environmental sensitivity and marine productivity analyses of the 26 OCS Planning Areas. This study also will evaluate whether information developed in the marine productivity analysis should be incorporated into the environmental sensitivity scoring or should be presented separately.

Importance to BOEM: BOEM is required by the OCSLA to conduct environmental analyses for each five-year oil and gas program. One required analysis is to evaluate the relative environmental sensitivity and marine productivity of different areas of the OCS. This study will develop the analysis for future Five-Year Programs. The analysis compares and ranks the environmental sensitivity and marine productivity of the 26 OCS planning areas.

Current Status: Awarded July, 2011. To date, updated methodologies have been evaluated and selected for use in the new analysis. Work continues to develop and

optimize the new model using up-to-date, quantitative data on OCS species and environments.

Final Report Due: March 31, 2013

Affiliated Web Sites: <https://www.boem.gov/studies>

Revised Date: July 26, 2012

ESPIS: Environmental Studies Program Information System

All *completed* ESP studies can be found here:

http://www.data.boem.gov/homepg/data_center/other/espis/espisfront.asp