

THE NEWS ROOM

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BOEMRE Calls for Public Comment to Inform Deepwater Environmental Assessment

Bureau Receives First Deepwater Exploration Plan

WASHINGTON – The Bureau of Ocean Energy Management, Regulation and Enforcement (BOEMRE) today announced that public comment is invited with respect to the Environmental Assessment (EA) for the first Exploration Plan (EP) for deepwater activity in the Gulf of Mexico completed in accordance with new safety and environmental standards implemented since the Deepwater Horizon explosion and oil spill.

The plan, a Supplemental EP submitted by Shell Offshore Inc., includes three proposed exploratory wells in approximately 2,950 feet water depth, 130 miles offshore Louisiana. Consistent with federal regulations, an EP is deemed “submitted” once all supporting materials and documentation has been provided. Once a plan is deemed submitted, BOEMRE has 30 calendar days to analyze and evaluate it.

As part of its review, the bureau will prepare an EA specific to the proposed exploration activities. Upon completion of the technical and environmental review, BOEMRE must decide whether to approve the plan, require modifications, or disapprove the plan. A supplemental plan involves proposed activities on an oil and gas lease that were not included in the operator’s original EP. Shell’s original plan for this lease was approved in 1985. Oil and gas is currently being produced from this lease, which is part of the Auger field. The supplemental plan proposes drilling up to three additional exploratory wells.

“As we continue exploration in the deepwater Gulf of Mexico, we will conduct thorough site-specific reviews to ensure that the proposed activities are carried out safely, responsibly and in accordance with our regulations. Our reliance on Environmental Assessments as part of our review of exploratory drilling plans in deepwater underscores our commitment to ensuring that deepwater drilling goes forward with adequate regard and protection for the environment,” BOEMRE Director Michael R. Bromwich said.

The 30-day time frame for review includes a 10-day public comment period to allow an opportunity to review and comment on the issues that should be considered by BOEMRE in preparing the EA for the plan. In an effort to make the comment opportunity more accessible, the public can both view and provide comments on agency documents at:
<http://www.boemre.gov/PublicComment.htm>.

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