

THE NEWS ROOM

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BOEMRE Awards \$5.6 Million for Arctic Environmental Study

Research to Focus on Hanna Shoal Ecosystem in Alaska's Chukchi Sea

WASHINGTON — The Bureau of Ocean Energy Management, Regulation and Enforcement (BOEMRE) today announced it has signed a cooperative agreement with the University of Texas at Austin and a team of highly qualified and experienced Arctic researchers for a comprehensive study of the Hanna Shoal ecosystem in the Chukchi Sea off Alaska's northwest coast. The study will be conducted from 2011-2016 and is expected to cost \$5,645,168.

Ongoing studies have highlighted Hanna Shoal as an important biological ecosystem between the Chukchi Sea and Arctic Ocean waters. BOEMRE analysts and decision makers will use the information developed by this study in future National Environmental Policy Act analyses and decision-making regarding potential energy development in the Chukchi Sea.

"Over the course of many years, we have devoted substantial resources to promote better understanding of the Arctic environment," said BOEMRE Director Michael R. Bromwich. "This five-year study will greatly contribute to the body of knowledge regarding the biological diversity of the Hanna Shoal area and will provide additional valuable information about the ecosystem that supports marine life."

The main objectives of the study are to identify and measure important physical and biological processes that contribute to the high concentration of marine life in the Hanna Shoal area. The study will document physical and oceanographic features, ice conditions, and information concerning local species. BOEMRE will integrate data gained from this study with other relevant Chukchi Sea studies to provide a more complete understanding of environmental considerations such as food web and contaminant bioaccumulations.

Dr. Kenneth H. Dunton, University of Texas at Austin, will serve as Principal Investigator. His team will include researchers from the Florida Institute of Technology, Old Dominion University, the University of Alaska Fairbanks, the University of Maryland, the University of Rhode Island, and the Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution. BOEMRE will be involved in all phases of the study, including substantial input to the field research design and coordinating with other research efforts in the Chukchi Sea to ensure BOEMRE information needs are met. BOEMRE staff may also participate in field cruises, field data interpretations and analyses, and in writing articles that flow from research that will be conducted under this cooperative agreement.

Although BOEMRE developed the Hanna Shoal study parameters in 2010, the study will also address several issues raised by the U.S. Geological Survey June 2011 report, An Evaluation of the Science Needs to Inform Decisions on Outer Continental Shelf Energy Development in the Chukchi and Beaufort Seas, Alaska.

Since the early 1970s, BOEMRE and its predecessor organizations have funded more than \$340 million in studies in Alaska. The Hannah Shoal study is one of approximately 40 ongoing studies the bureau's Alaska Region is currently coordinating and managing. The bureau's Environmental Studies Program conducts and oversees world-class, scientific research to inform policy decisions regarding leasing and development of OCS energy and mineral resources.

For additional information about BOEMRE's studies program,
see: <http://www.boemre.gov/eppd/sciences/esp/index.htm>.

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