

The NewsRoom

Release: 3950

Date: January 16, 2009

MMS Announces Milestones in Energy Development

Includes Alternative Energy, Traditional Sources

WASHINGTON, D.C. – The Department of the Interior's Minerals Management Service (MMS) announced today three significant milestones that will potentially lead to expanded domestic production of both traditional and alternative energy resources.

The milestones are: the notice of availability of the final environmental impact statement (FEIS) for the Cape Wind Energy project off Massachusetts; a notice of intent to prepare an environmental impact statement (EIS) for geological and geophysical studies, such as seismic surveys, off the Atlantic coast; and the notice of availability of the Draft Proposed 2010-2015 Outer Continental Shelf (OCS) Oil and Gas Leasing Program and notice of intent to prepare an EIS for that program.

"MMS has been working tirelessly to facilitate the responsible development of our domestic energy resources and expand our nation's energy portfolio," said MMS Director Randall Luthi. "Today, we are presenting options to the next Administration. The final decisions regarding the next steps are theirs."

The final EIS for the Cape Wind Energy Project, a proposed 130-turbine wind farm, was filed with the Environmental Protection Agency last week, and will publish in the Federal Register on January 16.

Luthi highlighted \$3.8 million in Fiscal Year 2008 funding for environmental research related to offshore alternative energy development.

"While we anxiously await the publication of the Final Rule governing the OCS Alternative Energy Program, we are moving forward with important environmental work to ensure we have the best available scientific data upon which to base our decisions," Luthi said. "As with the development of traditional sources of energy such as oil and gas, we must use a balanced approach to developing alternative energy resources, weighing the nation's demand for energy with our responsibility to protect and preserve the environment."

MMS submitted the Final Rule for the OCS Alternative Energy Program to the Office of Management and Budget for review and approval in November.

Luthi also announced the notice of availability of the Draft Proposed 2010 – 2015 OCS Oil and Gas Leasing Program (DPP) and a notice of intent to prepare an EIS for the DPP. The two notices will be published in the Federal Register January 21 beginning a 60-day public comment period.

"We're basically giving the next Administration a two-year head start," Luthi said. "This is a multi-step, multi-year process with a full environmental review and several opportunities for input from the states, other government agencies and interested parties, and the general public."

The agency estimates the OCS contains about 86 billion barrels of oil and 420 trillion cubic feet of natural gas in yet to be discovered fields.

These numbers are conservative because little exploration has been conducted in much of those areas during the past quarter of a century due to the Executive and Congressional restrictions.

In response to the lifting of the Executive ban and the expiration of the restrictions included in previous Congressional Appropriations language, industry has begun submitting requests to MMS to conduct geological and geophysical studies, such as seismic surveys, in the Atlantic planning areas. Before making a decision on such requests, the agency must first conduct the necessary environmental reviews in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA).

"In order to move forward with expanded exploration and development responsibly, we need current data. That is why we are also announcing today our intent to prepare a programmatic EIS to evaluate potential environmental effects of multiple geological and geophysical studies in the Atlantic OCS planning areas," Luthi said.

The public may submit comments on the Draft Proposed Program during the next 60 days by using the [online commenting system](#) or by mail to:

Minerals Management Service
Attention: Leasing Division (LD)
381 Elden Street, MS-4010
Herdon, VA 20170-4817

The public may submit comments on the scope of the Programmatic EIS, significant issues that should be addressed, alternatives that should be considered, scenario development, and the types of G&G activities and geographical areas of interest on the Atlantic OCS. Comments may be [submitted electronically](#) or in written form enclosed in an envelope labeled "**Comments on the PEIS Scope**" and mailed (or hand carried) to:

Regional Supervisor
Leasing and Environment (MS 5410)
Minerals Management Service
Gulf of Mexico OCS Region
1201 Elmwood Park Boulevard
New Orleans, Louisiana 70123-2394

For More Information:

- [Alternative Energy Environmental Studies Fact Sheet](#) (29.28 KB PDF)
- [Atlantic Seismic Activities Fact Sheet](#) (26.92 KB PDF)
- [Cape Wind Energy Project Fact Sheet](#) (27.38 KB PDF)
- [Draft Proposed Program Fact Sheet](#) (27.83 KB PDF)
- [Instructions for eRulemaking Portal](#)

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[MMS: Securing Ocean Energy & Economic Value for America](#)
[U.S. Department of the Interior](#)