

COOK INLET STUDY (#30029)

FOR RELEASE: June 10, 1993      CONTACT: Robin L. Cacy  
(907) 271-6070

CITIZENS' GROUP, U. OF ALASKA, MMS  
TO STUDY COOK INLET (#30029)

The Cook Inlet Regional Citizens' Advisory Council (CIRCAC), the University of Alaska Anchorage, and the U.S. Department of the Interior's Minerals Management Service (MMS) will cooperate this summer in studying Cook Inlet.

CIRCAC will test bottom sediments and caged mussels for hydrocarbons using a boat provided by MMS. Samples will be collected during two 10-day periods in June and July by CIRCAC's contractor, A.D. Little, Inc. The results will be used to establish a base line for future monitoring and will be available to MMS and others.

The Environmental and Natural Resources Institute (ENRI) of the University of Alaska at Anchorage will use the MMS launch to collect samples over a broad area from near Anchorage through lower Cook Inlet. That effort will take place under a \$443,000 contract with MMS. The contract will cover activities in June, August and September. ENRI will evaluate the water column and bottom sediments for trace metals, hydrocarbons and toxicity. The study will also examine shellfish for naturally occurring radioactive materials, trace metals and hydrocarbons.

Preliminary data from the study will be available for a Final Environmental Impact Statement on MMS's next proposed oil and natural gas sale in Cook Inlet/Shelikof Strait. That sale, No. 149, is tentatively proposed for late 1994.

The CIRCAC and MMS/ENRI work will provide a current picture of the mussels, water and sediment quality in Cook Inlet. The studies' results could be used as a base for future monitoring if production occurs in lower Cook Inlet following next year's proposed sale. The MMS first studied Cook Inlet aquatic life, sediments and water in 1976. Some of the results of the new study may be used to determine if there have been changes since that time.

"We expect these cooperative studies to provide us with a clearer picture of current conditions in Cook Inlet," said Alan D. Powers, MMS's Regional Director for the Alaska Outer Continental Shelf. "The results should also enhance our efforts to mitigate the effects of any future oil and gas production in the area."

--MMS--