

The NewsRoom

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MMS Determines Shell Exploration Plan for Beaufort Sea Complete

Agency Now to Analyze Plan for Operational and Environmental Requirements

WASHINGTON – The Department of the Interior's Minerals Management Service (MMS) has received Shell Offshore, Inc. Exploration Plan to explore two leases in the Beaufort Sea and has deemed it "complete."

The MMS has a 30-day time frame to analyze and evaluate Shell's plan. Included in its review, the agency will prepare an Environmental Assessment (EA) specific to Shell's exploration. Upon completion of the technical and environmental review, MMS must decide if the plan is approved, requires modifications, or is disapproved.

"The responsible development of offshore resources is part of our nation's comprehensive energy plan, which includes a renewed emphasis on conservation and an aggressive effort to develop renewable resources so we can move the nation towards energy independence," said Interior Secretary Ken Salazar. "Now that Shell's plan has reached this important milestone, we will review it carefully to ensure that it is technically sound and will protect the Beaufort Sea and Alaska's environment."

Shell proposes activities limited to the far western area of Camden Bay, including use of one drillship with one tending ice management vessel drilling two wells over the course of one year. The two leases are about 16 and 23 miles north of Point Thompson, Alaska.

The two leases were obtained by Shell Offshore, Inc. during Beaufort Sea oil and gas lease sales 195 and 202 in 2005 and 2007. The sales were included in the 2002-2007 five year oil and gas leasing program and are not affected by the recent court decision on the current leasing program, which sent the 2007-2012 program back to MMS for additional environmental reviews.

Before MMS would allow activity to proceed, Shell must also meet the coastal zone management requirements of the State of Alaska, air and water quality rules by the Environmental Protection Agency, and Marine Mammal Protection Act requirements of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and National Marine Fisheries Service.

The Beaufort Sea is estimated to contain 8.22 billion barrels of oil and 27.64 trillion cubic feet of natural gas (undiscovered technically recoverable mean estimate).

[Briefing Paper on Shell Exploration Plan](#) (21KB PDF)

[Shell's Exploration Plan and Additional Information](#)

[Resource Map](#) (349KB PDF)

[Exploration Plan Map](#) (89 KB PDF)

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