

The NewsRoom

Release:

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MMS schedules Public Meetings on Atlantic Geological & Geophysical Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement

Public to Comment on Scope of Environmental Study and Suggest Issues for Analysis

WASHINGTON, D.C. - The Department of the Interior's Minerals Management Service (MMS) has scheduled 13 public scoping meetings in seven locations to solicit comments for the development of a programmatic environmental impact statement (PEIS) for future geological and geophysical exploration (G&G) in the Mid- and South-Atlantic OCS.

It has been more than 25 years since G&G studies were conducted off the Atlantic coast. This data will enhance, update, and supplement information to support future MMS planning decisions for both renewable and conventional energy development on the OCS.

Public scoping meetings have been scheduled from April 20, 2010, through April 29, 2010, in Houston, TX; Jacksonville, FL; Savannah, GA; Newark, NJ; Charleston, SC; Wilmington, NC; Norfolk, VA. A schedule of meeting dates, times, and locations will be posted on MMS's web site at www.mms.gov.

In January 2009, MMS issued a Notice of Intent to Prepare the PEIS which included a 60-day comment period. However, because the scoping meetings could not take place within those 60 days, the comment period has been reopened to allow the scoping meetings to take place.

The Notice of the Re-opening of the Comment Period and the Public Scoping Meetings will publish in the Federal Register on April 2, 2010. The comment period and the public meetings are part of the scoping process through which other Federal, State, and local governments as well as any interested parties have the opportunity to assist MMS in identifying significant issues and alternatives for analysis in the PEIS.

The PEIS will evaluate potential environmental impacts of multiple G&G activities on the Mid- and South-Atlantic OCS. These activities include, but are not limited to, seismic surveys, sidescan-sonar surveys, electromagnetic surveys, geological and geochemical sampling, and remote sensing. This PEIS will also review advances in G&G technology and improved knowledge of acoustic impacts on marine life.

Findings from this PEIS will assist in determining whether significant impacts to Atlantic resources could occur as a result of G&G activities, and will aid in outlining any necessary mitigation and monitoring measures that will reduce or eliminate the potential for impacts to the environment.

The MMS has the authority under the OCS Lands Act to issue permits for offshore G&G activities and has received multiple applications for such permits. In the conference report that accompanied the 2010 Department of the Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies Appropriations Act, Congress directed the MMS to complete a PEIS to study the effects of G&G activities in the Atlantic OCS.

Schedule of Public Scoping Meetings	
DATE	CITY
April 20, 2010	Houston, TX
April 21, 2010	Jacksonville, FL
April 23, 2010	Savannah, GA
April 27, 2010	Newark, NJ
April 27, 2010	Charleston, SC
April 29, 2010	Wilmington, NC
April 29, 2010	Norfolk, VA

Members of the public who are unable to attend the meetings may submit written comments by:

- Submitting a written letter enclosed in an envelope labeled "Comments on the PEIS Scope" and mailed (or hand delivered) 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; or
- Emailing the MMS at the following address: GGEIS@mms.gov.

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