

developed the approved amendments to the RMPs in close coordination with the Service and cooperating agencies, using input from the public, stakeholder groups, State and local government entities, and American Indian tribes.

The BLM and the Service prepared an environmental impact statement (EIS) in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) to analyze the environmental impacts associated with the proposed action and the alternatives. Additionally, the BLM consulted with the Service to meet the requirements in Section 7 of the ESA. A biological opinion was issued by the Service to the BLM on January 12, 2021, and determined that the ROW and approved amendments to the RMPs are not likely to jeopardize the continued existence of the Mojave desert tortoise in the Upper Virgin River Recovery Unit and range-wide and that they are not likely to destroy or adversely modify designated critical habitat for the desert tortoise. Pursuant to section 10 of the ESA, the Service issued an intra-agency biological opinion on January 12, 2021, which determined that the ITP is not likely to jeopardize the continued existence of the Mojave desert tortoise, Holmgren milkvetch, Shivwits milkvetch, dwarf bear-poppy, Siler pincushion cactus, Gierisch mallow, and Fickeisen plains cactus or result in the adverse modification of critical habitat for the Mojave desert tortoise, Holmgren milkvetch, Shivwits milkvetch, Gierisch mallow, or Fickeisen plains cactus. The agencies also consulted with the Utah State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) and consulting parties as part of the Section 106 review process under the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA). The BLM determined, and SHPO concurred, that the ROW will result in adverse effects to historic properties and that the amendments to the Red Cliffs NCA and St. George Field Office RMPs will result in no adverse effects to historic properties. For the ITP, the Service cannot fully determine the effects to historic properties prior to issuance of the ITP and has worked with the SHPO and other consulting parties to develop a programmatic agreement, as authorized by 36 CFR 800.14(b). The programmatic agreement defines a process to evaluate and address any adverse effects to historic properties related to actions by Washington County on a case-by-case basis throughout the term of the ITP. The final programmatic agreement for the ITP was signed on December 15, 2020.

The formal public scoping process began on December 5, 2019, with the publication of a Notice of Intent (NOI)

in the **Federal Register** (84 FR 66692), which initiated a 30-day public scoping period. The Notice of Availability (NOA) for the Draft EIS and Amendments to the RMPs, Notice of ESA Section 10(a)(1)(B) permit application, and NOI announcing a concurrent public comment period for the proposed permanent closure of recreational target shooting within the proposed Reserve Zone 6 area were published on June 12, 2020 (85 FR 35950), which initiated a 90-day public comment period.

On November 13, 2020, the BLM published the NOA for the Final EIS and Proposed Amendments to the RMPs (85 FR 72683), initiating a 30-day protest period and a concurrent Governor's consistency review of up to 60 days. During the protest period for the Proposed Amendments to the RMPs, the BLM received 18 protest letters. All protests were resolved prior to the issuance of the RODs. For a full description of the issues raised during the protest period and how they were addressed, please refer to the BLM Protest Resolution Report, which is available online at <https://www.blm.gov/programs/planning-and-nepa/public-participation/protest-resolution-reports>. The Governor of Utah reviewed the Final EIS and Proposed Amendments to the RMPs and did not identify any inconsistencies with State or local plans, policies, or programs. Finally, in compliance with the John D. Dingell, Jr. Conservation, Management, and Recreation Act of 2019, Public Law 116-9, 16 U.S.C. 7913, and 43 CFR 8364.1, the NOA for the Draft EIS and Draft Amendments to the RMPs included an NOI announcing a concurrent 90-day public comment period regarding the proposed closure of recreational target shooting on BLM-administered lands within Reserve Zone 6. Based on issues analyzed in the EIS and feedback received during the target shooting comment period, protest period, government-to-government consultation, section 106 (NHPA) and section 7 (ESA) consultation, and Governor's consistency review, the BLM approved amendments to the St. George Field Office RMP, which includes a closure to recreational target shooting on BLM-administered lands within Reserve Zone 6.

Authority: Consistent with 40 CFR 1506.13 (2020), this notice and the EIS are issued under previous NEPA regulations: 40 CFR 1505.2; 40 CFR 1506.6; 40 CFR 1506.10; and 43 CFR 1610.2. The BLM also provides this notice under 43 CFR 8364.1 and 16 U.S.C. 7913. The Service also provides this notice under section 10(c) of the ESA (16 U.S.C. 1531 *et seq.*) and its implementing

regulations for incidental take permits (50 CFR 17.22).

Gregory Sheehan,

State Director.

Noreen Walsh,

Regional Director.

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DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

Bureau of Ocean Energy Management

[Docket No. BOEM-2021-0003]

Notice of Availability of the Area Identification for the Proposed Cook Inlet Oil and Gas Lease Sale 258

AGENCY: Bureau of Ocean Energy Management, Interior.

ACTION: Area identification.

SUMMARY: The Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (BOEM) announces the availability of the Area Identification (Area ID) for the proposed Cook Inlet Oil and Gas Lease Sale 258 (Cook Inlet Lease Sale 258) in the available northern portions of the Cook Inlet Planning Area.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

Patricia LaFramboise, Supervisor of Leasing and Plans, Alaska Regional Office, 907-334-5271, patricia.laframboise@boem.gov or Wright Jay Frank, Chief, Leasing Policy and Management Division, 703-787-1325, wright.frank@boem.gov.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: On January 17, 2017, the Secretary of the Interior approved the 2017-2022 National Outer Continental Shelf (OCS) Oil and Gas Leasing Program (2017-2022 National OCS Program), which included Cook Inlet Lease Sale 258 scheduled in 2021. Details of the 2017-2022 National OCS Program can be found at <https://www.boem.gov/National-OCS-Program/>. In accordance with 30 CFR 556.301, BOEM published a Call for Information and Nominations (Call) ¹ on the area identified in the 2017-2022 National OCS Program for the proposed Cook Inlet Lease Sale 258. The Call solicited industry nominations for areas of leasing interest and sought comments and information from the public on the areas being considered. BOEM analyzed the comments received in response to the Call and identified the areas that warranted further leasing consideration and analyses of the proposed sale's potential leasing effects on the human, marine, and coastal environments. This Area ID is not a

¹ 85 FR 55859, September 10, 2020.

decision to lease and is not a prejudgment by the Department of the Interior to proceed with proposed Cook Inlet Lease Sale 258. A decision to lease must be preceded by a number of steps, including, but not limited to, completion of environmental analyses, opportunities for the State of Alaska and other interested parties to comment, and issuance of Proposed and Final Notices of Sale.

The Area ID is available for viewing and downloading on BOEM's website at <http://www.boem.gov/ak258>. It also may be obtained from the Alaska Regional Office, Bureau of Ocean Energy Management, 3801 Centerpoint Drive, Suite 500, Anchorage, Alaska 99503–5820; telephone: 907–334–5200.

Authority: This Area ID is published pursuant to the Outer Continental Shelf Lands Act, as amended (43 U.S.C. 1331–1356), and the implementing regulation at 30 CFR 556.302.

Walter D. Cruickshank,

Acting Director, Bureau of Ocean Energy Management.

[FR Doc. 2021–00777 Filed 1–14–21; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 4310–MR–P

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

Bureau of Ocean Energy Management

[Docket No. BOEM–2020–0018]

Draft Environmental Impact Statement on the Cook Inlet Lease Sale 258

AGENCY: Bureau of Ocean Energy Management, Interior.

ACTION: Notice of availability of a draft environmental impact statement.

SUMMARY: The Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (BOEM) announces the availability of the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (Draft EIS) for the proposed Cook Inlet Outer Continental Shelf (OCS) Oil and Gas Lease Sale 258. This notice marks the start of the public review and comment period and serves to announce public hearings on the Draft EIS. After the public hearings and written comments on the Draft EIS have been reviewed and considered, a Final EIS will be prepared. The Draft EIS and associated information, including the Exploration, Development and Production, and Decommissioning Scenario (E&D Scenario) are available for review on the agency's website at <https://www.boem.gov/ak258>.

DATES: Comments are due by March 1, 2021.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

Amea Howard, project manager, at Bureau of Ocean Energy Management,

Alaska Regional Office, 3801 Centerpoint Drive, Suite 500, Anchorage, Alaska 99503–5823, or at telephone number (907) 334–5200.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: On January 17, 2017, the Secretary of the Interior approved the “Proposed Final 2017–2022 Outer Continental Shelf Oil and Gas Leasing Program” (National Program). The National Program includes proposed Lease Sale 258.

Cook Inlet stretches from the Gulf of Alaska to Anchorage in south-central Alaska. The proposed lease sale would offer for lease all available OCS blocks in the northern portion of the Cook Inlet Planning Area. The proposed lease sale area comprises 224 OCS blocks, which covers an area of approximately 1.09 million acres.

On September 10, 2020, BOEM published in the **Federal Register** the notice of intent (NOI) to prepare an EIS in support of Lease Sale 258. Publication of the NOI opened a public comment period that extended through October 13, 2020. In September 2020, BOEM held a series of public scoping meetings for the EIS. The comments received during the public scoping period were used to inform the scope and content of this Draft EIS.

Proposed action: The proposed action addressed in the Draft EIS is to conduct an oil and gas lease sale on portions of the Cook Inlet OCS Planning Area. Proposed Lease Sale 258 would provide qualified bidders the opportunity to bid on OCS lease blocks in Cook Inlet to gain conditional rights to explore, develop, and produce oil and natural gas.

The Draft EIS analyzes the potential direct, indirect, and cumulative environmental impacts of the proposed lease sale on the physical, biological, and human environments in the Cook Inlet area. See 40 CFR 1508.8 (2019 ed.). The Draft EIS describes a hypothetical scenario of exploration, development, production, and decommissioning activities that could result from the proposed lease sale and analyzes the potential impacts of those activities on the environment. The Draft EIS also analyzes reasonable alternatives to the proposed action. In addition to the Proposed Action and the No Action Alternative, BOEM analyzed three alternatives consistent with internal agency scoping, past public input from National Programs and previous lease sales, and comments received during the scoping period following publication of the NOI in September 2020 to prepare an EIS. The three alternatives address potential impacts to the Cook Inlet Distinct Population

Segment (DPS) of the beluga whale, the Southwest Alaska DPS of the northern sea otter, and the Cook Inlet drift gillnet fishery.

The proposed lease sale area defers certain areas from consideration due to potential conflicts with resources of high ecological and subsistence value. These deferred areas include: (1) The majority of the designated critical habitat for beluga whale and northern sea otter, and all of the critical habitat for Stellar seas lions and the North Pacific right whale, that are located within the Planning Area; (2) a buffer between the area considered for leasing and the Katmai National Park and Preserve, the Kodiak National Wildlife Refuge, and the Alaska Maritime National Wildlife Refuge; and (3) many of the subsistence use areas for the Native Villages of Nanwalek, Seldovia, and Port Graham identified during the Cook Inlet Lease Sale 191 process.

In this Draft EIS, BOEM has examined the potential environmental effects of activities that could result from the Lease Sale 258 proposed action along with several alternatives. The Draft EIS is based on BOEM estimates of the potential oil and gas resources in the proposed lease sale area and an associated scenario that estimates a range of potential oil and gas activities, including exploration, seismic surveying, on-lease ancillary activities, exploration and delineation drilling, development, production, and decommissioning.

Comment Submission: The public and all interested parties, including Federal, state, tribal, and local governments or agencies, are invited to submit written comments on the Draft EIS and associated information, including the E&D Scenario, through the Federal eRulemaking Portal: <http://www.regulations.gov>. In the field entitled “Enter Keyword or ID,” enter “BOEM–2020–0018,” and then click “search.” Follow the instructions to submit comments and view supporting and related materials available for this notice.

BOEM does not accept anonymous comments. Name and contact information are required to submit comments on the Federal eRulemaking Portal. Before including your address, phone number, email address or other personal identifying information within the body of your comment, you should be aware that your entire comment, including your personal identifying information, may be made publicly available at any time. While you can ask BOEM in your comment to withhold your personal identifying information