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U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
BUREAU OF OCEAN ENERGY MANAGEMENT
ALASKA OUTER CONTINENTAL SHELF REGION
ANCHORAGE, ALASKA

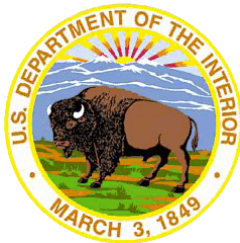
Prepared by
U.S. Department of the Interior
Bureau of Ocean Energy Management
Alaska Outer Continental Shelf Region
3801 Centerpoint Drive, Room 500
Anchorage, Alaska 99503-5823

October 2014

This document may be accessed electronically at <http://www.boem.gov/akstudies/>. To request a hard copy, please contact Dr. Heather Crowley at (907) 334-5281 or by email at Heather.Crowley@boem.gov. To request further information about the Studies Program or our planning process, please contact Dr. Dee Williams, Alaska OCS Region Studies Chief, at (907) 334-5283 or by email at Dee.Williams@boem.gov.

The inclusion of study profiles in this document does not constitute a commitment by the U.S. Department of the Interior, Bureau of Ocean Energy Management to conduct or fund any or all of the studies. Method of procurement may be selected at the discretion of BOEM. The scope of the studies is subject to change prior to initiation of any work.

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Cover Photos:

MODIS image of Alaska:	Jeff Schmaltz, NASA GSFC; June 17, 2013
Polar bear tagging and measurement:	Capt. B. Christman, NOAA Corps; OCSEAP, May 1978
Helicopter on ice for seal tagging:	Capt. B. Christman, NOAA Corps; OCSEAP, May 1978
Drying seal meat	Capt. B. Christman, NOAA Corps; OCSEAP, Jun. 1978
Red-faced cormorants and horned puffins:	Capt. B. Christman, NOAA Corps; OCSEAP, Sept. 1979



United States Department of the Interior

BUREAU OF OCEAN ENERGY MANAGEMENT

Alaska OCS Region

3801 Centerpoint Drive, Suite 500

Anchorage, Alaska 99503-5823

October 15, 2014

Dear Stakeholder:

Thank you for your interest in the Environmental Studies Program (ESP) of the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (BOEM). The agency assesses its information needs and develops new study profiles on an annual basis. We follow a well-established process that involves a role for both stakeholder input and scientific peer review (see a complete description of our process in Section 1.3). We are interested to know your perspectives and to receive any suggestions you may have for the BOEM *Alaska Annual Studies Plan, FY 2016*, which we are now beginning to formulate.

For your convenient reference, we are providing the *Alaska Annual Studies Plan FY 2015*, developed from submissions we received over the past year. In particular, we invite your attention to Section 1.4 in the document for a succinct review of notable updates.

For FY 2016 planning, we will continue to receive hardcopy submissions at our regional office. In addition, we have prepared a web docket at <http://www.regulations.gov> to facilitate public submission of new study ideas in digital format. Please enter "BOEM-2011-0096" in the search bar to open the latest docket folder.

To assist us in processing any suggestions for new studies, we ask that you follow the formatting guidance for a study profile as shown on the next page. Please keep in mind that studies proposed for our consideration must address specific BOEM mission and decision needs (see Section 1.3). Suggestions need to be received by us no later than November 24, 2014, to ensure consideration for the 2016 fiscal year. Following revisions to the plan, we will issue a final *Alaska Annual Studies Plan FY 2016* in the autumn of 2015.

We sincerely appreciate your participation in this process and we look forward to receiving your suggestions. If you have any questions about the submission process, you are urged to contact Dr. Heather Crowley, Studies Plan Coordinator, at (907) 334-5281.

Sincerely,

Dee Williams, Ph.D.

Chief, Environmental Sciences Management

**Bureau of Ocean Energy Management
Alaska Environmental Studies Program**
<http://www.boem.gov/akstudies/>

Proposed Study for FY 2016

Formatting Guidance: We recommend study profiles be less than 2 pages. Please do not try to make this a detailed scope of work. If the study is selected for further consideration, BOEM will prepare a more detailed scope of work. Please provide the following categories of information.

Region: Sample Region

Planning Area(s): All

Title: Sample Title and Profile to Show Formatting

BOEM Information Need(s) to be Addressed: Provide brief and conclusive reason(s) why BOEM needs the information. For example, identify how the study relates to analysis under the National Environmental Policy Act and/or specific BOEM decision(s), such as formulation of a mitigation measure. Please be as specific as possible.

Period of Performance: FY 2016-20XX

Description:

Background: Please provide 1 to 2 paragraphs on relevant issues. Explain what information is required and provide pertinent background. Include details about whether this study ties in with other efforts, and if so, how. Include a description of the current status of information. That is, what is the level of adequacy of existing information, does any exist, does it need to be more geographically specific?

Objectives: Clearly and succinctly state the objective(s) of the study. Explain what hypothesis will be tested or what questions will be answered by this study. We encourage the use of lists (1, 2, 3, etc.) for multiple, related objectives.

Methods: Provide brief detail on what information, techniques or methods are available that could be used. Explain how the objectives of the study will be accomplished.

Date information is required: Provide dates when products would be most useful and for what purpose, such as “Final report is needed by September 2019 to support NEPA analysis for anticipated lease sales under the next five-year program.” If the study includes products in addition to the scientific report (e.g. database, model, bibliography), explain in this section.

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ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

ACES	Alaska Coastal Ecosystem Survey
ADCP	Acoustic Doppler Current Profiler
ADF&G	Alaska Department of Fish and Game
AEWC	Alaska Eskimo Whaling Commission
AMBON	Arctic Marine Biodiversity Observing Network
AMSS	Alaska Marine Science Symposium
ANIMIDA	Arctic Nearshore Impact Monitoring in Development Area
Approx.	Approximate
ASP	Alaska Annual Studies Plan
AOOS	Alaska Ocean Observing System
ArcSEES	Arctic Science, Engineering and Education for Sustainability
AUV	Autonomous Underwater Vehicle
BLM	Bureau of Land Management
BOEM	Bureau of Ocean Energy Management
BOEMRE	Bureau of Ocean Energy Management, Regulation and Enforcement
BOWFEST	Bowhead Whale Feeding Ecology Study
BPXA	BP Exploration Alaska
BSMP	Beaufort Sea Monitoring Program
BSEE	Bureau of Safety and Environmental Enforcement
BWASP	Bowhead Whale Aerial Survey Project
CAB	Chemistry and Benthos
cANIMIDA	Continuation of Arctic Nearshore Impact Monitoring in Development Area
CESU	Cooperative Ecosystem Studies Unit
CHAOZ	Chukchi Acoustics, Oceanography and Zooplankton study
CIAP	USDOJ Coastal Impact Assistance Program
CIRCAC	Cook Inlet Regional Citizens Advisory Council
CMI	Coastal Marine Institute
COMIDA	Chukchi Offshore Monitoring in Drilling Area
CTD	Conductivity, Temperature, Depth sensor
DFO	Department of Fisheries and Oceans Canada
DPP	Development and Production Plan
DWM	Department of Wildlife Management (North Slope Borough)
EA	Environmental Assessment
EFH	Essential Fish Habitat
EIS	Environmental Impact Statement
EP	Exploration Plan
EPA	Environmental Protection Agency
ESA	Endangered Species Act
ESP	Environmental Studies Program (BOEM)
FY	Fiscal Year

G&G	Geological and Geophysical
GIS	Geographic Information Systems
GPS	Global Positioning System
IARPC	Inter-agency Arctic Research Policy Committee
IOOS	Integrated Ocean Observing System
ITM	Information Transfer Meeting
IUM	Information Update Meeting
JIP	Joint Industry Program
LCC	Landscape Conservation Cooperative
MARES	Marine Arctic Ecosystem Study
MMPA	Marine Mammal Protection Act
MMS	Minerals Management Service
NASA	National Aeronautics and Space Administration
NEPA	National Environmental Policy Act
NHPA	National Historic Preservation Act
NMFS	National Marine Fisheries Service
NMML	National Marine Mammal Laboratory
NOAA	National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
NODC	National Oceanographic Data Center
NOPP	National Oceanographic Partnership Program
NOS	National Ocean Service
NPRB	North Pacific Research Board
NPS	National Park Service
NSB	North Slope Borough
NSSI	North Slope Science Initiative
NSF	National Science Foundation
NSL	National Studies List
NWS	National Weather Service
OCS	Outer Continental Shelf
OCSEAP	Outer Continental Shelf Environmental Assessment Program
OCSLA	Outer Continental Shelf Lands Act
ONR	Office of Naval Research
OSRA	Oil-Spill-Risk Analysis
PAH	Polycyclic Aromatic Hydrocarbons
PMEL	Pacific Marine Environmental Laboratory
SDI	Satellite Drilling Island
SOAR	Synthesis of Arctic Research
TDR	Temperature/Depth Recorder
TK	Traditional Knowledge

UAA	University of Alaska Anchorage
UAF	University of Alaska Fairbanks
UAS	Unmanned Aircraft System
USARC	U.S. Arctic Research Commission
USDOI	U.S. Department of the Interior
USFWS	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
USGS	U.S. Geological Survey
UT	University of Texas
UW	University of Washington
WHOI	Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution

SECTION 1.0 PROGRAMMATIC OVERVIEW

1.1 Introduction to the Region

Background

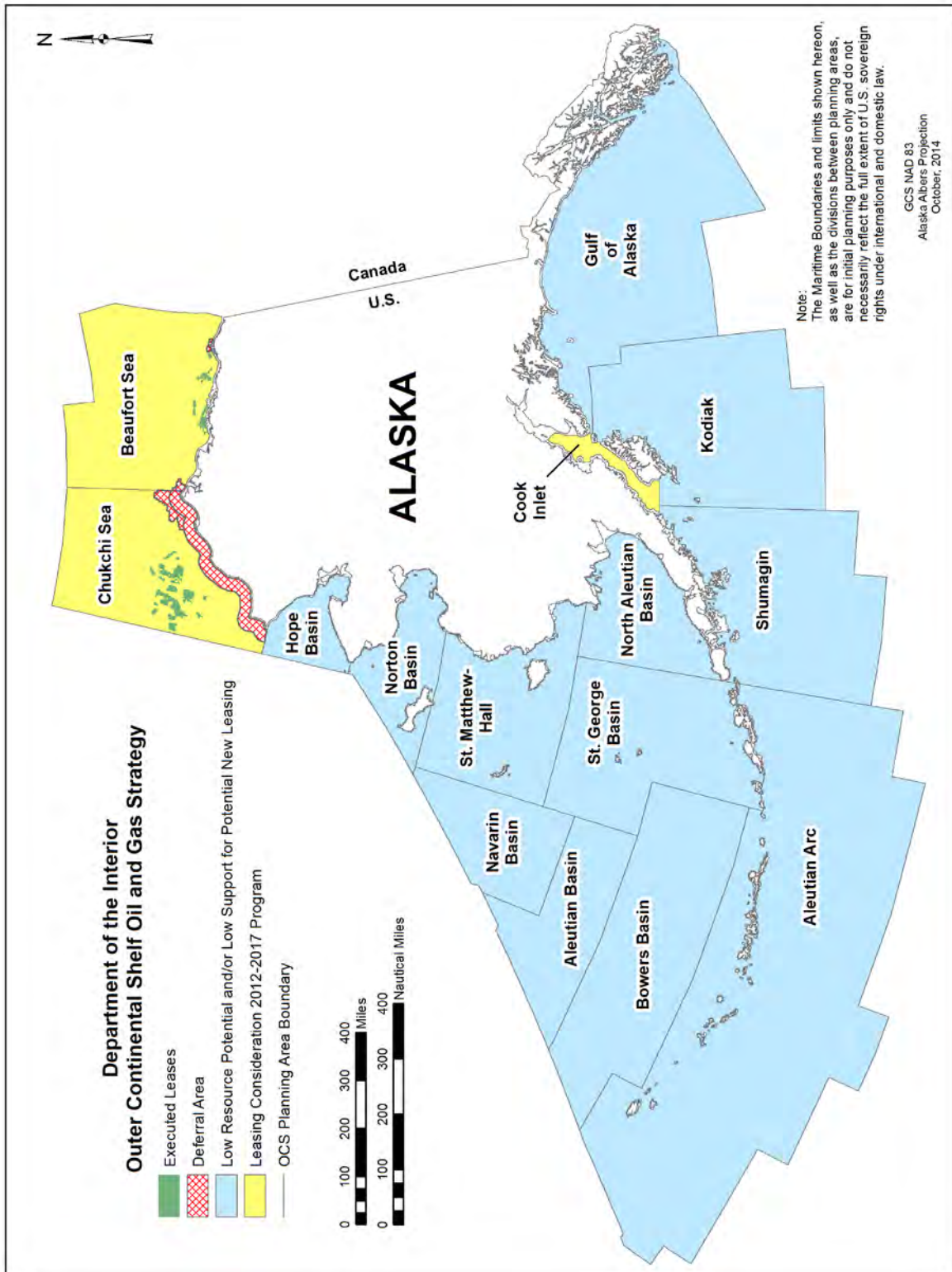
The Environmental Studies Program (ESP) of the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management was established and funded by the United States Congress to support the offshore oil and gas leasing program of the U.S. Department of the Interior (USDOI) in pursuit of national energy policies. The Environmental Studies Program was administered originally by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) from 1973 until 1982, then by the Minerals Management Service (MMS), and presently by the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (BOEM) since October 2011. The consistent mandate of the ESP since its inception has been to establish the scientific information used for assessment and management of potential impacts from oil and gas development on the human, marine and coastal environments of the Outer Continental Shelf (OCS). The OCS refers to 1.7 billion acres of Federal jurisdiction lands submerged under the ocean seaward of State boundaries, generally beginning three statute miles off the coastline (for most states) and extending for 200 miles. The Alaska OCS Region alone contains approximately 1 billion acres.

The Outer Continental Shelf Lands Act (OCSLA) of 1953, as amended (43 U.S.C. 1331 et seq.), provides direction for implementing an OCS oil and gas exploration and development program based on the need to balance orderly energy resource development with protection of the human, marine, and coastal environments. Also, the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969 requires that all Federal Agencies use a systematic, interdisciplinary approach that will ensure the integrated use of the natural and social sciences in any planning and decision-making that may have effects on the environment. Federal laws impose additional requirements on the offshore leasing process, these include the Marine Mammal Protection Act (MMPA); Endangered Species Act (ESA); Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act; Marine Protection, Research and Sanctuaries Act; and Clean Air Act.

The ESP operates on a national scale to assist in predicting, projecting, assessing and managing potential effects on the human, marine and coastal environments of the OCS that may be affected by oil and gas development. Lease-management decisions are enhanced when current, pertinent and timely environmental information is available. Final reports from the ESP are most directly utilized by teams of NEPA analysts within the BOEM Environmental Analysis Sections when they prepare Environmental Impact Statements (EISs) and Environmental Assessments (EAs), and review Geological and Geophysical permit applications, Exploration Plans (EPs) and Development and Production Plans (DPPs). Of course, a wide range of scientists, stakeholders and decision-makers also make use of our study products.

Since the ESP began, the USDOI and BOEM have funded nationally more than \$1 billion for environmental studies through fiscal year (FY) 2014. Nearly \$450 million of that amount has funded studies in Alaska across 15 planning areas in the Arctic,

Figure 1. Alaska OCS Region Planning Areas



Bering Sea and Gulf of Alaska sub-regions (see Figure 1) to produce more than 1,000 technical reports and peer-reviewed publication. The ESP manages ongoing study projects in Alaska (currently about 60) in disciplines such as physical oceanography, air quality, fate and effects of pollutants, protected and endangered species, marine ecology, and the social sciences, including traditional knowledge. Completed study reports are posted on our website at http://www.data.boem.gov/homepg/data_center/other/espis/espisfront.asp. An alternate location for browsing Alaska Region study reports by year is <http://www.boem.gov/AKpubs>.

Early in the development of the program, the focus was on obtaining baseline information on the vast biological resources and physical characteristics of the Alaskan environment for pre-lease decision-making. These studies included biological surveys of marine species, basic oceanography and meteorology, and geologic and sea ice phenomena. As a broader base of information was established, it became possible to focus on more topical studies in smaller areas to answer specific questions and fill identified information needs. In addition, generic studies were initiated to examine the potential effects of oil spills on biological resources and different oil development scenarios were modeled to determine the most likely routes of transport and dispersion of oil that might affect the marine environment. The use of computer modeling techniques has been implemented to aid in the assessment of potential oil spill and other pollutant risks to the environment, and to key species such as fur seals, sea otters and endangered whales. Modeling has also been used in ecosystem studies, especially where extrapolation to other areas provided valid analysis.

As studies information has been amassed, improved focus has required greater integration of various scientific disciplines. The ESP has initiated Synthesis Meetings, Information Transfer Meetings (ITMs) and Information Update Meetings (IUMs) to gather maximum expertise and assess the status of existing information, as well as to plan the best possible approach to a study within the constraints of time and resources. As BOEM and other Federal and State agencies collect more pertinent information, BOEM funds studies to search and evaluate existing literature and data prior to initiation of field efforts. This prevents duplication of effort and saves valuable resources by focusing study efforts on the areas of greatest information need and highest usefulness. Of course, additional research coordination with groups external to BOEM occurs continuously through a variety of institutional mechanisms, as discussed in the following section.

Scientific Studies are Conducted in Partnership

The ESP in Alaska, through its day-to-day operations and studies planning process, works to:

- Coordinate plans and studies with other ongoing programs and research projects, both internal and external to BOEM, to assure optimal studies management and efficient use of funding resources.
- Enhance utilization of existing information.

- Enhance interdisciplinary approaches to project planning, data collection and data interpretation.
- Incorporate the integrated management principles outlined in the report *Managing for the Future in a Rapidly Changing Arctic* (Clement et al., 2013).
- Implement the *National Strategy for the Arctic Region* (White House, 2013; White House, 2014).

Currently, a major portion of the ESP in Alaska is conducted on a collaborative basis with an extensive range of bilateral and multilateral partnerships. The ESP in Alaska coordinates routinely on major projects with numerous Federal entities, including: National Oceanographic Partnership Program (NOPP); National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) and the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) Alaska Fisheries Science Center; NOAA's National Marine Mammal Laboratory (NMML); the National Weather Service (NWS); U.S. Geological Survey (USGS)-Alaska Science Center; U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) and the Arctic Landscape Conservation Cooperative (LCC); USDOJ Coastal Impact Assistance Program (CIAP); the North Slope Science Initiative (NSSI); the National Park Service (NPS); the Office of Naval Research (ONR); the U.S. Integrated Ocean Observing System (IOOS); the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA); National Science Foundation (NSF); U.S. Arctic Research Commission (USARC); and the Polar Research Board.

In addition, the ESP works directly on specific projects with the Alaska Ocean Observing System (AOOS); the North Pacific Research Board (NPRB); Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G); the North Slope Borough (NSB) Department of Wildlife Management; the Alaska Eskimo Whaling Commission (AEWC); and academic institutions including the University of Alaska Anchorage (UAA), University of Alaska Fairbanks (UAF), Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution (WHOI), University of Washington (UW), Idaho State University, and University of Texas (UT). The ESP also coordinates closely with active industry research and monitoring programs in Alaska conducted by BP, Shell Offshore Inc., ConocoPhillips, and others.

In 1993, the University of Alaska Coastal Marine Institute (CMI) was created by a cooperative agreement between the University of Alaska and the ESP to study coastal topics associated with the development of natural gas, oil and minerals in Alaska's OCS. Under this arrangement, the ESP taps the scientific expertise of regional and local experts through the University of Alaska to collect and disseminate environmental information about resource issues of mutual interest. Through the CMI, the ESP stimulates important studies in a cost-saving one-to-one match structure. Since its inception, the CMI match has come from more than 50 different organizations and has leveraged over \$20 million of agency funds into \$40 million worth of relevant marine-based research. During that time, the CMI program has also provided roughly 137 years of student support and completed over 80 studies. The ESP has extended the cooperative agreement through 2017. For this agreement, the Alaska OCS Region has planned \$1,000,000 per year with a dollar-for-dollar match arrangement. More information about the CMI can be found at <http://www.sfos.uaf.edu/cmi>.

The ESP also conducts cooperative research with universities through the Cooperative Ecosystem Studies Units (CESUs). The CESUs are working partnerships among leading academic institutions, Federal, State, and non-governmental organizations. A national network of seventeen CESUs has been established, with each unit focusing on a separate biogeographic region. The goal of the CESU network is to facilitate collaboration through the working partnerships to provide high quality research, education and technical assistance for stewardship of cultural and natural resources. BOEM currently participates in seven CESUs that encompass the State of Alaska, the Pacific Northwest, California, Hawaii and the Pacific Islands, the North Atlantic Coast, the South Atlantic Coast, and the Gulf of Mexico.

Additional linkages have been established at an international level with other arctic nations' research and regulatory entities. The U.S. and seven other arctic nations voluntarily agreed to cooperate on an Arctic Environmental Protection Strategy, which evolved into the formation of the Arctic Council in 1996. The ESP in Alaska has coordinated with Arctic Council activities, such as the Arctic Monitoring and Assessment Program, Conservation of Arctic Flora and Fauna, Arctic Climate Impact Assessment and others. The ESP provides information to these working groups through review of reports and plans, and helps to inform participants of available information sponsored by BOEM. Further, the ESP identifies and facilitates specific studies that can coordinate and integrate with working group activities.

Since the people of Alaska's remote arctic and subarctic communities rely so heavily on subsistence resources of the marine environment, they are especially concerned about industrial activities that may directly or indirectly affect hunting success or the habitats of the species important to subsistence. The people of Cook Inlet also have concerns about potential effects of OCS activities on subsistence, commercial fishing, sport fishing and tourism. Many other related issues potentially could be affected by OCS activities, such as the well-being of marine mammals and threatened and endangered species. Coastal residents of Alaska have concerns about these resources, as do State and Federal agencies responsible for their management by law.

In ESP field oriented studies, researchers typically coordinate directly with local communities to discuss their plans, seek advice and ensure that interested individuals learn about the project and its results. The ESP strives to incorporate local and traditional knowledge of Alaska Natives and Alaskan residents directly in the preparation of its study products and interpretation of results. The process of melding local and traditional knowledge varies from project to project, but the outcome of better information for decision making is a common goal.

Alaska OCS Studies Planning Process

In the Alaska OCS Region of BOEM, research planning is a continual process that follows a longstanding annual cycle, beginning with the distribution of the Alaska Annual Studies Plan (ASP). The ASP is distributed in autumn to more than 200 stakeholder groups across Federal, State, Alaska Native, Tribal, academic, and industry sectors spanning international, regional, and local interest groups. While the ASP describes ongoing research and reveals approved new studies for the coming fiscal year,

it also serves to initiate the next planning cycle by circulating a letter that calls for suggestions about new information needs from all interested parties, including scientists, stakeholders, and the general public.

In Alaska, we typically receive more than 60 study profiles from external institutions and BOEM staff with suggestions for new research. Correspondence from agencies such as NMFS, USFWS, and the State of Alaska are carefully considered; particularly those that are relevant to interagency consultations under the Endangered Species Act and other processes. Additional ideas for new research derive throughout the year from program reviews and public meetings, including science conferences, multilateral planning sessions, and public hearings. Study profiles also address recommendations from broad programmatic reviews or “data gap” analyses, such as those coming from the National Academy of Sciences, the Interagency Ocean Policy Task Force, the 2011 USGS Circular 1370, and the Arctic Council. Furthermore, we prepare and advertise a web docket every autumn to facilitate convenient public submission of study ideas for consideration. Of course, the majority of incoming proposals for new research still originate with BOEM staff and managers in the regular performance of their duties.

From these multiple sources of input, BOEM subject-matter experts assimilate the various study comments and recommendations and consolidate them into discrete study profiles. Often, this involves merging several related objectives from multiple sources into a single study effort. It also involves revising submissions to enhance mission-focus or to provide more conclusive results. Consistent with our mission, the Environmental Studies Program funds studies that have strong applicability to pending pre- and post-lease decisions under the OCS Five-Year Oil and Gas Leasing Program. The most important considerations for establishing priorities within the national context include: program relevance; timing in relation to assessment needs; feasibility and likelihood of conclusive findings; and availability of information from other sources.

After evaluation of incoming proposals for completeness and extensive internal discussions, we prepare a short-list of the high priority study profiles to be considered by regional and national senior managers. In late January, the short-list of proposed profiles, as defined by priority of information need and consideration of budgetary constraints, is shared and coordinated with other agencies through multilateral partnerships such as the North Slope Science Initiative and the Arctic Landscape Conservation Cooperative. The proposed new profiles are then formally reviewed each spring by BOEM’s OCS Scientific Committee (an external peer-review advisory body) to evaluate the priority and quality of each proposed study, as well as the technical aspects of proposed study methods. The proposed profiles are again revised and reprioritized as needed, and finalized by August for funding allocation in the new fiscal year. The Annual Studies Plan is then finalized and circulated to the public in autumn, when the cycle starts all over again.

Once a research project achieves funding and gets underway, interim reports and project websites facilitate data sharing and report dissemination. When a project is complete, final study reports are posted to the BOEM website and a number of other scientific web portals to facilitate distribution. Project data are typically delivered to the National Oceanographic Data Center (NODC) and to customized project websites. The

Environmental Studies Program is also developing new platforms for enhanced data sharing with all stakeholders. Thus, from start to finish, the entire planning, procurement, and dissemination process involves constant coordination with multiple organizations and scientific entities.

Issues To Be Addressed

The *Alaska Studies Development Plan FY 2015-2017* complements and reinforces the goals of the Environmental Studies Program. The ESP is guided by several broad themes, which include:

- Monitoring Marine Environments
- Conducting Oil-Spill Fate and Effects Research
- Minimizing Impacts to Marine Mammals and Other Biota
- Understanding Social and Economic Impacts
- Maintaining Efficient and Effective Information Management
- Integrating Scientific Results with Local and Traditional Ecological Knowledge

To be responsive to current and future offshore activities and changing technologies, the Alaska OCS Region continually proposes new studies and pursues information needs in conjunction with ESP goals. Due to the great differences that exist between Alaskan environments and other OCS areas, the ESP in Alaska must remain especially flexible in planning and implementing needed studies.

At each step of the offshore leasing, exploration, and development and production process, a variety of potential issues or resource-use conflicts may be encountered. Two questions are fundamental:

- What is the expected change in the human, marine and coastal environments due to offshore activity?
- Can undesirable change be minimized through mitigation measures?

Environmental studies are the primary means to provide information on these questions for use by decision-makers. Currently the ESP in Alaska has primary focus on upcoming lease sales, as well as planned and proposed exploration activities in the Beaufort Sea and Chukchi Sea Planning Areas. Offshore oil and gas-related issues addressed by ongoing and proposed studies in the Beaufort and Chukchi Seas include, but are not limited to:

- What refinements can we make to our knowledge of major oceanographic and meteorological processes and how they influence the human, marine and coastal environment?
- What role will currents play in distribution of anthropogenic pollutants near exploration and development prospects?

- What long-term changes in heavy metal and hydrocarbon levels may occur near exploration and development prospects, or regionally along the Beaufort and Chukchi Sea coasts?
- How do we improve our model predictions of the fate of potential oil spills?
- If oil is spilled in broken ice, what will its fate be?
- What effects might pipeline construction have on nearby marine communities or organisms?
- What changes might occur in sensitive benthic communities such as the Stefansson Sound “Boulder Patch,” and other Beaufort Sea kelp communities or fish habitats?
- What are the current spatial and temporal use patterns of these planning areas by potentially sensitive species such as bowhead whales, polar bears, other marine mammals, seabirds and other birds, or fish?
- What is the extent of endangered whale feeding in future proposed or potential lease sale areas?
- What changes might occur in habitat use, distribution, abundance, movement or health of potentially sensitive key species such as bowhead whales, polar bears, other marine mammals, seabirds and other birds, or fish?
- What interactions between human activities and the physical environment, including noise, have affected potentially sensitive species?
- What changes might occur in socioeconomics and the subsistence way of life in coastal Alaska communities?
- What are current patterns of subsistence harvest, distribution and consumption and what changes might occur in key social indicators as a result of offshore exploration and development and production?
- How can we continue to integrate local and/or traditional knowledge into studies related to the ESP in Alaska?

Many of these same issues are also relevant to the Cook Inlet Planning Area. Some additional concerns in Cook Inlet include:

- What are the potential effects of oil exploration and development on key economic activities such as commercial fishing, sport fishing, and tourism?
- How do we improve our model predictions of the fate of potential oil spills in locations with extensive intertidal areas?
- What are the current spatial and temporal use patterns of this planning area by potentially sensitive species such as beluga whales, fin whales, Steller sea lions, sea otters, other marine mammals, seabirds and other birds, or fish?

1.2 Projected OCS Activities

This *Alaska Studies Development Plan* reflects consideration of the many changes occurring in the Alaska OCS Region, as well as anticipated needs for the future. In a frontier region such as the Arctic, planning lead-time is necessary to conduct adequate environmental studies. Challenges include: large and remote planning areas, diverse and extreme environmental conditions, still-evolving hydrocarbon extraction technology, and potential environmental hazards associated with offshore activities.

Pre-lease Considerations

Preparation of an EIS based on the best available information is an essential part of the lease sale process and ensures that decisions on whether to make areas of the OCS available for leasing are based on consideration of potential environmental impacts. This introduces an additional time-sensitivity to the information need. Although much relevant information exists for certain Alaska OCS planning areas, data are sparse in other areas, and environmental and other conditions are changing over time. Updating past studies to address information needs and changing conditions can substantially improve the quality of the information upon which our environmental analyses are based and help facilitate informed leasing decisions.

On June 28, 2012, BOEM released the *Proposed Final Outer Continental Shelf Oil & Gas Leasing Program 2012-2017* (USDOJ, BOEM, 2012). This Proposed Final Program schedules three potential lease sales in the Alaska OCS. These potential lease sales are deliberately scheduled late in the program to allow for further development of scientific information regarding the sensitive habitats, unique conditions and important other uses, including subsistence hunting and fishing, as well as the oil and gas resource potential in these areas. The first potential lease sale is scheduled for 2016 in the Chukchi Sea Planning Area (see Figure 2). The *Proposed Final Program* includes a pre-existing 25-mile nearshore buffer and an additional deferral area to the north of Barrow that will not be considered for leasing due to its documented importance for subsistence use. Another lease sale is proposed for 2017 in the Beaufort Sea Planning Area (see Figure 3). Two subsistence whaling areas near Barrow and Kaktovik will be excluded from this lease sale. Also, the *Proposed Final Program* includes a lease sale in the Cook Inlet Planning Area (see Figure 4) in 2016. BOEM has determined that the scope of potential industry interest is sufficient to warrant completion of a full environmental impact statement prior to making a final determination about the Cook Inlet lease sale. Historically, industry interest in this area was limited and environmental analysis must be updated for the proposed sale.

Post-lease Considerations

Prior to FY 1982, most studies offshore of Alaska were planned, conducted, and concluded before a lease sale was held in order to provide information for decision making and EIS production. However, not all needed information can be obtained prior to a lease sale. In accordance with mandates of Section 20 of the OCSLA (43 U.S.C. 1346), the need for studies continues into the post-lease period to address environmental concerns and monitoring related to specific areas of industry activity.

Figure 2. Chukchi Sea Oil and Gas Leases

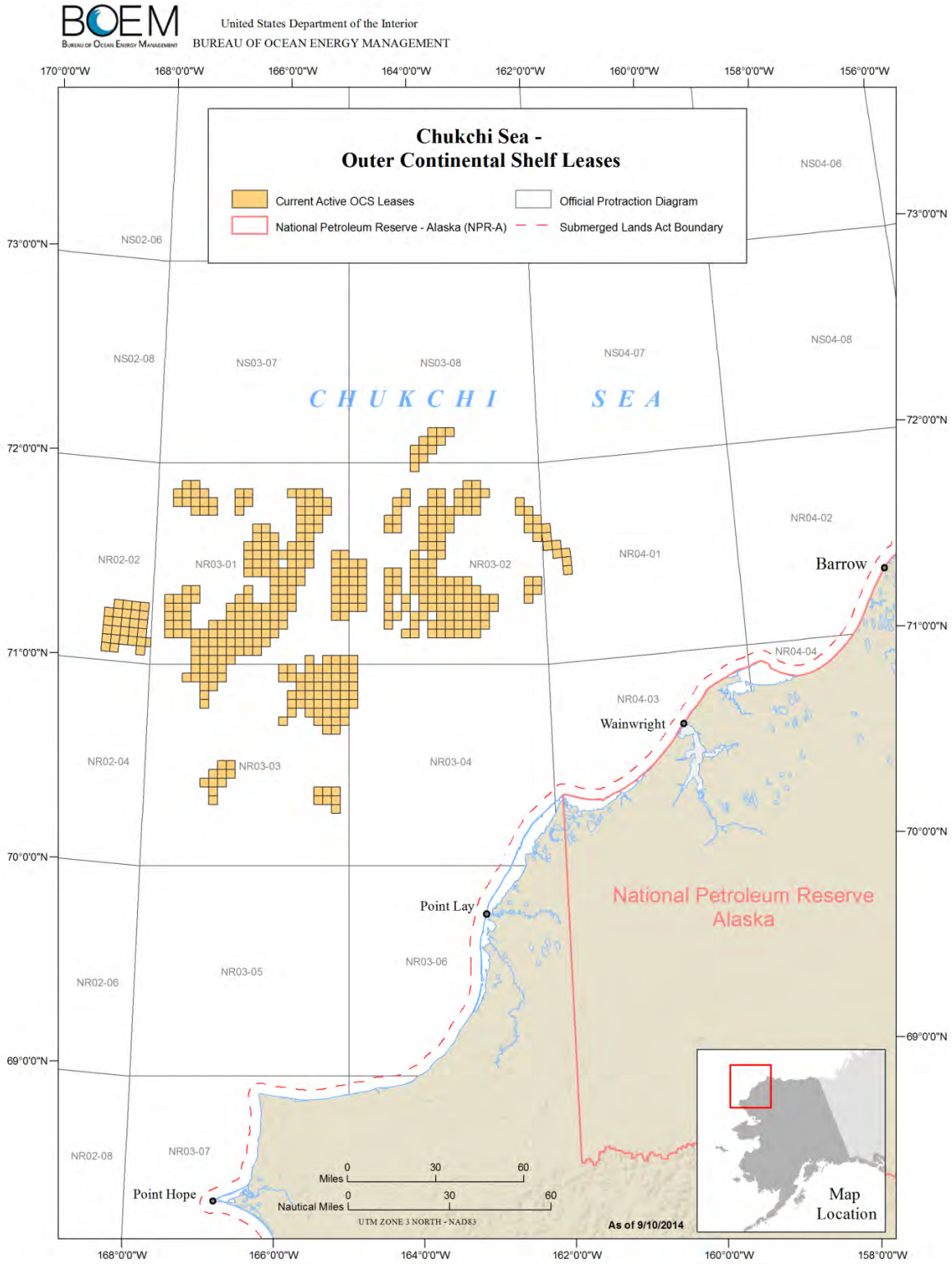


Figure 3. Beaufort Sea Oil and Gas Leases

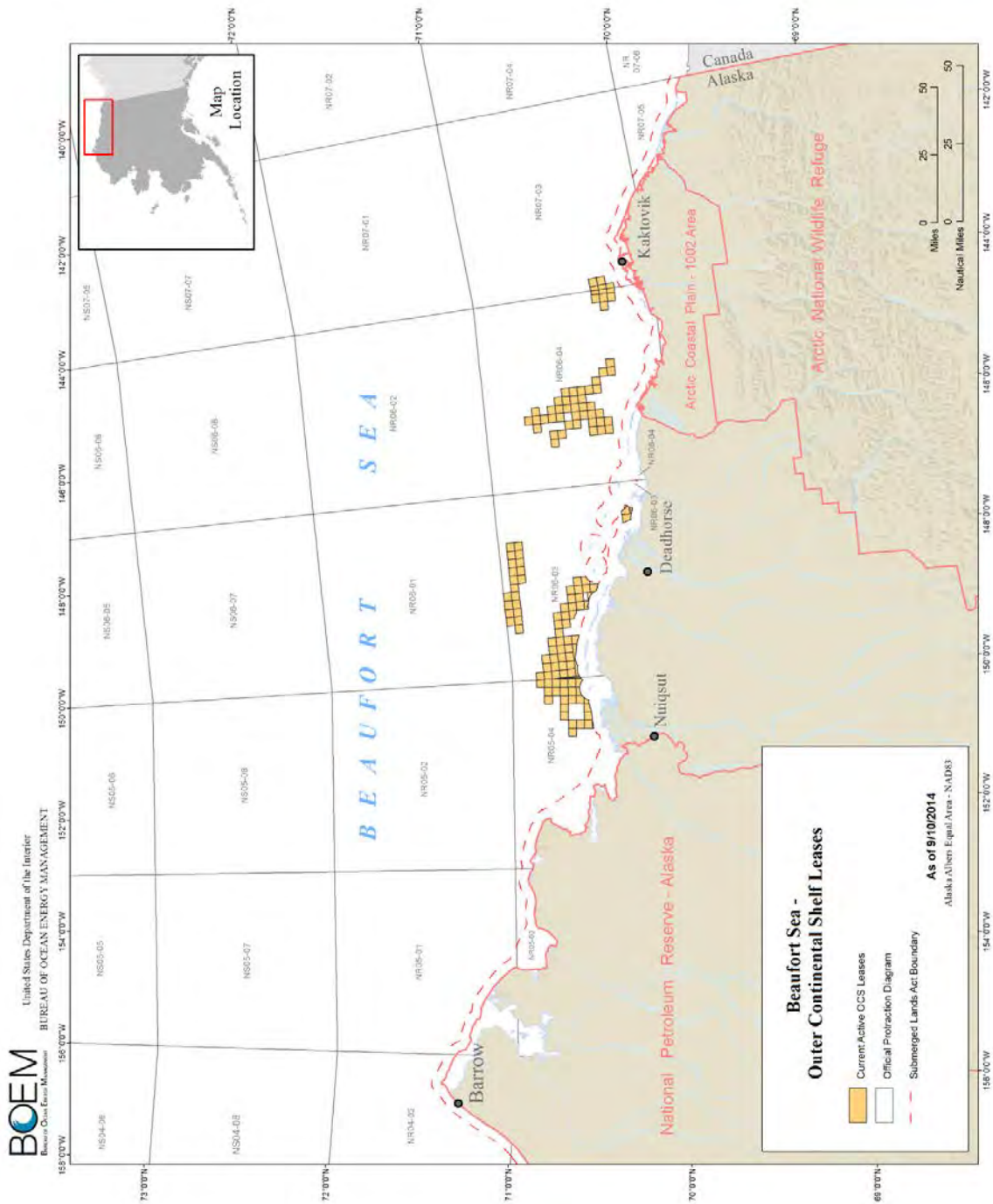
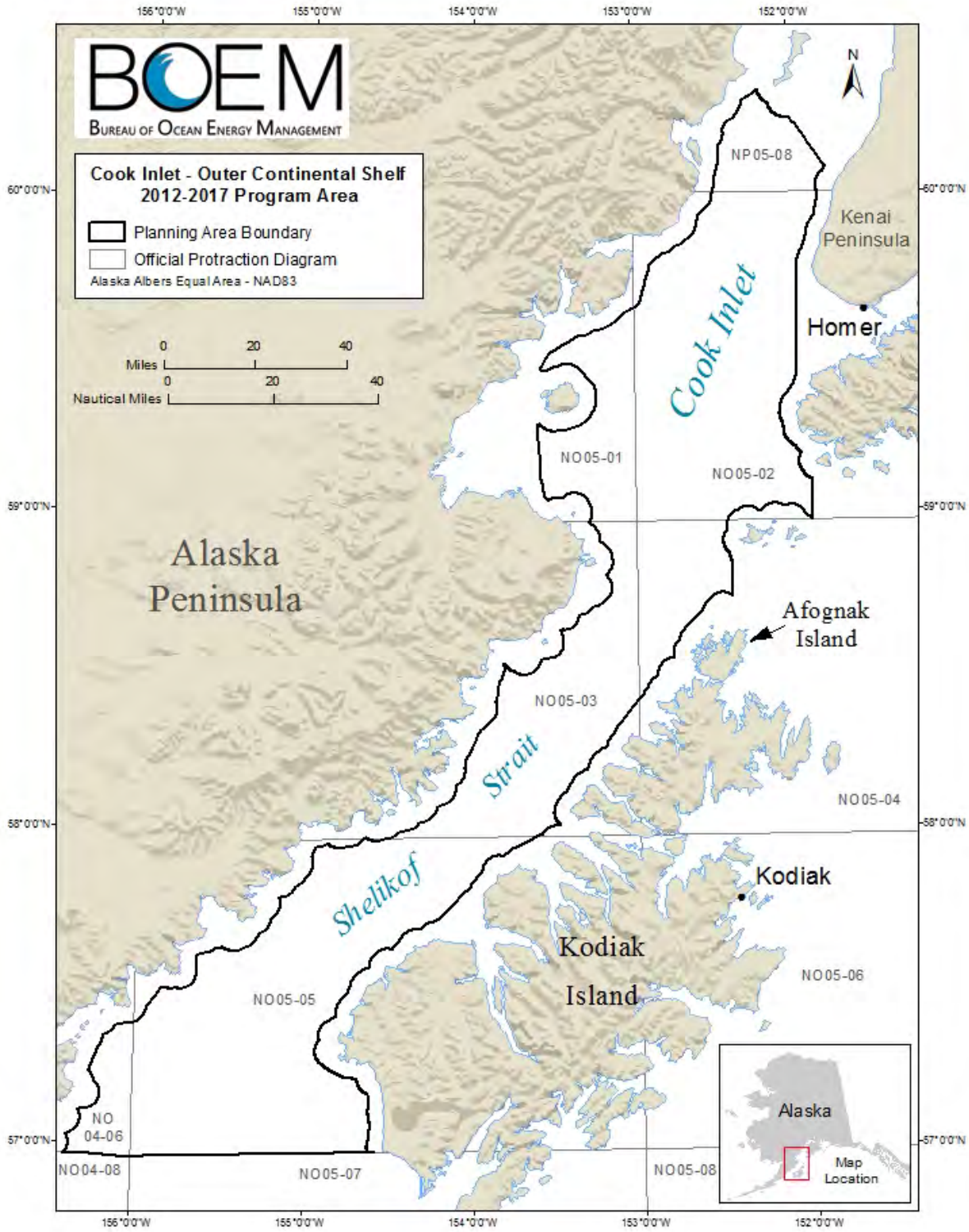


Figure 4. Cook Inlet Planning Area



The ESP acquires additional information for environmental analyses related to exploration, development and production. Accordingly, an increasing number of studies have become more closely related to proposed exploration and development schedules and related monitoring in addition to those broader studies related to the pre-lease stage. As with the pre-lease stage, the wide range of environmental conditions from Cook Inlet to the Arctic is considered during the process of formulating new studies. Post-lease activities that require environmental data and assessment include:

- Geological and Geophysical surveys
- Review of Exploration Plans (EPs)
- Monitoring of exploration drilling Review of Development and Production Plans (DPPs)
- Monitoring of development, construction and production activities
- Oil and gas transportation
- Platform decommissioning
- Oil spill detection, containment, clean-up and damage assessment

In the Beaufort Sea Planning Area, there have been 929 tracts leased in ten OCS lease sales. Industry has drilled 30 exploratory wells and determined 11 to be producible. Lease Sale 193, held in February 2008, resulted in 487 leases being issued in the Chukchi Sea Planning Area. As of September 2014, there are 147 active leases in the Beaufort Federal offshore area and 460 active leases in the Chukchi Sea. There are no active leases from previous lease sales in the Chukchi Sea or Hope Basin portions of the Arctic Subregion or in the Bering Sea, Cook Inlet or Gulf of Alaska Subregions.

Production:

Northstar – Northstar (see Figure 5) is a joint Federal/State of Alaska unit located in state waters in the Beaufort Sea about 6 miles northwest of Prudhoe Bay. The six producing Federal wells fall under Bureau of Safety and Environmental Enforcement (BSEE) regulatory authority, the State wells fall under the State’s oversight. Production started in 2001 and peaked in 2004. Total production of crude oil through July 2014 is over 160 million barrels, with the Federal portion comprising more than 28.5 million barrels.

Development:

Liberty – The Liberty prospect is located in the central Beaufort Sea about 6 miles east of the existing Endicott Satellite Drilling Island (SDI). BP Exploration Alaska, Inc. (BPXA) and Hilcorp Energy LLC hold joint interest in Liberty and are considering development options, including potential construction of a gravel island. BPXA has estimated that the reserves for the Liberty project total almost 150 million barrels of oil.

Exploration:

Exploration Plan for Camden Bay (Beaufort Sea) –BOEM approved Shell’s Beaufort Sea EP subject to 11 conditions on August 4, 2011. Shell plans to drill up to four exploration wells in the Beaufort Sea over multiple years. During 2012, Shell completed the top hole

Figure 5. Northstar Island, August 2000



section of one well at its Sivulliq Prospect in the Beaufort Sea. Shell encountered problems towing its drill rig out of Alaska in December 2012 and has not resumed drilling. While Shell remains interested in continuing exploration work in the Beaufort Sea, they have decided to prioritize Chukchi Sea exploration and will concentrate its efforts entirely in the Chukchi Sea during the next few years.

Exploration Plan for the Chukchi Sea – On August 28, 2014, Shell Gulf of Mexico Inc. (Shell) submitted a Revised Chukchi Sea Exploration Plan (EP Revision 2) to BOEM for approval. Shell's goal is to drill up to six wells at its Burger Prospect, located about 85 miles northwest of the coastal village of Wainwright, in waters approximately 140 feet deep. Shell proposes to conduct drilling operations during the open water season (generally July 1-Oct. 31) each year until all six drill sites are drilled. Shell states that its predicted "average" drilling season, constrained by prevailing ice conditions and regulatory restrictions, is long enough for a drilling rig to drill an exploration well from spud to proposed total depth (PTD) and possibly construct an additional well cellar or drill and secure a partial well. Shell's proposal is a continuation of exploration drilling that it began in 2012, when it completed the top hole section of one well at Burger. Shell was unable to resume work in 2013 because of problems with its drill rig, and in 2014, Shell halted its planned exploration of the Chukchi Sea because of the January 2014 remand of Lease Sale 193 by the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit. In response to the Lease Sale 193 remand BOEM will prepare a Second Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement and a subsequent Record of Decision for Lease Sale 193. Consequently, BOEM cannot take any formal action concerning Shell's EP Revision 2 until after the Secretary of the Interior's decision on Lease Sale 193, anticipated in March 2015.

Air Quality: The Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2012 transferred jurisdiction to regulate air emissions associated with oil and gas activities on portions of the Alaska OCS from EPA to BOEM. Companies seeking to operate facilities on the Chukchi Sea OCS and Beaufort Sea OCS no longer require an air quality permit from the EPA. Rather, their proposed facilities' emissions will be evaluated by BOEM as a prerequisite to approval of the operator's exploration plan or development and production plan. BOEM's existing regulations are designed to ensure that air quality in coastal areas complies with national ambient air quality standards as promulgated by EPA. These regulations have protected air quality in coastal states along the Gulf of Mexico for decades and were also used to regulate OCS activities in the Arctic during the 1980s.

Legal Challenges: Litigation remains a factor for Alaska OCS activities. Currently, there are two active cases.

Native Village of Point Hope v. Jewell (Sale 193). In January 2008, a coalition of environmental groups, a local government, a Federally recognized tribe, and an Alaska Native organization challenged the government's decision to hold Lease Sale 193, which offered tracts in the Chukchi Sea. The plaintiffs alleged inadequacies in the environmental reviews supporting the leasing decision. On July 21, 2010, the U.S. District Court for the District of Alaska issued an order that enjoined all activity under Lease Sale 193 and remanded the action back to the government for additional NEPA review. Specifically, the Court instructed the government to: (1) analyze the

environmental impact of natural gas development; (2) determine whether missing information identified in the Sale 193 Final EIS was essential or relevant under 40 CFR 1502.22; and (3) determine whether the cost of obtaining the missing information was exorbitant, or the means of doing so unknown. In subsequent orders the Court narrowed its injunction and BOEMRE (now BOEM) prepared a Final Supplemental EIS to satisfy the concerns identified by the Court. On October 3, 2011, the Secretary of the Interior signed a Record of Decision that affirmed Sale 193 as held. On February 13, 2012, finding that BOEM had satisfied its remand, the District Court entered an order dismissing the matter in its entirety. On April 12, 2012, Plaintiffs filed a Notice of Appeal.

The U.S. Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit heard oral arguments on March 5, 2013. On January 22, 2014, the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit released a published opinion which (1) upheld BOEM's treatment of incomplete or unavailable information in the Lease Sale 193 SEIS, and (2) concluded that reliance in the FEIS on a one billion barrel development scenario was arbitrary and capricious. As a result, the court reversed and remanded the case back to the district court for further proceedings consistent with the opinion. After the parties' presentations regarding remedy before the district court, BOEM began, and is currently in the process of completing, a Second Supplemental EIS to address the concerns identified by the Court of Appeals.

Center for Sustainable Economy v. Jewell. In October 2012, a non-profit organization filed a petition in the U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit challenging the *Proposed Final Program for 2012-2017*. CSE's challenge focuses on BOEM's economic and environmental analyses. Briefing has been completed and oral argument was heard on September 11, 2014.

1.3 Identification of Information Needs

Beaufort Sea General Information Needs

Both offshore and onshore oil and gas development and production activities are continuing across Alaska's North Slope. Residents of Nuiqsut, Kaktovik and Barrow are particularly concerned about long-term effects of offshore developments at Northstar and other possible developments, as well as long-term and cumulative effects of any exploration from OCS Beaufort Sea lease sales. Key constituents have identified the need to monitor under-ice currents, sedimentation and potential effects on social systems in the vicinity of Northstar and Liberty, as well as other potential offshore activities. Related questions that need to be addressed include the characteristics of major oceanographic and meteorological processes and how they influence the human, marine and coastal environments.

Interdependent Physical, Biological and Social Processes: The Alaska OCS Region has a long history of supporting multidisciplinary research, beginning with the "Outer Continental Shelf Environmental Assessment Program" (OCSEAP) surveys conducted between the 1970s and early 1990s and the "Beaufort Sea Monitoring Program" (BSMP) in the 1980s. The "Arctic Nearshore Impact Monitoring in Development Area" (ANIMIDA) program and its continuation (cANIMIDA) started in 1999 to provide

baseline data and monitoring results for chemical contamination, turbidity, and subsistence whaling in the vicinity of Northstar and Liberty development sites. This work continues today with the studies “ANIMIDA III: Boulder Patch and Other Kelp Communities in the Development Area” and “ANIMIDA III: Contaminants, Sources, and Bioaccumulation,” which has been expanded to include Camden Bay (see Figure 6).

In addition to the ongoing need for integrated research programs, there is also a need for synthesis of results from multiple studies to facilitate interpretation of data across disciplines. The ongoing “Synthesis of Arctic Research” (SOAR) study brings together a multidisciplinary group of Arctic scientists and Alaskan coastal community representatives to explore and integrate information from completed and ongoing marine research in the northern Bering, Chukchi and Beaufort seas. A number of ongoing studies also take an integrated approach to examining the interdependence of physical, biological and social processes and filling identified information needs across the various disciplines. Highlights of these and other important research projects are provided in Section 1.4.

Ocean Circulation and Sea Ice: Accurate information on surface wind fields, ocean currents, and sea ice is important for determining the fate of spilled oil in this region and the potential impacts on biota associated with these systems. Studies conducted by the Alaska OCS Region have demonstrated that water motion is very different under landfast ice than in adjoining open or pack-ice areas. It becomes very important to know locations and seasonal changes in the distribution of polynyas, leads, and landfast ice. Figure 7 shows a schematic of key sea ice lead patterns sketched onto a map of recurrence probability estimates in the Chukchi Sea computed for the month of April between 1993 and 2010. Information about ice gouge characteristics and recurrence rates is also needed to assess risks associated with burial of oil production pipelines to support BOEM’s fault tree modeling.

Air Quality: The transfer to BOEM of authority to regulate industrial emissions in OCS areas of the Beaufort and Chukchi seas necessitates increased focus on Arctic OCS air quality considerations. Arctic oil and gas exploration and extraction activities proposed for the OCS require environmental evaluations pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act, as well as air quality operating approval, to comply with the impact analysis under BOEM’s implementation of the OCSLA. Information will be used to assess the cumulative air quality impact of off-shore Arctic oil and gas activity, including oil spill response equipment and associated support equipment not already accounted for through State and Federal air quality permit requirements. The recently awarded study “Arctic Air Quality Impact Assessment Modeling” will compile a dataset of emission sources that will be used to drive EPA-approved air quality models.

Pollutants: North Slope residents are concerned about potential contamination of their food supply. In the Beaufort Sea such foods include bowhead whales, seals, waterfowl and fish. Of particular concern are environmental effects of development on these biota, including those from potential oil spills. Up-to-date information on ocean currents and sea ice is necessary to fully address these concerns. Contaminant monitoring in biota and sediments is ongoing in both the Beaufort and Chukchi seas.

Figure 6. Locations of potential sampling stations for the ANIMIDA III Program.

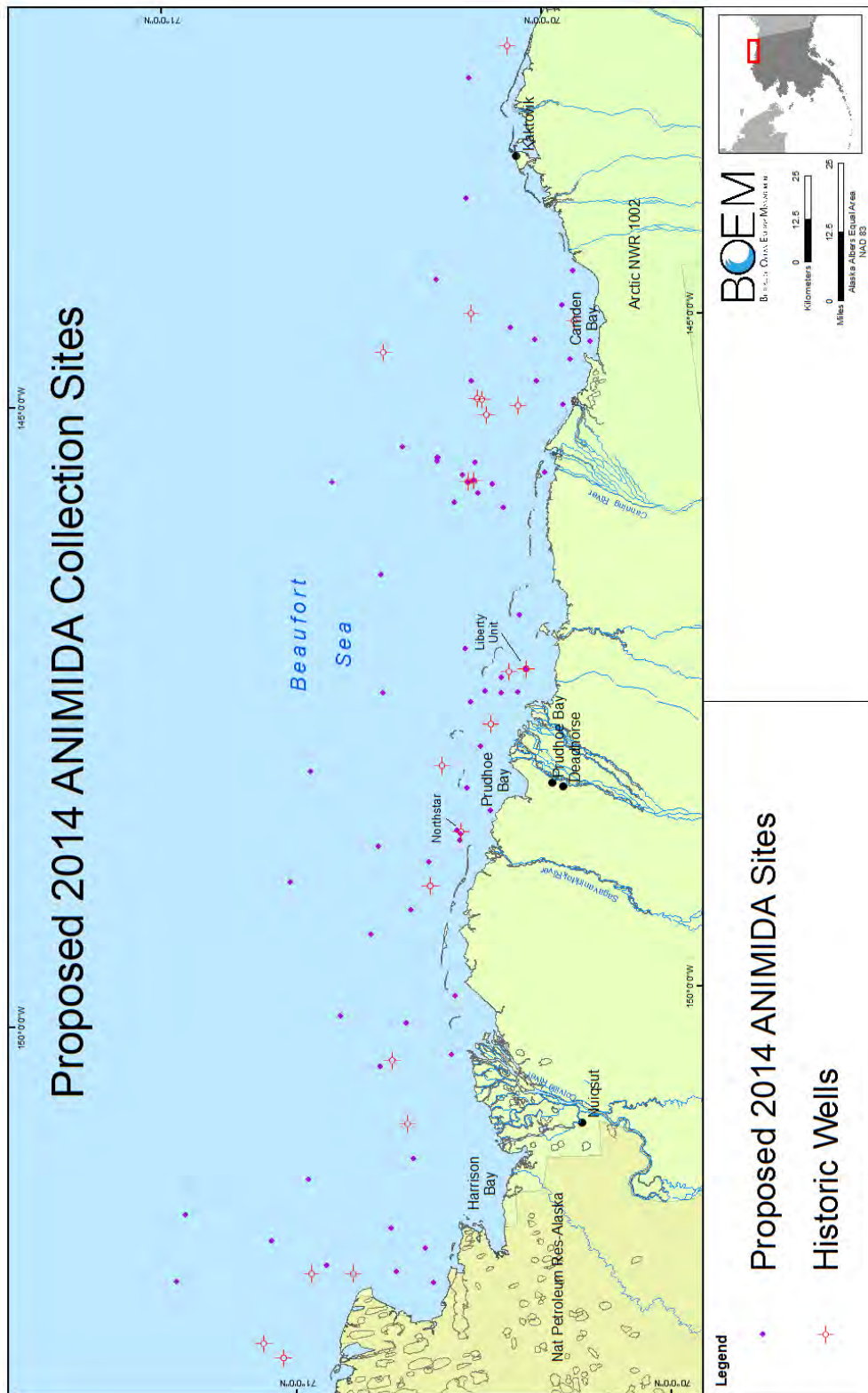
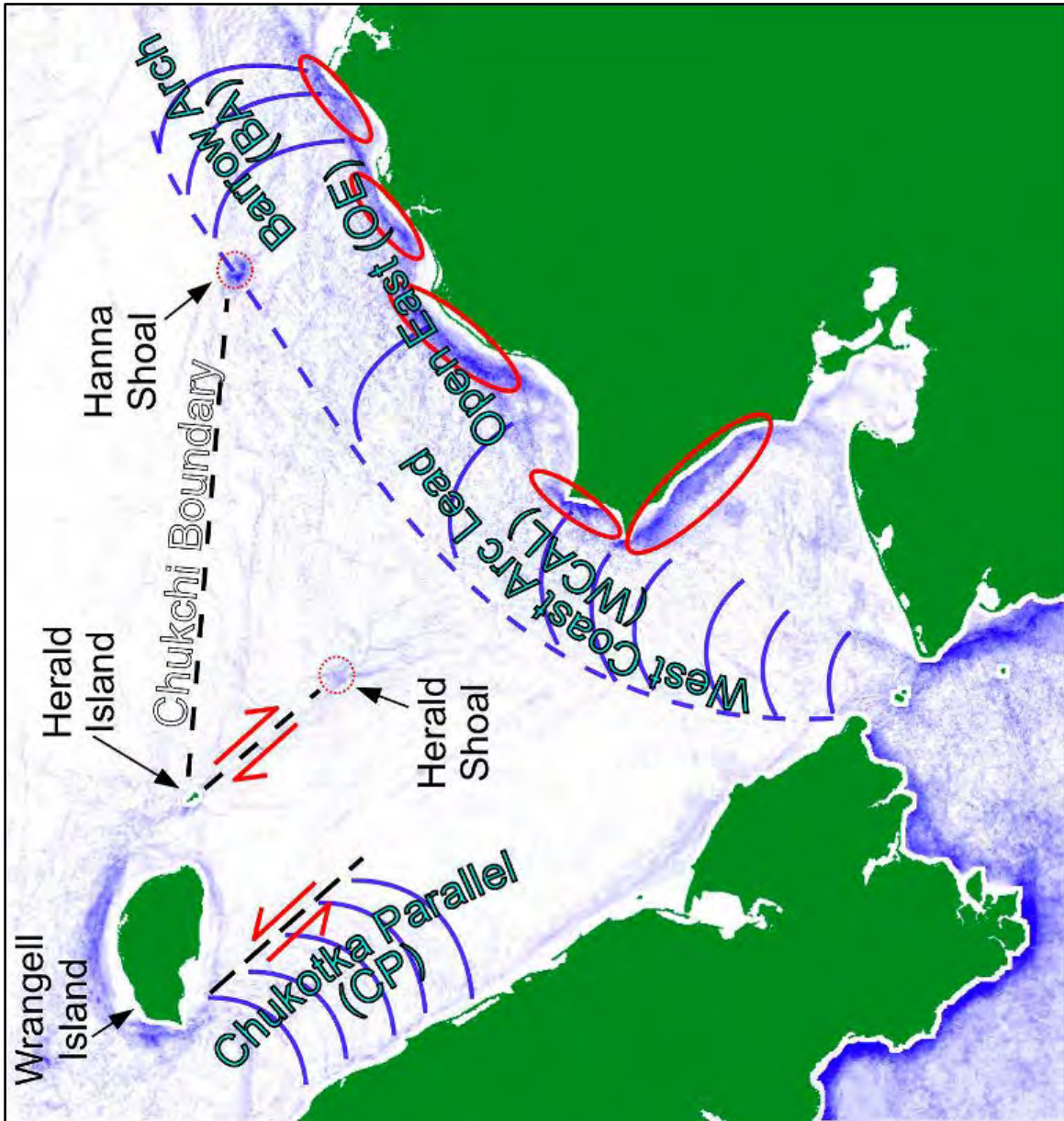


Figure 7. Schematic of sea ice lead patterns sketched onto a map of recurrence probability in the Chukchi Sea for the month of April. (Mahoney et al., 2012)



Concern has also been raised over increasing spillage from corroded pipelines on the North Slope. The recently completed study “Oil Spill Occurrence Estimators for Onshore Alaska North Slope Crude and Refined Oil Spills” has provided updated spill data for the Alaska North Slope and estimated occurrence rates for onshore oil spills. Information on the fate (weathering) of oil spills has recently been examined as part of a joint industry consortium (Oil in Ice JIP [Joint Industry Program]) doing field experiments on cleanup, behavior, and weathering of oil in broken ice. The study “Physical and Chemical Analysis of Crude and Refined Oils: Lab and Mesoscale Oil Weathering,” will conduct laboratory and mesoscale oil weathering tests on a number of Alaskan crude or condensate oils, as well as refined oils.

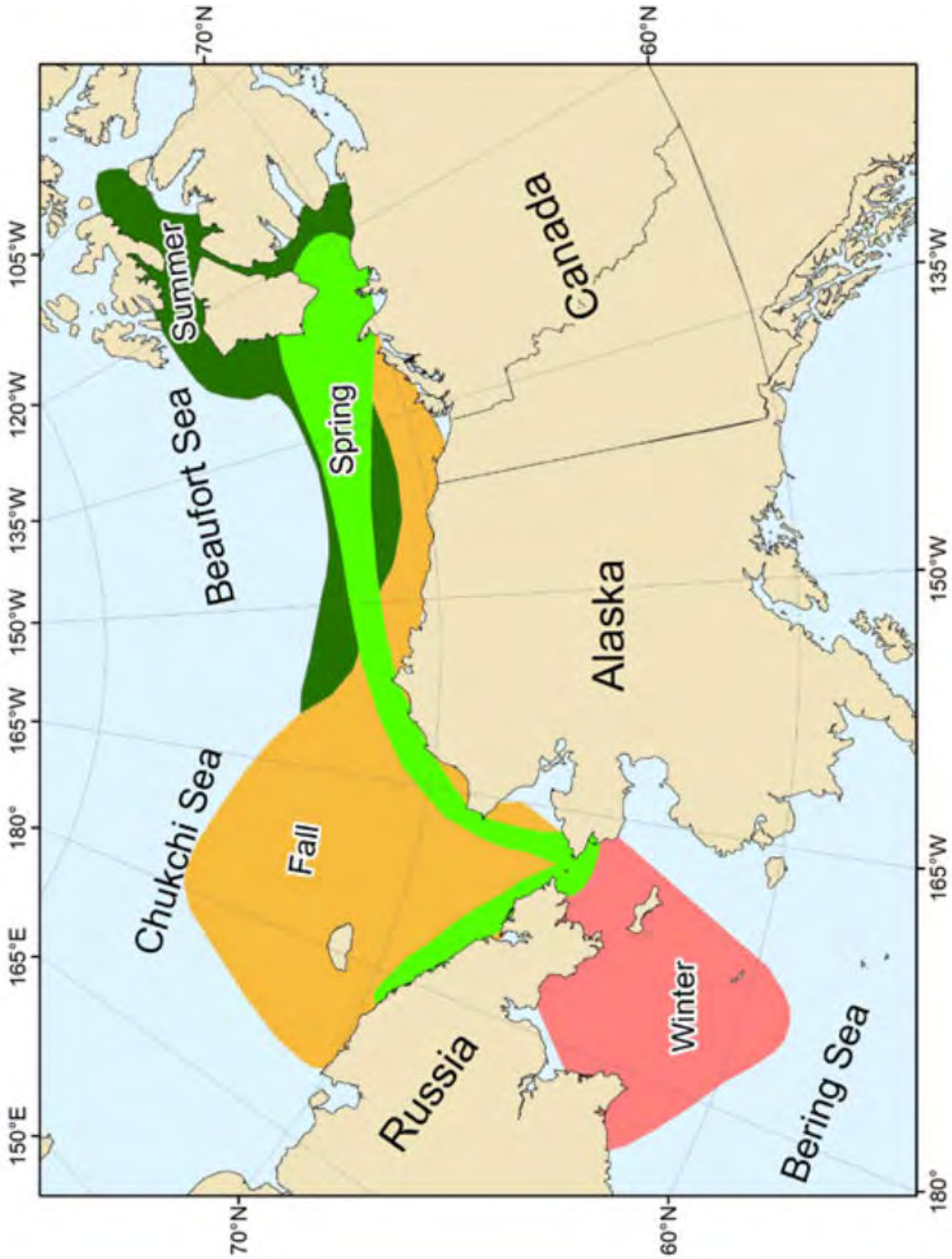
Information on Bowhead Whales and Other Wildlife: The Iñupiat rely heavily on bowhead whales for subsistence. The bowhead whale is central to Alaska Native cultural and spiritual life. Whale hunters have reported that migrating bowhead whales deflect from their normal migratory route well upstream of active industry vessels and may divert a great distance from their migration route. A concern is that deflection around oil and gas activity (including seismic surveys, drilling activity and associated icebreaker support) makes whales skittish and more difficult to hunt. Figure 8 depicts the generalized range of bowhead whales in the Beaufort, Chukchi and Bering seas, as inferred from a synthesis of tracks from satellite-tagged bowhead whales. Information about bowhead feeding and habitat use is also needed, and it is important to assess the factors that may be affecting the habitat use, health, population status and migration routes of bowhead whales. Noise from industrial activity is a central concern. Additionally, Iñupiat whale hunters as well as the scientific community have raised concerns about potential cumulative impacts on bowhead whales.

The populations of bowhead whales, polar bears, spectacled eiders, spotted and ringed seals, and other threatened and endangered species, as well as candidate species such as walruses and some ice seals, are an ongoing concern. Potential effects from loss of sea ice are a particular concern. More comprehensive abundance estimates for these ice-associated marine mammals enhance the assessment of potential impacts under NEPA and to ensure compliance with Federal management and regulatory mandates for marine mammals under the MMPA. North Slope residents are also concerned about potential disturbance of beluga whales, ringed seals, waterfowl and other subsistence-wildlife species by oil and gas activities such as helicopter overflights.

Fish and Lower Trophic Communities: Fishes in the Beaufort and Chukchi seas fill an essential role in the Arctic ecosystem by consuming small prey and in turn providing a food resource for larger fishes, birds, marine mammals, and people. It is important to assess the distribution and abundance of fishes in these areas and to distinguish between changes due to anthropogenic and natural effects. In addition, assemblages and populations of fish and benthic organisms in marine ecosystems off Alaska have undergone observable regime-shifts in diversity and abundance over the last 20-30 years.

The Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act is the Federal law that governs U.S. marine fisheries management for all OCS waters. Under the Magnuson-Stevens Act, each fishery management plan must describe and identify

Figure 8. Map of the seasonal occurrence and migration corridors of bowhead whales from the Bering-Chukchi-Beaufort stock. (Quakenbush et al., 2013)



Essential Fish Habitat (EFH) for the fishery, minimize to the extent practicable the adverse effects of fishing on EFH, and identify other actions to encourage the conservation and enhancement of EFH. BOEM and other Federal agencies must consult with NMFS regarding any action that may adversely affect EFH. BOEM engages in consultation with NMFS officials and EFH assessment related to adult and late juvenile life-stages of a number of species, including Arctic cod, Pacific salmon, and saffron cod.

Alaska Native Culture: The Iñupiat report in public testimony that their culture is vulnerable to short-term, long-term and cumulative effects from OCS activities. They are concerned that OCS activities might lead to:

- Social disruption and a change in cultural values through population shifts (immigration of large numbers of non-Iñupiat to the North Slope)
- Employment changes (potential effects on subsistence way of life by a cash economy)
- Cumulative effects of multiple industrial activities, alteration of subsistence-harvest patterns and displacement of hunters and subsistence resources

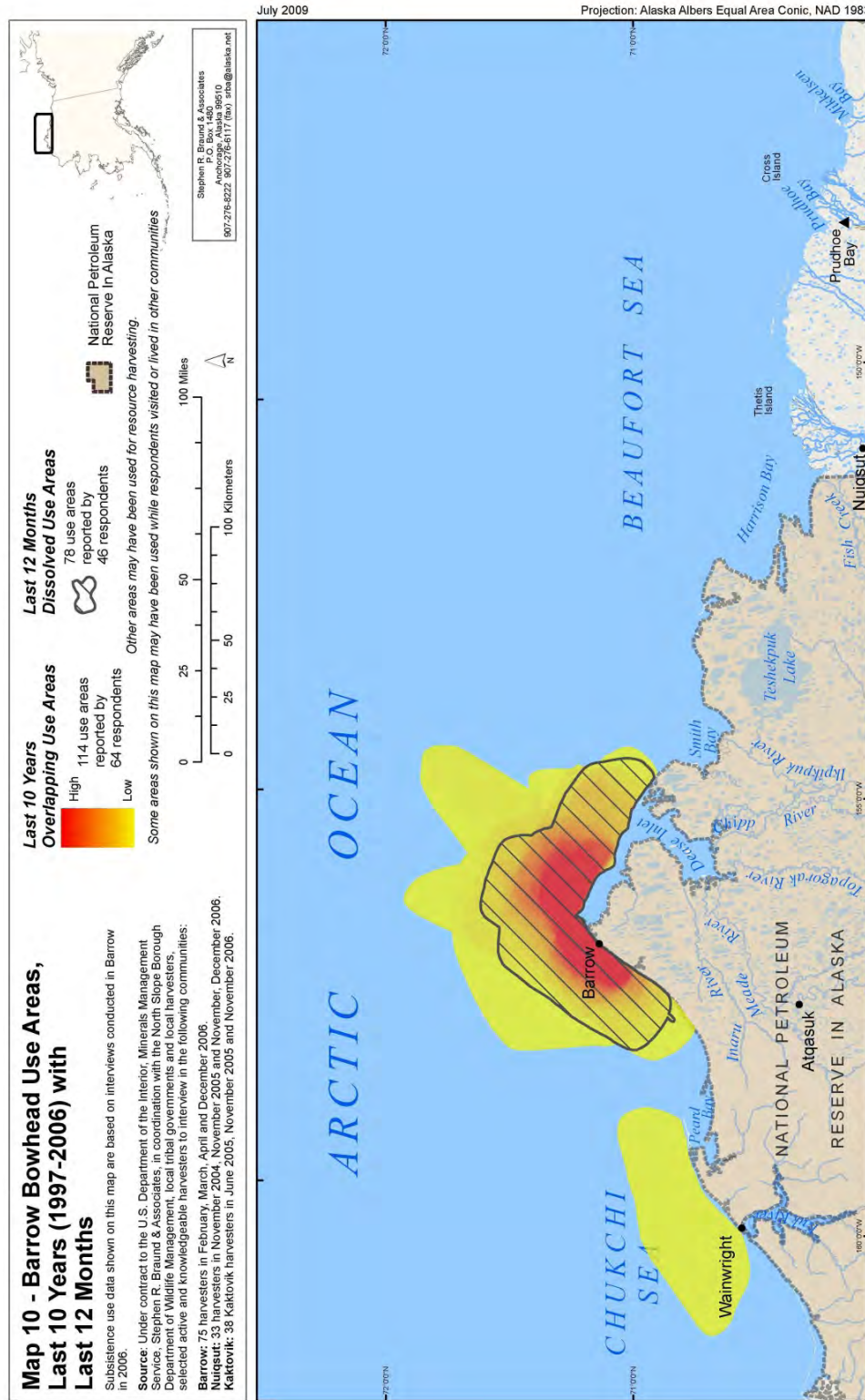
There is an ongoing need to monitor key indicators of socioeconomic and cultural changes on the North Slope. The Iñupiat rely on a wide variety of marine resources as significant sources of food. In addition, the harvesting, sharing and consuming of subsistence resources form an important part of the traditional Iñupiaq culture and spiritual life. People are concerned that a temporary or permanent elimination of primary subsistence foods would cause North Slope residents either to shift to less desired subsistence resources or to replace subsistence foods with expensive western foods. Figure 9 provides an example of a synthesis map depicting bowhead whale subsistence hunting areas near Barrow over time. The Iñupiat are concerned about mitigation of impacts and compensation for potential losses. An anticipated decline in oil revenues to the NSB is also an issue of concern. Another concern is the use of local and traditional knowledge in analysis of potential environmental effects. We continue to seek and include firsthand knowledge of local subsistence hunters to enhance the scientific knowledge base.

Archaeological Resources: The archaeological significance of offshore areas has been recognized in recent years and marine archaeological studies have been showing the presence of prehistoric sites on the shelves beneath the modern ocean. Basic information and analysis is needed for assessments of archaeology potential in the Beaufort and Chukchi seas to support the National Historic Preservation Act and NEPA review. Data are very limited in the Chukchi Sea, and the last baseline study in the Beaufort Sea is decades old.

Chukchi Sea General Information Needs

The fundamental issues in the Chukchi Sea are very similar to those in the Beaufort Sea, although many species that regularly appear within the Chukchi Sea are not typically found within the Beaufort Sea. One major difference is that USDOI placed less

Figure 9. A synthesis map depicting bowhead whale subsistence hunting use areas for the community of Barrow over time. (Stephen R. Braund & Associates, 2009)



emphasis on studying the Chukchi Sea than the Beaufort Sea beginning in the mid-1990s in recognition of leasing priorities at the time. Since 2007, however, the Alaska OCS Region has developed a new suite of studies in the Chukchi Sea, leveraging more than \$65 million (through FY 2014) to conduct interim baseline research and monitoring in all the following fields of interest: meteorology, ice dynamics and basic oceanography, benthic fauna and sedimentation, marine mammals (including whales, walrus, seals, and polar bear), fish, birds, and social systems. Most of the projects exhibit complex, multilateral collaborations, with explicit inter-disciplinary linkages between the physical and biological sciences, and many of them also provide a role for active participation by Alaska Native residents and input from sources of traditional knowledge. Most of them pursue multi-year data collection efforts on a regional scale, with careful attention to inter-annual variability and ecosystem processes.

Cook Inlet General Information Needs

The Alaska OCS Region has not undertaken a thorough environmental analysis of the Cook Inlet Planning Area since 2003. Updated information about the physical and biological environment in Cook Inlet and Shelikof Strait is needed to support NEPA analysis for potential future lease sales in this area. Specific information needs in Cook Inlet include, but are not limited to:

- An improved understanding of circulation and water mass movement in lower Cook Inlet
- Assessment of variability and long-term trends in oceanographic conditions and biological communities
- Use of the area by sensitive species including cetaceans, sea otters, pinnipeds, and seabirds

Renewable Energy General Information Needs

Section 388 of the Energy Policy Act of 2005 amended the OCSLA to give discretionary authority to BOEM to issue leases, easements or rights-of-way on the OCS for alternative energy projects, such as wind, wave, or ocean current facilities. Under this authority, the areas that BOEM makes available for alternative energy leasing are likely to be determined through a process that assesses different types of alternative energy resources, anticipated and potential environmental impacts, and other relevant information on a national, regional, or local basis. No lease sales for renewable energy are currently planned for the Alaska OCS.

Mineral Resources General Information Needs

The OCSLA gives discretionary authority to BOEM to issue leases for mineral resources. No lease sales for mineral resources are currently planned for the Alaska OCS.

1.4 Notable FY 2014 Programmatic Highlights

IARPC support (update): The Arctic is a region of considerable and growing interest to the U.S. Government. In 2013, the White House released the Arctic Research Plan: FY2013 – FY2017, as developed by the Inter-agency Arctic Research Policy Committee (IARPC). In 2014, the White House released the National Strategy for the Arctic Region, which incorporated the IARPC five-year research plan as part of the strategy to ensure responsible stewardship of the Arctic environment. These documents advocate ecosystem-based research and management approaches to support sound decisions about resource development. As an active IARPC participant, the BOEM Environmental Studies Program has played a lead role in implementing national research priorities in the Arctic. Appendix 1 (see pages 219-230) provides a table that displays the substantial progress that BOEM has made in recent years toward fulfilling itemized IARPC research priorities while meeting its own regulatory mission.

Synthesis of Arctic Research (update): Between the years 2005 and 2015 BOEM will have invested more than \$50 million in marine mammal and related oceanographic studies in the western Arctic. These data serve to increase our ecosystem knowledge about the region considerably, but interpretation is complicated by concurrent environmental changes. The Synthesis of Arctic Research (SOAR) project aims to create a platform for collaboration among scientists and Alaska Arctic residents with the overarching goal of using available data, analytical and modelling approaches to identify and test hypotheses that cross scientific disciplines. The SOAR study began in 2011, and the first of two phases is nearly complete. Publication of a special peer-review journal issue comprised of 15 articles resulting from the SOAR project is anticipated in the coming months.

Biodiversity Monitoring: As the Arctic continues to experience intense and accelerating changes, it is increasingly important to observe and document trend lines in biodiversity and ecosystem health. Toward that end, BOEM is mobilizing funds to partner with industry, NOAA, and the University of Alaska Fairbanks to initiate the Arctic Marine Biodiversity Observing Network (AMBON) project in the Chukchi Sea. The AMBON project expects to close current gaps in taxonomic and spatial coverage in biodiversity observation on the Chukchi shelf. Notably, AMBON will add a significant new molecular component to previous biodiversity observations, thus fully capturing for the first time the microbial fraction of the ecosystem biota, which likely are among the first responders to ecosystem stress. The project will also build upon recent efforts to extend time-series monitoring data, and integrate synthesized data with past and ongoing research programs on the U.S. Arctic shelf.

Marine Arctic Ecosystem Study: In 2014, BOEM initiated the Marine Arctic Ecosystem Study (MARES) through NOPP. The primary geographical scope of the project is the continental shelf and slope of the Beaufort Sea between Barrow Canyon and the Mackenzie River delta (including the Tuktoyaktuk Peninsula). The extensive coverage follows from requirements for understanding regional ecosystem dynamics and the broad science missions of multiple NOPP partners. The MARES project involves several core planning and research components, including: conceptual hypotheses; fieldwork

and data sampling through remote sensing and scientific cruises; syntheses and integration of previous, concurrent, and new observational data; numerical modeling of biogeochemical processes; and documentation of local subsistence activities and traditional knowledge.

Arctic Research Synthesis Conference: BOEM regularly co-sponsors the annual Alaska Marine Science Symposium (AMSS) to allow our Principal Investigators to brief the scientific community about results from ongoing Arctic research. The AMSS has provided a successful format to disseminate useful information, but the recurring magnitude and scale of new projects has become so large that additional venues are needed to cover the breadth of information flow. For that reason, BOEM plans to host an Arctic Research Synthesis Conference in Anchorage in 2015 that will feature detailed presentations by BOEM-funded Principal Investigators, who will explain the results of their research in hour-long presentations before leading the audience in a discussion of ecosystem implications. The conference will emphasize the progress of multilateral collaboration as the U.S. assumes chairmanship of the Arctic Council.

Current Keystone Studies

Integrated Multidisciplinary Studies:

Hanna Shoal Ecosystem Study: This study continues the ecological monitoring of the Chukchi Sea Offshore Monitoring in Drilling Area (COMIDA): Chemistry and Benthos (CAB) study and extends it to the region of Hanna Shoal. The study also will document the circulation and density fields, as well as ice conditions, at Hanna Shoal and examine important chemical, physical and biological interactions with the unique ecological regime in this highly productive area.

U.S.-Canada Transboundary Fish and Lower Trophic Communities: In collaboration with the Department of Fisheries and Oceans Canada, this partnership with UAF will document baseline fish and invertebrate species presence, abundance, distribution and biomass in the U.S. and Canadian Beaufort Sea. The hydrographic structure of the eastern Beaufort shelf also will be documented to provide enhanced understanding of the effects of habitat variables such as temperature and salinity on species distributions under different climate conditions.

ANIMIDA III: This pair of companion studies continues long-term Beaufort Sea monitoring efforts begun in 1999. Sediment and benthic biota samples are collected throughout the Beaufort Sea development area and into Camden Bay. Measured concentrations of hydrocarbons and trace metals will provide additional baseline information and monitoring results to evaluate for chemical contamination and turbidity. Additionally, kelp beds in the Boulder Patch Area of Special Biological Concern, as well as Camden Bay, are monitored to evaluate potential impact from oil and gas exploration and development activities.

Chukchi Acoustic, Oceanography and Zooplankton Study: Hanna Shoal: This study will continue the acoustic and biophysical monitoring begun under the study “COMIDA: Factors Affecting the Distribution and Relative Abundance of Endangered Whales” with focus on the region of Hanna Shoal. The general presence of marine mammals,

including bowhead and other baleen whales, near Hanna Shoal will be documented to assess the importance of this area of very high biological productivity. The study includes deployment of arrays of long-term acoustic recorders that are capable of continuous year-round recording.

Synthesis of Arctic Research: This study is conducting a synthesis of multidisciplinary marine science information in the northern Bering, Chukchi and Beaufort seas from recent and ongoing research conducted by BOEM, as well as other Federal and State agencies and industry. The overarching goals of the project are to increase scientific understanding of the biophysical environment, enhance capability to predict future conditions, and effectively transmit findings to stakeholders.

Arctic Whale Ecology Study: In collaboration with NMFS and the Pacific Marine Environmental Laboratory (PMEL), this study assesses patterns of spatial and temporal use of the Chukchi Sea by endangered bowhead, fin and humpback whales, as well as beluga and gray whales, and evaluates ecological relationships that affect critical habitat for these species. This effort combines targeted oceanographic sampling with biological sampling and satellite tagging of individual humpback, fin and gray whales to expand scientific understanding of whale behavior and to improve predictions about where and when aggregations of feeding whales are likely to occur. This study extends the research of the “Bowhead Whale Feeding Ecology Study” (also known as BOWFEST) into the Chukchi Sea and expands the scope to include other cetacean species.

Marine Arctic Ecosystems Study: In partnership with numerous government agencies and other entities through the National Oceanographic Partnership Program, the goal of this study is to conduct coordinated observational and modeling efforts to produce information that will be analyzed from different perspectives, including: ecosystem understanding and environmental protection, climate change and monitoring, and Oil-Spill Risk Analysis. Component projects will emphasize an integrated, or ecosystems approach to data collection or synthesis, while focusing on essential processes, functions and interactions among organisms and their environment.

Air Quality and Meteorology:

Arctic Air Quality Modeling: This study will conduct air quality modeling using existing dispersion models to reasonably predict the potential cumulative air quality effects associated with onshore and offshore emission sources. The study will evaluate existing methods for establishing emissions exemption thresholds and, if necessary, suggest improved methods.

Physical Oceanography:

Characterization of Circulation in the Northeast Chukchi and Western Beaufort Sea: In collaboration with UAF, ocean current circulation fields are being mapped and analyzed along the coast of the northeastern Chukchi and western Beaufort seas through the deployment of coastal High Frequency radar systems, offshore bottom mounted Acoustic Doppler Current Profilers (ADCPs), gliders and surface drifters. Such direct circulation measurements improve understanding of the ocean currents that drive oceanographic processes and influence the transport and fate of spilled oil.

Enhanced Verification and Interpretation of Freeze-up Conditions for the Northeast Chukchi Shelf: The goal of this study, which is planned to begin in FY 2015, is to work toward improved ice forecasts for the Chukchi Sea. The study will document the atmospheric and oceanographic conditions that initiate freeze-up conditions on the northeast Chukchi shelf to obtain a comprehensive understanding of the relevant processes and feedback mechanisms driving the ice-ocean-wave-atmosphere system.

Arctic Tracer Release Experiment (ARCTREX): In collaboration with UAF, this study will perform targeted dye release experiments at both the surface and bottom of the Northeast Chukchi Sea to examine applications for mapping spilled oil in Arctic waters. These experiments are designed to test available observational technologies and their capability to map a dye plume both temporally and spatially (simulating an oil spill) and to potentially deliver real time data to response agencies, including data for ingestion into numerical oil spill trajectory models.

Marine Mammals:

Distribution and Relative Abundance of Marine Mammals in the Chukchi Sea and the Fall Migration of Bowhead Whales in the Beaufort Sea: In partnership with NMML, this study merges the Bowhead Whale Aerial Survey Project (BWASP) and the Chukchi Sea aerial surveys of marine mammals. This combined effort collects aerial survey data on seasonal distribution, relative abundance, and habitat use of marine mammals in the Beaufort and Chukchi seas. Observations are focused on bowhead whales, but also help to monitor gray whales, beluga whales, Pacific walrus, polar bears, bearded seals, and several other species of ice seals. All of these species are subject to changes in environmental variables such as oceanographic currents, sea temperature, sea ice cover, prey availability, and anthropogenic impacts. MMS/BOEM has conducted aerial surveys of the fall migration of bowhead whales each year since 1987. Methods are comparable from year to year and based on similar monitoring dating to 1979.

Satellite Tracking of Bowhead Whales: Habitat Use, Passive Acoustic and Environmental Monitoring: In collaboration with the Alaska Department of Fish and Game, this study will track the movements and document the behavior and habitat utilization of bowhead whales using satellite telemetry. Tags equipped with environmental sensors will be deployed to monitor, collect, and transmit ambient oceanographic conditions during bowhead whale migrations. Acoustic tags will document vocalization rates and ambient noise levels to develop analysis of call rates relative to behavior and disturbance. Data will be used to examine inter-annual variation in bowhead feeding concentrations and vocalizations. Other large cetacean species (Gray whale, Humpback whale and Fin whale) may be opportunistically tagged and tracked as a pilot study for future research.

Walrus Seasonal Distribution and Habitat Use in the Eastern Chukchi Sea: The overarching objective of this partnership with USGS is to obtain information on the seasonal abundance, distribution, and habitat use of walrus in the Chukchi Sea. Researchers will deploy radio-tag instruments on walrus and use GIS and spatial analysis methods to define important habitats, identify migration pathways, walrus foraging behaviors and activity budgets.

Village-based Satellite Tracking of Ringed and Bearded Seals: This partnership with ADF&G trains seal hunters in villages along the Beaufort, Chukchi and northern Bering seas in seal capture and tag deployment. The resulting data will be analyzed relative to ice edge, ice concentration, bathymetry, and residence times to better understand movements and habitat use of ice seals in the region.

Habitat and Ecology:

Distribution of Fish, Crab and Lower Trophic Communities in the Chukchi Sea Lease Area: This partnership with NOAA and UAF documents and characterizes the distribution of pelagic and demersal fish and invertebrate communities in the Chukchi Sea lease area. The study includes field surveys to obtain baseline data on the structure and function of the Chukchi ecosystem and the ecology of important fish species in the region. This project is a component of the “Arctic Ecosystem Integrated Survey,” a collaborative effort involving scientists from UAF, NOAA’s Alaska Fisheries Science Center, USFWS and ADF&G.

Distribution and Habitat Use of Fish in the Nearshore Ecosystem of the Beaufort and Chukchi Seas: In partnership with NOAA, this study will inventory the distribution and diversity of nearshore fish, their habitat and prey along high priority sites in the Beaufort and Chukchi Seas. The age and diet of the fish, as well as ambient oceanographic conditions, will be assessed to improve understanding about the effect of habitat variables like temperature and salinity on fish species distributions.

Ecological Processes in Lower Cook Inlet and Kachemak Bay: This collaborative effort with NOAA, USFWS and NPS will enhance existing oceanographic surveys, plankton surveys, near-shore benthic surveys, and upper trophic level surveys of seabirds and marine mammals in lower Cook Inlet and Kachemak Bay. Improving understanding of this complex marine environment will improve understanding of biological variability and potential impacts from oil and gas development activities.

Social Systems:

Social Indicators in Coastal Alaska: Arctic Communities: This study will update key socio-cultural and economic baseline data for analysis of potential local and regional impacts from offshore exploration and development activities. It will evaluate the pace, direction and magnitude of regional socio-economic changes experienced by residents in select Arctic coastal communities including: Point Lay, Wainwright, Barrow, Nuiqsut and Kaktovik.

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SECTION 2.0 STUDY PROFILES

2.1 Profiles of Ongoing Studies

Information about ongoing studies can be found at:

<http://www.boem.gov/AKstudies>

This website is updated three times each year and includes:

1. An updated status of each study.
2. Report due dates.
3. Related publications.
4. Affiliated websites.

Reports from completed ESP Studies can be found at:

http://www.data.boem.gov/homepg/data_center/other/espis/espisfront.asp and
<http://www.boem.gov/AKpubs>.

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Environmental Studies Program: Alaska Annual Studies Plan FY 2015

Region: Alaska

Planning Area(s): Beaufort Sea, Chukchi Sea

Title: Arctic Air Quality Impact Assessment Modeling
(AK-13-01)

BOEM Information Need(s) to be Addressed: BOEM requires information to assess the cumulative air quality impact of off-shore Arctic oil and gas activity, including oil-spill response equipment and associated support equipment not already accounted for through State and Federal air permit requirements. This information will support BOEM and various Federal and State agencies in assuring compliance with the Clean Air Act and environmental justice initiatives. In addition, the information will provide public agencies, permit applicants, and the public with a holistic view of the air pollution impact on the people and environment in Northern Alaska. In light of the change in jurisdiction for control of oil and gas emission sources on the Arctic OCS, BOEM requires information defining emission thresholds to ensure exempt OCS facilities will not produce significant onshore ambient air concentrations.

Total Cost: \$1,751,036

Period of Performance: FY 2013-2018

Conducting Organization: Eastern Research Group, Inc.

BOEM Contact: [Dr. Heather Crowley](#)

Description:

Background: Arctic oil and gas exploration and extraction activities proposed for the OCS require environmental evaluations pursuant to NEPA, and air quality operating approval to comply with the impact analysis required under NEPA and the Clean Air Act. An air quality model capable of conducting an air impact analysis requires various input datasets, including emission sources, meteorology, and pre-existing pollutant concentrations. This project proposes development of these major input datasets, which would be applied to an air quality model such as the Community Multipurpose Air Quality model (CMAQ) or the Comprehensive Air Quality Model, with extensions (CAMx), to assess the cumulative air quality impact of proposed offshore OCS projects and North Slope support activities.

A recently completed BOEM project, “Chukchi/Beaufort Seas Mesoscale Meteorology Modeling Study” (MMM), developed a long-term dataset of meteorological model data. While useful in air quality modeling, the MMM dataset configuration is designed to support modeling of an oil-spill response. The data was not evaluated and optimized for air pollutant concentrations and transport. The project proposed in this profile would leverage the current BOEM MMM data project to produce a five-year meteorological modeling dataset (years 2007-2011) that could be evaluated and optimized for performance with air quality dispersion models.

Various estimates exist for pollutant emissions from proposed and existing North Slope and OCS activities, but there is no overall analysis to show the increased pollutant concentration from all aspects of the proposed activities, including increased emissions in towns along the coast, emissions from support vehicles far from the drilling operation, and aircraft and helicopter emissions. This project would pull together all existing emissions information available from the Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation, which would be combined with estimates of additional emissions from proposed OCS activity. From this comprehensive database, an emission inventory could be calculated and translated to three-dimensional emissions for a time period of interest (i.e., output from the Sparse Matrix Operator Kernel Emissions [SMOKE] processor).

The meteorological and emissions datasets would be applied to a regional air quality model such as CMAQ or CAMx. The results would assist in defining the cumulative impacts of all pollution sources induced by OCS activity, including the formation of secondary fine particulate matter (PM_{2.5}) and ozone chemistry that may be occurring in this environment. This study will be coordinated with work in the Gulf of Mexico OCS Region to avoid duplication of efforts and ensure consistency with similar approaches.

Objectives:

- Test the hypothesis that the cumulative impacts from OCS-related activities, exclusive of permitted sources, would not be statistically significant.
- Test the hypothesis that secondary PM_{2.5} and ozone are not significant for cumulative impact analyses.
- Evaluate modeling results to assess the cumulative impact of emissions on the OCS and on the North Slope.
- Apply the results to demonstrate compliance under the NEPA and the Clean Air Act for EISs and EAs prepared by BOEM and to develop valid exemption thresholds.

Methods:

1. Build upon meteorological datasets developed by the BOEM “Beaufort/Chukchi Seas Mesoscale Meteorology Modeling Study” and by industry that reflect climatological conditions of the North Slope, Beaufort Sea, and Chukchi Sea.
2. Format the compiled dataset for use in dispersion models approved for the Arctic OCS.
3. Build an input database of emission sources typically associated with oil and gas activities on the OCS. Build in scenarios of potential OCS development.
4. Prepare an emission inventory using EPA-approved calculation methods and prepare emissions data sufficient as input to a regional air quality model.
5. Conduct air quality modeling by applying the input datasets to an EPA-approved model such as CMAQ or CAMx.

6. Analyze importance of atmospheric chemistry with tools such as a literature survey, box chemistry models, plume models with chemistry, and regional air quality models.
7. Assess the results to identify the background impact and the cumulative impact of proposed OCS activities to meet the project objectives.

Revised Date: September 2014

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Environmental Studies Program: Alaska Annual Studies Plan FY 2015

Region: Alaska

Planning Area(s): Chukchi Sea

Title: COMIDA: Factors Affecting the Distribution and Relative Abundance of Endangered Whales: Biophysical Moorings and Climate Modeling (AK-09-02b)

BOEM Information Need(s) to be Addressed: The BOEM is studying marine mammal distribution, benthic biota, and anthropogenic chemicals to monitor for environmental effects of oil and gas exploration in the Chukchi OCS. Interannual and seasonal variability in the Chukchi is very high and there is a need to distinguish oil and gas effects from those related to variability in the physical environment or from local effects of global warming. This task would provide that context to other monitoring tasks and also greatly improve our understanding of first order physics in the NE Chukchi Sea. In addition, this study will provide information useful for ground-truthing and tuning of numerical ocean models.

Total Cost: \$2,068,928
plus Joint Funding

Period of Performance: FY 2010-2015

Conducting Organization: NOAA-Pacific Marine Environmental Laboratory

BOEM Contact: [Dr. Heather Crowley](#)

Description:

Background: During the last three decades there has been a northward shift of some fish species in the eastern Bering Sea. It is hypothesized that these changes are a result of global climate change and the loss of sea ice. The western Arctic physical climate is rapidly changing. The summer minimum sea ice extent in 2007 and 2008 covered an area which was 37% less than the areal coverage of two decades ago and 20% less than the previous minimum coverage in 2005. The rapidity of these changes was unexpected, as the consensus of the climate research community just a few years ago was that such changes would not be seen for another 30 years, as expected from the CO₂ anthropogenic contribution alone. This reduction in sea ice area opens up vast new regions of the Arctic Ocean to increased absorption of sunlight and storage of heat. This heat is returned to the atmosphere in the following autumn resulting in increased Arctic temperatures of more than 5° C, extending the sea ice free season into November, and causing changes in wind patterns. Such Arctic changes appear to be irreversible. As the sea ice that has lasted for several years melts away and extra heat is stored in the ocean during autumn, potential future periods of colder than normal air temperatures may not be sufficient to rebuild the summer sea ice cover. Previous sea ice and climate analyses and projections for the Chukchi Sea are out of date.

One of the methods to be applied to the Chukchi Sea includes measuring the changing ecosystem in the eastern Bering Sea through long term biophysical moorings coupled

with shipboard observations. These will provide critical information on the ecosystem, including physical drivers of primary production and higher trophic levels, and support the development of hypotheses for mechanisms controlling ecosystem organization. The coupling of the passive listening device for whales with active acoustics for zooplankton size distribution and biovolume from the moorings has provided some interesting relationships between primary production, zooplankton biovolume and the presence/absence of fin whales. Moorings permit observations during ice covered periods and the critical spring and early summer when spring phytoplankton blooms occur. Such measurements are impossible to obtain from ships, because of the relatively short duration they spend in the area.

Euphausiids are important prey items for bowhead whales in the Chukchi Sea. Availability and prey concentrations are important factors in the habitat utilization of whales in the study area. Euphausiids are thought to be transported from the northern Bering Sea as reproduction of euphausiids within the Chukchi has not been observed. Modeled trajectories of passively floating particles to simulate euphausiid transport have been analyzed. The results suggest that the majority of euphausiid prey in the study area is derived from the northern Bering Sea. Furthermore, particles in close association with the bottom were more likely to be transported to the study area than particles in the surface waters.

Objectives:

- Obtain two full years of biophysical measurements on the shallow Chukchi shelf utilizing moorings at three sites, and collect hydrographic and lower trophic level data during deployment/recovery of the moorings.
- Collaborate with the protected-species study: “COMIDA: Factors Affecting the Distribution and Relative Abundance of Endangered Whales: Passive Acoustic Detection and Monitoring of Endangered Whales in the Arctic” in order to evaluate the extent to which variability in environmental conditions such as sea ice, oceanic currents, water temperature and salinity, and prey abundance influence whale distribution and relative abundance.
- Rerun the National Center for Atmospheric Research (NCAR) climate model (Community Climate System Model: CCSM) for future projections using the sea ice extents from 2007/2008 as initial conditions.
- Analyze multiple ensemble members from the NCAR model and other International Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) models to assess the future variability of sea ice cover and extended sea ice free seasons during fall for the Chukchi Sea.
- Provide long-term estimates of habitat use for large whale species and compare this with predictions about annual ice coverage in order to establish predictive variables to describe large whale occurrence.

Methods: A pair of moorings will be deployed at three different sites of tight-acoustic arrays on the Chukchi Sea shelf (See protected-species study: “COMIDA: Factors Affecting the Distribution and Relative Abundance of Endangered Whales: Passive

Acoustic Detection and Monitoring of Endangered Whales in the Arctic.”) Moorings will be deployed in August for one year, to be recovered the following August. Each mooring site has two moorings; one is a bottom mounted upward-looking ADCP with instruments that measure fluorescence, temperature, and oxygen deployed beneath the ADCP; the second mooring will contain the instrument to measure ice thickness with instruments that will measure nitrate, temperature and salinity beneath it. At one site there will also be an upward looking TAPS-8 (on the P mooring), which acoustically measures zooplankton biovolume as a function of size. During each deployment/recovery cruise, hydrographic data (temperature, conductivity, nutrients, chlorophyll, oxygen) and zooplankton will be collected at each mooring site, along the transect between moorings and at other selected sites in northern part of the Bering Sea and in the Chukchi.

Samples for mesozooplankton and micronekton will be collected using double-oblique tows of paired bongo frames (60-cm frame with 0.333 mm mesh and 20-cm frame with 0.150 mm mesh) or when appropriate, (e.g. for groundtruth of the acoustic data) using a Tucker Sled which allows us to collect samples right next to the bottom.

The climate modeling task will adapt the NCAR CCSM to examine the influence of natural variability on sea ice loss and compare results with a new set of IPCC model results. Within a year a new round of IPCC models will be available for analysis and we will evaluate them for application to Chukchi Sea climate projections. Recent satellite sea ice analyses, including high resolution AMSR-E microwave analyses from Europe, multiyear sea ice fraction from QuikSCAT, and ICESat thickness data are critical data to evaluate climate change as well as the numerical climate models. These data together with data from the moorings will be used for model verification.

Revised Date: September 2014

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Environmental Studies Program: Alaska Annual Studies Plan FY 2015

Region: Alaska

Planning Area(s): Beaufort Sea, Chukchi Sea

Title: Characterization of the Circulation on the Continental Shelf Areas of the Northeast Chukchi and Western Beaufort Seas (AK-12-03a)

BOEM Information Need(s) to be Addressed: The BOEM needs information on several aspects of the temporal and spatial structure of ocean currents in the northeastern Chukchi and western Beaufort seas. This characterization encompasses a description of the mean circulation under different wind and sea ice coverage conditions. This knowledge will be valuable for (a) improving the quality of information used in the Oil-Spill Risk Analysis conducted by BOEM, (b) inferring the transport of zooplankton, contaminants and other quantities in key areas, (c) providing insight into the flow-related feeding aggregations of bowhead whales near Barrow, (d) providing important information for the preparation of NEPA documents, (e) providing information for ocean modeling efforts (including validation and skill assessment), and (f) complementing ongoing social research on offshore subsistence hunting.

Total Cost: \$5,056,252
plus Joint Funding

Period of Performance: FY 2012-2016

Conducting Organization: CESU-UAF

BOEM Contact: [Warren Horowitz](#)

Description:

Background: The circulation in the region of the junction between the Chukchi and Beaufort continental shelves is likely complex given the abrupt change in the orientation of the isobaths, change in shelf width, and the convergence of the mean westward wind-driven flow over the Alaskan Beaufort Sea with the mean northeastward flow along the eastern flank of Barrow Canyon. The nature of this junction varies with the winds and ice environment. The regional circulation is such that contaminants introduced on either the Chukchi or Beaufort shelf will likely have a variety of fates. These include being advected from one shelf to the other, being flushed offshore into the Arctic basin, or perhaps accumulating within the vicinity of the western Beaufort Sea due to flow convergence from currents on both shelves. The conditions under which these various scenarios occur are not well known.

This proposed study is a continuation and expansion of the existing surface circulation study within the northeast Chukchi Sea. Prior to 2009, surface current observations on the Chukchi shelf were extremely limited. Through a joint Industry/BOEM supported study, the University of Alaska Fairbanks (UAF), Coastal Marine Institute began measuring surface currents during the open water period on the Chukchi shelf beginning in September 2009 with the deployment of long range (180 km), High

Frequency (HF) radar systems located at the villages of Barrow and Wainwright. In 2010, coverage was expanded to the southwest to include additional offshore lease areas. The surface current data was supplemented by water column profile data collected by Slocum Gliders. Acoustic Doppler current profilers (ADCPs) were also deployed across the Alaska Coastal Current at the head of Barrow Canyon to assess the annual flow regime, the connectivity between surface and subsurface currents during the open water season, and the changes in subsurface currents beneath the mobile pack ice and lead system during the winter months. This new study will expand our present efforts to improve understanding of the flow regime and shelf dynamics between the inner and outer Chukchi shelf, the exchange of waters between the Chukchi Sea and western Beaufort shelf through Barrow Canyon, and the upwelling of Atlantic Waters.

Objectives:

- Extend the present Chukchi Sea HF radar, mooring and glider study to include the western Beaufort shelf slope and Barrow Canyon to investigate the spatial and temporal structure of ocean currents within the western Beaufort and northeast Chukchi shelves and the exchange of waters between these areas.
- Characterize the flow regimes and surface water exchange among areas of the inner and outer Chukchi shelf and the western Beaufort shelf under varying conditions of wind forcing and sea ice coverage.
- Describe the oceanic response, at different levels in the vertical, using all available wind observations, as well as those generated by atmospheric and/or coupled models.

Methods: The above objectives will be pursued using a suite of instrumentation including: ADCPs, CTDs, Ice Profiling Sonar (IPS5), gliders, surface drifters and HF radars. Long Range HF radar systems presently deployed along the Chukchi coast at Point Lay, Wainwright and Pt. Barrow will be modified to increase the maximum observable range to approximately 250 km to capture the summer surface current flow over a larger area of the Chukchi shelf and around Hanna Shoal. A planned HF radar deployment at Cape Simpson (CIAP funds) will capture surface current flow along the western Beaufort shelf and slope and within Barrow Canyon. Gliders, surface drifters, moored ADCPs and towed CTDs will collect data on depth and time dependent current, temperature and salinity structure. Ice Profiling Sonar and moored ADCPs will be used to calculate ice drift and velocity. Sea ice extent will be obtained from satellite information, while drifting buoys will be crucial for computing flow trajectories and diffusivities. Data from the ADCPs, CTDs, glider deployments, HF radars, planned drifter measurements and available industry data will be synthesized to acquire a comprehensive characterization of the circulation in the study area. This project will coordinate and collaborate with other research projects in the area (BOEM, WHOI, AOOS/IOOS, industry, etc.) to synthesize and integrate all available data.

Revised Date: September 2014

Environmental Studies Program: Alaska Annual Studies Plan FY 2015

Region: Alaska

Planning Area(s): Chukchi Sea

Title: Arctic Tracer Release Experiment (ARCTREX):
Applications for Mapping Spilled Oil in Arctic Waters
(AK-12-03b)

BOEM Information Need(s) to be Addressed: The results from this study could inform BOEM Oil-Spill Risk Analysis (OSRA) and oil-spill fate modeling efforts, and may improve detection and cleanup operations in the event of a large oil spill. Outputs could be used to verify oil-spill contingency plans. Results will support decisions associated with environmental assessments and exploration plans. The BOEM/BSEE analysts and decision makers may use the results to improve NEPA analysis and documentation for any future Alaska OCS lease sales.

Total Cost: \$1,249,977

Period of Performance: FY 2013-2016

Conducting Organization: University of Alaska Fairbanks

BOEM Contact: [Warren Horowitz](#)

Description:

Background: There is a need in the Arctic OCS to test, develop, and implement the observational platforms, mapping software, and oil-spill models that could track and assess the fate of spilled hydrocarbons. This study will field test environmental response and mapping software in cooperation with NOAA's Office of Spill Response and Restoration, and other parties who would be willing to share resources and incorporate real-time observational data into this tracking and mapping software system. We will develop and test the instrumentation for AUV gliders and other observational technologies that can map the surface and subsurface dispersion of a dye release. The BOEM will jointly work with other interested parties to field test the capability of the environmental response and mapping software to track a planned release of fluorescein dye within the Chukchi Sea. Protocols will be developed and tested over multiple field experiments to assess applications for tracking a potential pollutant release in the offshore during the open water season.

Objectives:

- Develop a better understanding of small scale transport processes important to fate and effects modeling used in oil impact analysis.
- Assess the effectiveness of HF Radar surface current mapping system and drogued drifters for providing near-surface current input data to oil-spill models.

- Develop, test, and deploy instrumentation for Autonomous Underwater Vehicles (AUV) that can be customized for use in the Arctic to detect the spatial and temporal locations of subsurface dye plumes.
- Conduct at least two field tests of the dispersal and tracking of non-toxic fluorescein dye off the Chukchi coast.
- Track the dispersed dye plume by incorporating input from the AUVs and other real time data collection sensors in the Chukchi Sea (e.g., surface currents from HF Radar, drifters, modeled wind fields, data from meteorological buoys and other offshore instruments) to assess the fate and transport of the dye plume.
- Develop algorithms quantifying small scale transport processes based on measurable oceanographic and meteorological data (i.e., advection, Langmuir circulation, wind drift, vertical and horizontal dispersion coefficients, etc.)

Methods: This study will perform targeted dye release experiments at both the surface and bottom of the Northeast Chukchi Sea to examine applications for mapping spilled oil in Arctic waters. These experiments are designed to test available observational technologies and their capability to map a dye plume both temporally and spatially (simulating an oil spill) and to potentially deliver real time data to response agencies, including data for ingestion into numerical oil spill trajectory models. Two planned field experiments will be conducted during the August-September time frame, in 2014 and 2015. The research team will use the same suite of instruments currently used in the Chukchi Sea on other projects (CTDs, fluorometers, gliders and towed vehicles). Using large dynamic-range fluorometers, the research team will undertake a field experiment to map a dye plume and its evolution in time and space over a 3-6 day period over two field seasons and multiple dye injections. Part of the planned activities includes evaluating the effectiveness of instruments to track the released dye under diverse environmental conditions. The team will coordinate our field effort with NOAA's Environmental Response Management Application ERMA (Arctic ERMA) and the Bureau of Environmental Enforcement (BSEE), and work towards real time data ingestion into NOAA's oil-spill response system.

Revised Date: September 2014

Environmental Studies Program: Alaska Annual Studies Plan FY 2015

Region: Alaska

Planning Area(s): Cook Inlet

Title: Cook Inlet Circulation Model Calculations (AK-13-x10)

BOEM Information Need(s) to be Addressed: Oil-Spill Risk Analysis (OSRA) is a cornerstone foundation for evaluating alternatives in OCS oil and gas leasing NEPA analyses and oil spill response plans. The results of this study will be used by BOEM to create the OSRA estimates of oil-spill trajectories. The ocean models have been shown to have skill in estimating the near surface currents. This study will result in a time series of simulated current and wind fields that will be compared to field projects that have been conducted in the Cook Inlet and will be used in the OSRA calculations.

Total Cost: \$499,528

Period of Performance: FY 2014-2015

Conducting Organization: CESU-UAF

BOEM Contact: [Dr. Heather Crowley](#)

Description:

Background: Ocean currents in Cook Inlet are forced by winds and river runoff, as well as having very large tidal amplitude and extreme tidal currents. The Alaska Coastal Current that flows into Lower Cook Inlet and continues out through Shelikof Strait is an important element of the nearshore circulation of the northern Gulf of Alaska. Sea ice forms in Cook Inlet, but its effect on the overall circulation pattern has not been studied in detail.

The circulation of Cook Inlet has been studied through previous model simulations, with funding by NOAA, BOEM, USACE, and others. The models were subjected to many sensitivity calculations and skill was assessed by teams of oceanographers and the models were shown to have significant skill in simulating the ocean surface currents. Many field programs that may provide observational data for assimilation and validation have also been conducted in this area.

Objectives: The objective of this study is to obtain simulations of the surface circulation in Cook Inlet for use in OSRA. The simulations must have significant skill in reproducing the near-surface currents, compared to drifting buoy data, fixed current meters, ADCPs, and other data sets. The results of the model will provide environmental variability input into the OSRA calculations.

Methods: This study will adapt an existing community ocean model to produce a high-resolution hindcast of the current fields in Cook Inlet, using data assimilation methods whenever practical. The hindcast period will be determined by data availability, but shall be no less than 5 years. The tidal current must be accurately reproduced. The wind forcing will be derived from the products of an atmospheric model. Skill

assessment comparisons against historical field observations, i.e. current meters and drifting buoy velocities, will be performed.

Revised Date: September 2014

Environmental Studies Program: Alaska Annual Studies Plan FY 2015

Region: Alaska

Planning Area(s): Chukchi Sea

Title: Satellite-Tracked Drifter Measurements in the Northeast Chukchi Sea (AK-08-12-08)

BOEM Information Need(s) to be Addressed: This study will provide information on surface currents in the vicinity of the Chukchi Sea Lease Area during the open water season. Results from his study will provide model validation data for BOEM modeling efforts, and provide new information regarding current shear in the upper ocean and its relation to changes in stratification and winds.

Total Cost: \$459,892
plus Joint Funding

Period of Performance: FY 2011-2015

Conducting Organization: CMI, UAF

BOEM Contact: [Warren Horowitz](#)

Description:

Background: The oil and gas industry plans to drill exploratory wells within the Chukchi Sea during the open water season within the coming years to assess the extent of potential hydrocarbon resource within the subsurface formations. The BOEM and the oil and gas industry are presently sponsoring a physical oceanographic study in the Chukchi Sea to measure ocean current circulation fields from High Frequency (HF) radar sites located along the northwestern coast of Alaska at Barrow, Wainwright and Point Lay. The data from this study are providing us with significant new information on Chukchi Sea surface current circulation within the boundary of the radar coverage. The drifter measurements as proposed within this CMI study will provide information on near surface current movements, augmenting the HF radar effort by extending the surface current measurements beyond the range of HF radar coverage. In addition, the drifter measurements will answer critical questions on not only how currents flow at the surface, as HF radars define, but how currents flow below the surface, where pollutants could also get transported.

Objectives:

- Map the surface current drift within the upper water column at one meter and ten meter water depths.
- Document the differences in the surface and subsurface flow fields as related to the bathymetry, seasonally-varying winds, stratification, and/or ice-edge fronts.
- Display the daily results of the drifter trajectories on a project website open to the public.

Methods: A ship will deploy CODE-type drifters to measure the upper meter surface current flow and WOCE-drifter drogues to measure current speed and direction at a depth of 10 meters. Each drifter will contain a surface thermistor to measure surface water temperatures. The drifters will be deployed from a ship from two different oil and lease block locations, on a weekly basis, beginning in early August and ending by mid-September. The drifter positions will be determined by satellite GPS fixes twice every hour during its time of operation. Repeated drifter deployments will allow statistical analysis of the spatial and temporal distribution of upper ocean flow, its vertical shear, and surface water motion. Comparison of drifter movements will also be made against available subsurface current measurements from current meters and ADCPs and surface measurements collected from HF radars. The impacts on drifter motion from the seasonal changes in ocean stratification will also be examined. These drifter deployments will encompass a near full range of sea ice concentrations, meteorological, and oceanographic conditions that would be expected during the July/August through September/October open water season in the northeast Chukchi Sea. Their individual trajectories will be updated daily to a map on the publically available, University of Alaska Fairbanks project web site. A second field season has been added to this program. This study has been extended to include drifter measurements from 2011 through 2013.

Revised Date: September 2014

Environmental Studies Program: Alaska Annual Studies Plan FY 2015

Region: Alaska

Planning Area(s): Beaufort Sea, Chukchi Sea

Title: Development of an Accurate Model of the Beaufort and Chukchi Ice Drift and Dispersion for Forecasting Spill Trajectories and Providing Decision Support for Spill Response (AK-13-03-03)

BOEM Information Need(s) to be Addressed: In the event of an oil spill, sea ice complicates the tracking of ice/oil trajectories and can hinder clean-up operations. There is a need for a sea ice model that can accurately simulate ice pack deformation and failure to improve ability to track ice/oil trajectories and support oil response operations. BOEM analysts and decision makers will use this information in NEPA analysis and documentation for Lease Sales, EPs and DPPs.

Total Cost: \$359,078
plus Joint Funding

Period of Performance: FY 2013-2016

Conducting Organization: CMI, UAF

BOEM Contact: [Dr. Heather Crowley](#)

Description:

Background: Offshore oil and gas exploration and production activities in the Beaufort and Chukchi Seas can be significantly and adversely affected by sea ice. For example, in the event of an oil spill, the presence of sea ice vastly complicates the issues of tracking ice/oil trajectories and conducting clean-up operations. It becomes important to forecast the trajectory and dispersion of contaminated ice and to simulate the location of pressured ice, which can hinder transportation. Of particular interest is simulating realistic lead distributions (opening and closing rates), ice deformation, ice velocity, ice stress, ice flow trajectory, and the location of ice divergence and convergence zones.

The current state-of-the-art for coupled ocean-ice-atmosphere modeling makes use of a continuum model of sea ice kinematics originally developed by Hibler. Ice-ocean modeling of the Beaufort and Chukchi Sea areas is under development for BOEM using ROMS, which includes an ice model with elastic viscous-plastic (EVP) ice dynamics. This type of coupled ice-ocean models has difficulty in reproducing observed sea ice strain-rates. The representation of sea ice in the regional, pan-Arctic and global models currently used for simulating the coupled ice-ocean system or for ice forecasting does not represent the brittle failure behavior of the ice pack on the spatial scales these models attempt to resolve. The difficulty is that the continuum EVP models used to describe ice constitutive properties do not represent observed internal ice stresses and strain rates (opening and shearing), and they do not reproduce realistic patterns of localized shear zones. Hence these models cannot simulate the dispersion of sea ice well, which limits their utility in forecasting or hindcasting the trajectories of contaminated ice.

A discrete element method (DEM) sea ice model can simulate fracture patterns with intersection angles and spacing characteristics similar to those observed in Arctic pack ice. Although, to date, no regional model of sea ice has reproduced realistic deformation patterns, the DEM approach has been successful in simulating the density of fractures expected in the Beaufort Sea. The DEM approach directly accounts for discontinuities in the ice pack at which failure can occur and stresses concentrate to form cracks, unlike continuum approaches that use an isotropic rheology (such as CICE which uses the EVP model) and require artificial seeding of stress discontinuities in order to simulate cracks. As the DEM approach specifies the failure stress of weaknesses (defined as joints or contacts between grains or unit cell floes), control of fracture characteristics is more physically based in a DEM model.

Objectives: This project will build upon previous work funded by MMS/BOEM (OCS Study MMS 2005-068, OCS Study MMS 2008-020, OCS Study BOEM 2012-067) and NSF to:

- Develop a DEM model that accurately simulates ice velocity, kinematics and dispersion in the Beaufort and Chukchi Seas.
- Optimize the model to simulate realistic lead distributions (opening rate) and the location of pressured ice that hinders transportation.
- Build validation metrics appropriate for confining parameters in pack ice constitutive relations.
- Produce an open-source well-documented DEM sea ice model usable by the general sea ice community and readily incorporated into coupled sea ice/wind/ocean models

Methods: This study will build a model of sea ice interaction, simulating drift and deformation of the ice pack, with the DEM. The researchers will work to improve model parameters over previous DEM models by tuning the model to field data and investigate the effects on model simulations of varying the failure process from a gradual weakening ice strength during failure to a sudden rupture upon reaching failure criteria. In developing the model, they will identify appropriate representation of tensile, compressive and shear failure of pack ice.

The model domain will encompass the Beaufort and Chukchi Seas with zero velocity and stress gradients across the open ocean boundaries. This will ensure no artificial shear is imparted at the open boundaries that would manifest as unrealistic kinematic features. External forcing will be developed from available products. The validation metrics developed in the study will provide insight into the mechanical properties of pack ice. Sensitivity experiments will be conducted to tune the model.

Revised Date: September 2014

Environmental Studies Program: Alaska Annual Studies Plan FY 2015

Region: Alaska

Planning Area(s): Chukchi Sea

Title: Development and Testing of a Low-Cost Satellite-Tracked Ice Drifter for Arctic Waters (AK-13-03-07)

BOEM Information Need(s) to be Addressed: The products will respond to BOEM's and the State of Alaska's needs to better understand ocean currents within the water column underlying sea ice and to better predict oil and contaminant trajectories in the nearshore in the event of a spill during the winter months. These low-cost ice drifters will be able to be easily deployed in ice-infested waters. The results from the ice drift study will provide new information on the stability of landfast ice, including in those areas that are heavily used by subsistence hunters. The capability to monitor large fragments of detached coastal sea ice in real-time would allow local communities, the State of Alaska, and Federal Agencies to track the movement of large ridges of ice that have the potential to be offshore marine mammal habitat or potential maritime hazards to shipping operations or subsistence hunting.

Total Cost: \$218,286
plus Joint Funding

Period of Performance: FY 2014-2017

Conducting Organization: CMI, UAF

BOEM Contact: [Warren Horowitz](#)

Description:

Background: This study will develop and test a limited number of ice drifters to measure small scale ice motion within the nearshore and offshore sea ice off Barrow. Sea ice movement is an important concern with respect to offshore oil and gas operations, the shipment of goods to the villages, scientific research activities, and the safety of subsistence hunting activities. Through the use of satellite-tracked buoys and satellite imagery, our understanding of large-scale ice motion within the deep ocean has improved significantly over the past few decades, although our knowledge of the impacts of small scale ice motions are limited, especially in the nearshore and offshore areas of the shallow shelf areas of the Chukchi Sea. Recent scientific investigations described in OCS Study BOEM 2012-079, *Application of High Frequency Radar to Potential Hydrocarbon Development Areas in the Northeast Chukchi Sea*, have shown a complex set of ocean currents within this area of the shelf during the open water season. Other investigations have shown large breakout events of landfast ice along the northeast Chukchi coast. In one of these breakout events on April 9, 2012, a large mass of ice over 40Km in length broke off the coast seaward of Wainwright and drifted into offshore areas of the Chukchi Shelf.

Objectives:

- Design, develop, test, and deploy low-cost satellite-tracked ice drifters that will collect position data during winter conditions in the northeast Chukchi Sea. The drifters should be easily deployed by local residents using snow-machines or walking on ice; survive low altitude deployments from helicopters; transmit real-time position data via Iridium Satellite; and float and continue sending position data after the ice flow has melted.
- Obtain ice motion information from the collection and analysis of sub-daily position data from clusters of deployed drifters within the coastal ice and within offshore ice flows.
- Obtain ice thickness and velocity data from the tagged ice floes, when possible, as they pass over co-located Ice Profiler and Acoustic Doppler Current Profiler situated beneath the coastal ice and at offshore locations.

Methods: The proposal plans to design, develop, and test a new type of satellite-tracked ice drifter that can be deployed on coastal landfast ice by local hunters or on top of freely drifting mobile pack ice by helicopter to track the movement of sea ice in the northeast Chukchi Sea. The movement and velocity data from the ice-drifters will compliment other data collection efforts currently underway that measures nearshore ice movements, current velocities, and ice thickness from X-Band Coastal Radar, moored Acoustic Doppler Current Profilers (ADCP), and Ice Profiling Sonars (IPS), respectively. Sub-daily position data from the clusters of drifters and X-Band Coastal Radar will improve our understanding of small scale ice dynamics of the coastal attached sea ice. As the fragments of ice detach from the landfast ice during the spring and early summer months, the co-located ADCP and IPS, and the coastal meteorological station in Barrow will provide additional information on potential forces driving the detachment process and movements of sea ice within the nearshore area. Farther offshore large ice floes will be tagged with clusters of ice drifters to track their movements. Twenty (20) prototype ice drifters will be deployed in stages to ensure that any design flaws may be corrected with later deployments. Improvements to the design of the drifters will be made as needed to ensure success.

Revised Date: September 2014

Environmental Studies Program: Alaska Annual Studies Plan FY 2015

Region: Alaska

Planning Area(s): Beaufort Sea, Chukchi Sea

Title: Sea Level Measurements along the Alaskan Chukchi and Beaufort Coasts (AK-13-03-09)

BOEM Information Need(s) to be Addressed: This study will deploy a network of tide gauges that will provide information to examine the relationships between ocean processes and sea level along the entire Chukchi-Beaufort coast in a systematic manner. A better understanding of local sea levels in this region and their relationship to both local and remote wind forcing will aid with improving the ocean circulation models that support BOEM's oil-spill trajectory modeling.

Total Cost: \$72,178
plus Joint Funding

Period of Performance: FY 2014-2017

Conducting Organization: CMI, UAF

BOEM Contact: [Dr. Heather Crowley](#)

Description:

Background: Changes in coastal sea level are caused by ocean currents, storm surges, winds, and tides. Local observations and recent measurements acquired by current meters in the northern Chukchi Sea and western Beaufort Sea indicate that sea level and coastal currents sometimes change rapidly even if local winds are calm. These changes are responses to wind forcing in the southern Chukchi/northern Bering Sea. These remote winds initiate sea level changes that propagate northward along the Chukchi coast toward Barrow and then eastward along the Beaufort coast.

Presently, there are NOAA tide gauges (sea level recorders) at Red Dog dock and at Prudhoe Bay. These two monitoring sites are too few and too distant from one another to investigate relationships between sea level and ocean processes along the entire Chukchi-Beaufort coast in a systematic manner.

Objectives: The overall goal of this study is to improve understanding of ocean circulation and improving computer models of ocean circulation in the Chukchi and Beaufort seas. Specific objectives include:

- Investigating relationships between landfast ice breakout events and sea level changes;
- Assessing the sea level responses to local and remote wind forcing during open water and ice covered seasons; and
- Computing tidal harmonics and other relevant statistics for each location.

Methods: This project will deploy tide gauges (water level recorders) to acquire year-long (summer 2014 – summer 2015) records of local sea level at five locations in Alaska: Pt. Hope, Pt. Lay, Wainwright, Barrow, and Kaktovik. Local boats and crews will be chartered in each community and provided with necessary instruction to deploy and recover the moorings. The moorings will be deployed in lagoons or protected waters near the sentinel communities at locations and depths, identified by local crews, where the potential for instrument loss and/or damage associated with ice scouring is minimized. Sea level signals in lagoons are typically comprised of signals associated with large-scale processes occurring external to the lagoons and small-scale processes occurring within the lagoons. Accordingly, three (one primary and two secondary) moorings will be deployed near each community.

Revised Date: September 2014

Environmental Studies Program: Alaska Annual Studies Plan FY 2015

Region: Alaska

Planning Area(s): Beaufort Sea, Chukchi Sea

Title: Updates to the Fault Tree for Oil-Spill Occurrence Estimators (AK-11-01)

BOEM Information Need(s) to be Addressed: The Oil-Spill Risk Analysis (OSRA) is a cornerstone to regional EISs, EAs, and oil-spill response planning. Oil-spill issues constitute a significant portion of public comments submitted on lease sale or development EISs and exploration EAs in the Alaska OCS Region. This study is necessary to incorporate fault-tree spill occurrence estimators into NEPA analyses for Arctic OCS oil and gas lease sales or Arctic development.

Total Cost: \$229,840

Period of Performance: FY 2011-2016

Conducting Organization: Bercha International

BOEM Contact: [Caryn Smith](#)

Description:

Background: The OCS spill occurrence rates used in non-Arctic BOEM NEPA analyses are based on historical Gulf of Mexico and Pacific OCS platform, pipeline or worldwide tanker crude oil-spill rates. Since 2002, the Alaska OCS Region has incorporated a fault-tree approach which considers 1) differences in oil-spill occurrence factors between the Arctic and Gulf of Mexico OCS and 2) Arctic-specific factors. Recent examples of such analyses include:

- Bercha, F. G. 2006. Alternative Oil Spill Occurrence Estimators and Their Variability for the Chukchi Sea - Fault Tree Method. OCS Study MMS 2006-033. Prepared by Bercha Group, Calgary, Alberta, for MMS Alaska OCS Region, Anchorage, AK.
- Bercha, F. G. 2008. Alternative Oil Spill Occurrence Estimators and Their Variability for the Alaskan OCS - Fault Tree Method: Update of GOM OCS Statistics to 2006. OCS Study MMS 2008-025. Prepared by Bercha Group, Calgary, Alberta, for MMS Alaska OCS Region, Anchorage, AK.
- Bercha, F. G. 2008. Alternative Oil Spill Occurrence Estimators and Their Variability for the Beaufort Sea - Fault Tree Method. OCS Study MMS 2008-035. Prepared by Bercha Group, Calgary, Alberta, for MMS Alaska OCS Region, Anchorage, AK.
- Bercha, F. G. 2008. Alternative Oil Spill Occurrence Estimators and Their Variability for the Chukchi Sea - Fault Tree Method. OCS Study MMS 2008-036. Prepared by Bercha Group, Calgary, Alberta, for MMS Alaska OCS Region, Anchorage, AK.
- Bercha, F. G. 2011. Summary Final Report Alternative Oil Spill Occurrence Estimators for the Beaufort and Chukchi Seas - Fault Tree Method. OCS Study

BOEMRE 2011-030. Prepared by Bercha Group, Calgary, Alberta, for USDOJ, BOEMRE, Alaska OCS Region, Anchorage, AK.

Objectives: Provide an update to fault tree spill occurrence rates and confidence intervals for NEPA analyses for any Arctic OCS Lease Sales and other actions, including for OCS offshore oil and gas developments during the contract period of performance.

Methods: This study will: 1) review and assimilate oil-spill occurrence reports, data and geohazard data from alternative sources and locations as needed; 2) use updated Gulf of Mexico OCS historical data together with its measures of spill size and frequency variance to run the Monte Carlo fault tree model with these measures of variance; 3) provide updated fault tree analyses for Arctic oil and gas lease sales based on BOEM-supplied exploration and development scenarios, generating life-of-field oil-spill occurrence rates and indicators; 4) provide up to two additional fault-tree analyses for Beaufort and/or Chukchi Seas for site-specific oil and gas development taking into account site-specific geohazards and generating life-of-field occurrence indicators; 5) provide a formal report documenting each analytical or fault-tree update, and 6) provide professional support to BOEM in regard to statistical issues of occurrence rates and estimator(s) related to this study and its results.

Revised Date: September 2014

Environmental Studies Program: Alaska Annual Studies Plan FY 2015

Region: Alaska

Planning Area(s): All Alaska Planning Areas

Title: Loss of Well Control Occurrence and Size Estimators for the Alaska OCS (AK-11-12)

BOEM Information Need(s) to be Addressed: The Oil-Spill Risk Analysis (OSRA) is a cornerstone to regional EISs, EAs, and oil-spill contingency planning. BOEM uses a fault-tree approach to extrapolate the historical non-Arctic spillage to Arctic conditions for Arctic NEPA analyses. BOEM needs well control incident data from Gulf of Mexico, the North Sea, and offshore Australia exploration and development well activities to be reviewed, statistically analyzed and formatted for use for future fault tree and NEPA analyses. The OSRA spill rate calculations, because of oil-spill issues, constitutes a significant portion of public comments submitted on lease sale or development EISs and exploration EAs in the Alaska OCS Region, even prior to 2010 Deepwater Horizon spill in the Gulf of Mexico OCS.

Total Cost: \$306,040

Period of Performance: FY 2012-2016

Conducting Organization: Bercha International

BOEM Contact: [Dr. Heather Crowley](#)

Description:

Background: The BOEM uses the historical blowout record on the Outer Continental Shelf (OCS) and the North Sea as an input to the fault tree model to develop oil-spill occurrence rates for oil-and-gas-lease sales and any development projects in the Chukchi and Beaufort Sea OCS Planning Areas proposed under BOEM and industry planning. In recent years, the Alaska OCS Region has frequently been tasked to provide frequency estimates and analysis of loss of well control occurrence during lease sale, exploration and development in NEPA assessments. The largest spill from a single well control incident in the history of offshore oil industry, the *Deepwater Horizon* blowout in the Gulf of Mexico OCS, has further focused interest in consideration of very large spills from well control incidents in NEPA analyses.

Under the Bureau of Safety and Environmental Enforcement Regulations 30 CFR § 250.188 (3) industry must report all losses of well control. “Loss of well control” means: (i) Uncontrolled flow of formation or other fluids. The flow may be to an exposed formation (an underground blowout) or at the surface (a surface blowout); (ii) Flow through a diverter; or (iii) Uncontrolled flow resulting from a failure of surface equipment or procedures. *Offshore Blowouts: Causes and Control* (Holand, 1997) has the most comprehensive analysis of worldwide blowout data, but those data are in need of updating. The primary world database for this information has been compiled by and is held by SINTEF, with SINTEF and a few others with access providing statistical analyses based on the database.

Objectives:

- Update offshore loss of well control frequency information through 2011 for the Gulf of Mexico and Pacific OCS, the North Sea, Australian offshore regions and other areas with a comparable regulatory regime.
- Apply statistical procedures to develop loss of well control occurrence rates for different operational phases and product spilled (e.g., gas, crude and condensate, drilling mud).
- Estimate confidence intervals for occurrence rates.
- Provide statistical measures such as mean and median spill sizes including appropriate methods for statistical outliers such as the *Deepwater Horizon* blowout.

Methods: The investigators will collate and analyze available data on offshore well control incidents in the Gulf of Mexico and Pacific OCS, the North Sea, Australian offshore regions and other areas with a comparable regulatory regime. Existing very large oil spill examples (probability, size, and basis) from regional (Alaska) oil-spill contingency plans and environmental assessments will also be reviewed. The investigators will calculate well control incident frequencies and perform appropriate statistical analyses, including trend analysis.

Revised Date: September 2014

Environmental Studies Program: Alaska Annual Studies Plan FY 2015

Region: Alaska

Planning Area(s): Beaufort Sea

Title: ANIMIDA III: Boulder Patch and Other Kelp
Communities in the Development Area (AK-11-14a)

BOEM Information Need(s) to be Addressed: The Arctic Nearshore Impact Monitoring in Development Area (ANIMIDA) and continuation of ANIMIDA (cANIMIDA) have monitored the Boulder Patch Area of Special Biological Concern in the Beaufort Sea OCS, with last Boulder Patch survey in 2007. There is a continuing, ongoing need for this monitoring in the development area within the Beaufort Sea during the performance period of the study, which will coincide with continued production from Northstar, development and production from Liberty, and Camden Bay delineation and potential development. The information will support NEPA analysis and documentation for Beaufort Sea Lease Sales and DPPs.

Total Cost: \$606,000

Period of Performance: FY 2012-2018

Conducting Organization: CESU-University of Texas at Austin

BOEM Contact: [Catherine Coon](#)

Description:

Background: The ANIMIDA project started monitoring of the Boulder Patch in 2000. This and multiple other research projects on the Boulder Patch by BOEM, the National Science Foundation, and industry have allowed one of very few long-term monitoring records in the Arctic to be cobbled together, stretching from the late 1970's through the current decade.

The Liberty prospect adjoins the Boulder Patch. In 2008, the MMS approved a development plan for the nearby Liberty prospect. Shell has also submitted an exploration plan to delineate existing oil discoveries in the Sivulliq and Torpedo prospects in Camden Bay, an area with known but poorly mapped kelp beds. Ongoing industry activities necessitate ongoing monitoring projects.

Objectives:

- Evaluate the potential impact from additional activities at the Liberty prospect on the Boulder Patch kelp community.
- Monitor the impact to the Boulder Patch community from increased summer turbidity and other oceanographic changes occurring with climate change.
- Estimate the importance of and extent of Camden Bay kelp patches.

Methods: The Boulder Patch kelp bed surveys and monitoring will be conducted using small vessel support in the open water season. Kelp production will be measured using established or comparable techniques. Oceanographic measurements shall include ambient light intensity and total suspended solids using established or comparable techniques. Data will be combined with the existing long-term dataset. The extent of kelp in Camden Bay will be surveyed and GIS maps constructed of kelp and implied (boulder and or hard bottom) kelp beds in the study area.

Revised Date: September 2014

Environmental Studies Program: Alaska Annual Studies Plan FY 2015

Region: Alaska

Planning Area(s): Beaufort Sea

Title: ANIMIDA III: Contaminants, Sources, and Bioaccumulation (AK-11-14b)

BOEM Information Need(s) to be Addressed: This project has monitored the development area in the Beaufort Sea OCS, with last sampling of contaminants, sources, and bioaccumulation in 2006. There is a continuing, ongoing need for this monitoring in the development area within the Beaufort Sea during the performance period of the study, which will coincide with continued production from Northstar, development and production from Liberty, and Camden Bay delineation and potential development. The information will support NEPA analysis and documentation for Beaufort Sea Lease Sales and DPPs.

Total Cost: \$2,700,000

Period of Performance: FY 2013-2017

Conducting Organization: Olgoonik/Fairweather, LLC

BOEM Contact: [Dr. Dan Holiday](#)

Description:

Background: The Arctic Nearshore Impact Monitoring in Development Area (ANIMIDA) and continuation of ANIMIDA (cANIMIDA) started in 1999 and, has provided baseline data and monitoring results for chemical contamination, turbidity, Boulder Patch productivity, and subsistence whaling in the vicinity of oil industry development in the Beaufort Sea OCS. Northstar and Liberty prospects were monitored prior to development and Northstar into development and production. A second continuation of the subsistence whaling task has been completed and a continuation of the Boulder Patch monitoring began in FY 2012.

In 2008, the MMS approved a development plan for the Liberty prospect that would use directional drilling from an enlarged Satellite Drilling Island (SDI) at the east end of the Endicott Causeway. Shell has also submitted an exploration plan to MMS that would delineate existing oil discoveries in the Sivulliq and Torpedo prospects in Camden Bay. Ongoing industry activities necessitate ongoing monitoring projects. The last contaminant sampling under cANIMIDA occurred in 2006 and did not include the deeper Camden Bay area of interest.

Objectives:

- Continue the ANIMIDA/cANIMIDA sediment chemistry monitoring emphasizing hydrocarbon and priority metal concentrations.
- Improve the cANIMIDA conceptual model of suspended sediment interactions, loading, and export from the ANIMIDA area, continue to delineate and quantify the offshore dispersion of river runoff and suspended sediments during the

spring melt, trace the dispersion of suspended sediments into deeper, outer shelf water, continue to refine sourcing techniques for suspended sediments particularly in the expanded eastern ANIMIDA area, expand the chemical analyses of suspended sediments to include hydrocarbon composition, estimate the contribution of shoreline erosion, Mackenzie River, and offshore waters to suspended sediment load and composition.

- Continue development of a conceptual model of bioaccumulation and trophic interaction in ANIMIDA biota, monitor bioaccumulation of contaminants in selected species, and continue ANIMIDA/cANIMIDA contaminant monitoring program for amphipod and bivalve samples.
- Develop and initiate a contaminant monitoring program for deeper water benthic biota found in this expanded ANIMIDA study area. Include mid-Beaufort Distributed Biological Observatory stations as part of the monitoring program

Methods: Field logistics will include small vessel support in the open water season. Larger vessel support will be needed in offshore Camden Bay for the biological/contaminant effort. Primary biological/contaminant field surveys will likely occur in the open-water period, with some effort during breakup with high river flow, and at least once during the ice-covered season.

Sediment and biota sampling will be scheduled such that stations sampled in eastern, central, and western Beaufort in ANIMIDA/cANIMIDA will be resampled at least once and that new deeper eastern Beaufort Region stations around Sivulliq and Torpedo would be sampled at least twice (to form a baseline). Focus will be on potential oil and gas development areas and contaminants in sediments and benthic biota, as well as distribution and abundance of benthic biota.

Chemical fingerprinting and ratio techniques developed in ANIMIDA/cANIMIDA will be used to characterize sources of suspended sediments. Profiles for turbidity, salinity, temperature and current would be obtained from numerous sites around the pertinent project area at the time of sampling. The choice of elemental and isotope parameters to be analyzed for suspended sediment will be designed to maximize the potential for discriminating among different sources of particles. A variety of dispersion models and predictive tools should be considered.

The study will use the cANIMIDA conceptual food web model to help guide development of specific objectives for this task, increase statistical viability of the results with the goal of longer-term strategy for biological contaminant monitoring, and will make improvements to this conceptual model based on study findings.

Revised Date: September 2014

Environmental Studies Program: Alaska Annual Studies Plan FY 2015

Region: Alaska

Planning Area(s): Beaufort Sea, Chukchi Sea, Cook Inlet

Title: Physical and Chemical Analyses of Crude and Refined Oils:
Laboratory and Mesoscale Oil Weathering (AK-14-02)

BOEM Information Need(s) to be Addressed: The Alaska OCS Region uses an oil weathering model (OWM) to provide NEPA analysts with a common, quantitative set of spill weathering parameters. Weathering of spilled oil and persistence of its most toxic components vary depending on the specific characteristics of the oil. Currently, NEPA analysts in the Alaska OCS Region must make assumptions about these processes because only a small subset of oil samples specific to the Alaska OCS and North Slope have been analyzed for use in the SINTEF OWM. In particular, the addition of new low-sulfur marine diesel fuels to the library would be especially useful information for analysts to use in upcoming NEPA assessments.

Total Cost: \$580,511

Period of Performance: FY 2014-2016

Conducting Organization: SEA Consulting Group

BOEM Contact: [Dr. Heather Crowley](#)

Description:

Background: The rate of oil dispersion into the water column calculated by the OWM is used to estimate whether State and Federal water quality standards and criteria would be exceeded by a spill, over what area and for how long. The model calculates the area covered by a spill, an important parameter for estimating effects, but the OSRA does not. The model also calculates the persistence of the lighter, but most toxic components of the oil slick. This calculation allows analysts to directly estimate persistence of toxicity, rather than assume for purposes of analysis that these toxic components persist over the first three days of a spill. Because the size of a spill affects its weathering, the model helps distinguish between effects of large ($\geq 1,000$ bbl) and small ($< 1,000$ bbl) spills. The *in situ* viscosity and degree of emulsification provided by the model are used in assessing the mitigation by and effectiveness of oil-spill countermeasures such as mechanical recovery, dispersant, and in-situ burning.

This proposed research will be informed by results from the study “Validation of the Two Models Developed to Predict the Window of Opportunity for Dispersant Use in the Gulf of Mexico” conducted by the Bureau of Safety and Environmental Enforcement’s Technology Assessment and Research Program. That project aims to validate and improve two correlation models that were developed to predict the window of opportunity for successful chemical dispersant use in the Gulf of Mexico (GOM). That project will also evaluate the sensitivity of the models to various oil weathering parameters.

Objectives: This study will provide weathering characteristics of representative Alaskan OCS crude and marine fuel oils to expand upon the existing SINTEF oil weathering model library of oil compositions.

Methods: Conduct lab and mesoscale oil weathering on up to 7 Alaskan crude or condensate oils (potentially including: Ooguruk, Nikiakchuq, Badami, Endicott, Northstar, Point Thompson, Alpine, Alaska North Slope, Cook Inlet) and up to 3 refined oils (such as low-sulfur marine diesel, IFO and Bunker C).

Revised Date: September 2014

Environmental Studies Program: Alaska Annual Studies Plan FY 2015

Region: Alaska

Planning Area(s): Chukchi Sea

Title: Evaluating Chukchi Sea Trace Metals and Hydrocarbons Sourced from Nearby Coastal Rivers (AK-08-12-12)

BOEM Information Need(s) to be Addressed: Quantifying trace metals and polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAH) contributions from these terrestrial sources will provide needed information about chemistry and seasonal variability in outputs of contaminants and pollutants from land to the offshore Chukchi lease areas and thus provide a major constraint on background source variability of these chemicals. BOEM analysts and decision makers will use this information in NEPA analysis and documentation for Lease Sales, EPs and DPPs.

Total Cost: \$232,760
plus Joint Funding

Period of Performance: FY 2012-2015

Conducting Organization: CMI, UAF

BOEM Contact: [Dr. Heather Crowley](#)

Description:

Background: The Yukon, Kobuk, and Noatak Rivers comprise 88% of the land-derived area draining into the Chukchi Sea (via strong northward directed currents through the Bering Strait). These rivers deliver relatively unknown quantities of particulate and dissolved phases (including metals and hydrocarbons) to the Bering and Chukchi seas. There are ambient levels of metals and hydrocarbons present in marine sediments and seawater in the Arctic, much of which are thought to be originally derived from terrestrial sources. Metals and hydrocarbons from offshore drilling operations can alter the natural biogeochemical state of marine ecosystems. Previous studies have added to our knowledge about concentrations of metals and hydrocarbon pollutants proximate to the OCS lease areas (e.g., ANIMIDA, cANIMIDA, COMIDA CAB). This study will complement previous work by quantifying terrestrial particulate inputs to the Chukchi Sea from “upstream” sources such as the Yukon River.

Objectives:

- Develop an inventory of trace metals and PAHs to the Chukchi Sea of river sediments from the Yukon River.
- Evaluate the completeness of the historic record found in cores taken from high-sedimentation areas.
- Examine the relationship between trace metal abundance in riverine sediment sources and sediment grain-size.

Methods: Researchers will collect active river channel bedload and suspended load sediments for trace metal and PAH analyses from the Yukon River during two summer field seasons. Bedload samples will be collected from river banks whereas suspended sediment load samples will be collected from water pumped at a 1 m depth below the surface. Samples will then be filtered using a continuous flow centrifuge. Sediment cores will also be extracted from the three locations using a vibracorer. Local residents will be trained to collect additional suspended load and bedload samples during the fall, winter and spring seasons.

Revised Date: September 2014

Environmental Studies Program: Alaska Annual Studies Plan FY 2015

Region: Alaska

Planning Area(s): Beaufort Sea, Chukchi Sea

Title: Distribution and Abundance of Select Trace Metals in Chukchi and Beaufort Sea Ice (AK-13-03-04)

BOEM Information Need(s) to be Addressed: Anthropogenic contaminants from local, regional, or global sources can contribute to the abundance and distribution of trace metals in sea ice and therefore could significantly affect the distribution of dissolved trace metals in surface waters. Offshore exploration and development products (e.g. drilling muds, produced water or oil) are potential local and regional sources, while atmospheric emissions from industrialized regions captured in winter snow are potential regional and global sources. Results from this project will improve understanding of trace metal distribution and abundance in the Arctic sea ice environment, and on its role as a source of trace metals in the water column. BOEM analysts and decision makers will use this information in NEPA analysis and documentation for Lease Sales, EPs and DPPs.

Total Cost: \$262,073
plus Joint Funding

Period of Performance: FY 2013-2016

Conducting Organization: CMI, UAF

BOEM Contact: [Dr. Heather Crowley](#)

Description:

Background: Increased oil and gas activities in the offshore Alaskan Arctic can potentially lead to changes in the natural environment. Offshore exploration and extraction of mineral resources in the Alaskan Arctic under a changing sea ice environment emphasizes the need to better understand the role of natural environmental processes in the retention, transport, and subsequent release of trace metals in sea ice. Concentrations of trace elements in seawater and sediments in the nearshore Beaufort Sea development area have been well constrained by numerous studies during the last 20 years, including the ANIMIDA and cANIMIDA projects. In contrast, there are no data for dissolved trace metals in Alaskan Arctic sea ice and a very limited number of unpublished data points for particulate metals. Sea ice samples were collected during the cANIMIDA projects, but contamination issues stemming from the type of corer used precluded the measurement of dissolved trace elements.

The concentrations of certain trace metals are significantly elevated in sea ice relative to seawater, as indicated by results of previous studies in Antarctica and the Bering Sea. Consequently, sea ice melt has been shown to increase concentrations of some elements in surface waters, but the processes controlling the retention and subsequent release of trace metals in sea ice are not well understood. Possible mechanisms include: 1) trace metals mobilized into the dissolved phase from suspended sediments that were trapped

during sea ice formation; 2) trace metals mobilized from aerosols deposited onto the sea ice as snow begins to melt; 3) trace metals that vary only as a function of salinity and have limited particle reactivity (i.e. Barium and Aluminum); or 4) trace metals concentrated within brine channels during ice formation, and as the base of the sea ice interacts with the upper water column during the growing season. Understanding the relative importance of these mechanisms will provide the basis for understanding how trace metals (naturally occurring and anthropogenic) are retained, transported, and released by sea ice.

Objectives:

- Manufacture and test a trace metal clean ice corer.
- Conduct laboratory-based experiments on sea ice retention and release of trace metals.
- Collect aerosols and surface seawater samples in the Chukchi Sea and near ice floes.
- Quantify dissolved and particulate trace metals in laboratory grown sea ice and the resulting brine/seawater mixture.
- Quantify dissolved and particulate trace element concentrations in offshore surface seawater samples.
- Quantify particulate trace element concentrations and ratios in offshore atmospheric deposition (aerosol/snow) samples.
- Quantify dissolved and particulate trace metal concentrations and ratios in ice cores collected in Camden Bay.
- Quantify dissolved and particulate trace metal concentrations and ratios in snow samples collected in Camden Bay.
- Share project results with local communities.

Methods: The researchers will build a new corer using commercially pure titanium battery powered drill head to minimize potential contamination. Laboratory experiments to investigate the cycling of trace elements in sea ice will focus on 1) the effect of sediment inclusion and brine rejection during ice formation and growth and 2) the effects of sea ice degradation on the characteristics of material exported from sea ice. These experiments will be conducted under temperature-controlled conditions in plastic tanks, and the resultant concentration of the trace metals in the sea ice and underlying waters will be monitored. Changes in the dissolved and particulate fractions will be monitored as ice grows in both the ice and remaining seawater. The ice will be allowed to grow slowly and a time series of trace metal concentrations in both seawater and ice obtained.

Offshore surface seawater and aerosols samples will be collected on board the *R/V Mirai* in collaboration with the Japanese Agency for Marine-Earth Science and Technology (JAMSTEC). Snow will be collected onboard the ship opportunistically during snow events using wide mouth plastic bottles mounted on a polyethylene

polepositioned as high and forward as possible on the ship. A total of ~80-100 cores samples will be collected from 10 stations during the sea ice sampling effort in Camden Bay. Specially designed sampling techniques will be employed to minimize contamination.

Revised Date: September 2014

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Environmental Studies Program: Alaska Annual Studies Plan FY 2015

Region: Alaska

Planning Area(s): Beaufort Sea, Chukchi Sea

Title: Crude Oil Infiltration and Movement in First-year Sea Ice: Impacts on Ice-associated Biota and Physical Constraints (AK-13-03-06)

BOEM Information Need(s) to be Addressed: This project will address some of the questions related to infiltration of oil into sea ice and its biological impacts. This is much needed information with regard to the analysis of any potential oil spills in the Arctic, particularly during winter months when ice cover is unavoidable. BOEM analysts and decision makers will use this information in NEPA analysis and documentation for Lease Sales, EPs and DPPs.

Total Cost: \$298,214
plus Joint Funding

Period of Performance: FY 2014-2017

Conducting Organization: CMI, UAF

BOEM Contact: [Dr. Heather Crowley](#)

Description:

Background: Sea ice plays a critical role in the physics, chemistry and biology of polar seas. Increased oil and gas exploration and development, along with increased shipping in Arctic seas, are increasing the likelihood of oil spill events during periods of ice cover in these areas. Oil spilled under sea ice will initially accumulate under the ice but will then be redistributed through various physical processes, including entrainment into the brine channel system of the sea ice. The extent to which this movement occurs depends on the porosity of the ice, which is temperature and salinity dependent. In addition, the highly variable abundances of biota can substantially alter the characteristics of the brine channel network.

Sea ice provides a habitat for a wide range of biota that inhabit the surface, interior, and bottom ice layers including single-celled organisms such as diatom algae as well as multi-cellular taxa such as nematode round worms, various crustaceans and Arctic cod. These ice biota fuel Arctic food webs by providing an early and, for some taxa, nutritiously superior food pulse to pelagic and benthic fauna before the onset of pelagic production. Depressed sea-ice derived production caused by toxic or mechanical effects of oil would cascade up the food chain both in the pelagic and benthic realms.

Objectives:

- Adapt and apply potentially suitable, simple analytical and fluid dynamics numerical models to the small-scale movement of oil in ice.

- Compare results from mesocosm experiments conducted in nearly sterile versus highly populated biomass of sea ice to assess the effects on oil migration.
- Assess changes in sea ice flora and fauna composition in association with exposure to oil.
- Analyze the dependence of the volume fraction of ice impacted by oil on the small scale, as well as the mobilization of oil, on the evolution of ice microstructure during spring warming.

Methods: Field work will be conducted off Barrow, Alaska, during the sea ice-covered season in 2014 and 2015. Geophysical and biological measurements, as well samples of ice biota will be collected during different seasons, spring (April 2014) and early spring (Feb/March 2015), because physical and biological properties of sea ice change with increasing temperature and irradiance. Sections from at least three ice cores per sampling period and site will be melted directly in the dark and divided for measurements of algal pigment concentrations and measurement of particulate organic carbon (POC) and nitrogen (PON). Sea-ice geophysics data obtained in the field will include continuous measurements of ice temperature, thickness and snow-depth evolution with automated sensor. During field visits, ice cores will be extracted for analysis of ice stratigraphy, salinity, temperature and oxygen stable-isotope composition. On-ice thickness surveys will provide information on spatial variability of ice and snow thickness.

Ice tank experiments will be conducted at UAF. Two tanks each will be dedicated for each of three treatments: 1) an abiotic control (-biota, +oil); 2) a biotic control (+biota, -oil); and 3) an experimental treatment (+biota, +oil). Prior to collection of sea ice biota, the experimental design will be tested with an abiotic control to compare microstructure of artificial and natural sea ice. Natural sea ice biota collected from Barrow (see above) will be concentrated in biomass and inserted into treatments 2 and 3 after the initial sea ice cover has reached a thickness of ~5 cm. Crude oil will be released into treatments 1 and 3 under the ice, and after incubation for 2, 10 and 20 days after the oil release, small ice cores (5 cm diameter) will be taken to quantify biological parameters. Biological parameters to be quantified include ice algal pigment concentration, mass of particulate organic carbon and nitrogen, abundance of ice meiofauna, and extracellular polymeric substances as well as bulk salinity, porosity, and oil concentration.

Revised Date: September 2014

Environmental Studies Program: Alaska Annual Studies Plan FY 2015

Region: Alaska

Planning Area(s): Beaufort Sea, Chukchi Sea

Title: Biodegradation and Transport of Crude Oil in Sand and Gravel Beaches of Arctic Alaska (AK-13-03-10)

BOEM Information Need(s) to be Addressed: This study will provide information about the potential fate of crude oil on the Arctic coast. It will investigate transport processes through sediments, as well as degradation of crude oil by microorganisms. Additionally, BOEM analysts will use this information in NEPA analysis and documentation for Lease Sales, EPs and DPPs.

Total Cost: \$56,310
plus Joint Funding

Period of Performance: FY 2014-2015

Conducting Organization: CMI, UAF

BOEM Contact: [Rick Raymond](#)

Description:

Background: Low temperatures (such as those present during most of the year in arctic Alaska) affect the physical properties (e.g. viscosity) as well as biodegradability of crude oil. It is common practice after such spills to begin spill clean-up with mechanical means, and then enhance microbial degradation of petroleum hydrocarbons by adding nutrients after preliminary efforts; this was the process for the Exxon Valdez Oil Spill. However, the efficiency of nutrient addition may be reduced due to the washout resulting from tidal and wave action. The majority of coastal oil-spill remediation research has focused on biostimulation of microbes to aid crude oil degradation. Little research has been conducted on the movement of oil through the soil profile and the effect that wave action can have on this movement. Flushing due to tides and waves will impact hydrocarbon transport both within the soil/sediment matrix and into the sea. This important aspect has not received much scientific attention. Limited quantitative information is available on the fate of crude oil spilled on arctic shorelines or on the efficiency of crude oil biodegradation in cold climates.

Objectives:

- Analyze the combined effect of crude oil concentration and temperature on the rate of crude oil biodegradation in seashore sediments, under conditions typical for Alaska's arctic coasts.
- Determine the fate of nutrients and crude oil through sand/gravel beach sediment samples with different grain size distributions using a wave simulation tank.

- Evaluate the movement of crude oil through the soil profile on the Arctic coast, with special consideration of wave action
- Analyze the rate at which oil moves through the soil, oil pooling, the amount of oil remaining in the soil (not washed away), and the extent to which biodegradation can contribute to oil removal

Methods: This study will address both biodegradation and contaminant transport processes in a comprehensive laboratory setting to evaluate the feasibility of treating crude oil spills along arctic shores with bioremediation. Soil samples from an inter-tidal zone from a North Slope beach will be used to provide soil profiles representative of an Arctic Alaskan coast. The samples will be characterized in terms of grain size distribution, hydraulic conductivity, porosity and bulk density.

Beach sediment samples from the Barrow area will be infused with crude oil. Mass transfer processes will be studied in a Plexiglas wave tank and in small scale soil columns. Biodegradation will be examined in microcosms containing crude oil-contaminated soil to identify effects from a number of parameters, including: soil grain size (sand/gravel), temperature, nutrient addition, crude oil concentration, and number of flushing cycles or intensity and duration of simulated wave action. Gas chromatography mass spectrometry will be used to measure microbial respiration rates and hydrocarbons remaining in the soil, as well as hydrocarbons volatilized and sorbed to activated carbon. Concentrations of hydrocarbon degrading microorganisms and nutrients will also be quantified.

Revised Date: September 2014

Environmental Studies Program: Alaska Annual Studies Plan FY 2015

Region: Alaska

Planning Area(s): Beaufort Sea

Title: Beaufort Sea Marine Fish Monitoring Survey in the Central Beaufort Sea (AK-10-06)

BOEM Information Need(s) to be Addressed: Fish resources are important to upper trophic levels in the Beaufort Sea ecosystem and to the coastal communities. NEPA analysts need additional species presence and abundance information for assessing potential impacts of offshore development activities. Study information will support NEPA analyses and documentation for Beaufort Sea Lease Sales, EPs, and DPPs in 2011 and beyond.

Total Cost: \$1,764,252
plus Joint Funding

Period of Performance: FY 2010-2016

Conducting Organization: University of Alaska Fairbanks

BOEM Contact: [Kate Wedemeyer](#)

Description:

Background: Enhanced marine fish information is needed for Beaufort Sea NEPA analyses. Data at the most basic level—e.g., fish species presence/absence and distribution data—are not only spotty, but also outdated. Fish assemblages and populations in other marine ecosystems off Alaska have undergone observable regime-shifts in diversity and abundance over the last 20-30 years. While the same is likely true of the Beaufort Sea, it is unconfirmed because the scant distribution and abundance data available are pre-regime-shift. Furthermore, important marine mating, spawning, rearing, feeding, and migration habitats (pre or post regime-shift) is yet to be delineated. A baseline of fish species, distribution, relative abundance, and the locations of critical or sensitive life history stage habitats in this central lease area remains a very high-priority information need for NEPA analyses. The original central Beaufort target area remains the region of most intense industry interest and thus the region of greatest BOEM information need.

An under-ice pilot survey is included because the Beaufort Sea lease area is under ice for half to three-fourths of the year. Thus, it is important that BOEM obtain a more complete data set that encompasses the under-ice season. The addition of the under-ice pilot survey study will provide a more complete methodology and a baseline data set that encompasses all seasons in the Beaufort Sea, including ice-covered seasons. Such a data set will allow BOEM to support environmentally sound offshore oil and gas exploration and development decisions.

The addition of bird and marine mammal observers and zooplankton sampling will provide transect data in offshore areas where data for those species is as sparse as for

fish species. The contemporaneous collection will also enable first-time correlations between fish, zooplankton, birds and marine mammal species in this area.

Objectives:

- Identify the fish species that occupy the central OCS Beaufort Sea lease area.
- Develop and recommend a methodology adapted to arctic conditions and specific BOEM information needs in the Beaufort Sea for use in future surveys.
- Identify the fish species that occupy the central lease area during the ice-covered season.
- Correlate observation of seabirds and marine mammals to fish and zooplankton for increased understanding of this arctic ecological system.

Methods: The survey will sample fish and zooplankton in the central Beaufort between 147° and 152° west longitude, where BOEM information needs are greatest. Due to logistical conflicts encountered in 2008, it will incorporate new strategies for timing surveys to avoid interference from industry seismic exploration. It will include methods adapted to sampling small sized and rare fish thought to inhabit the Beaufort Sea and also assess additional options to effectively sample bottom habitats. Addition of bird and marine mammal observers will provide transect data to those specialties and allow correlations between fish, zooplankton, birds, and marine mammals.

A pilot under-ice marine survey will implement a design outlined in the 2007 MMS “Under-Ice Sampling Workshop.” The survey will occur in three stages: 1) assemble local and traditional knowledge with Inupiat residents; 2) under-ice sampling by local residents and time lapse under-ice cameras, 3) test survey of three different and difficult-to-sample Arctic cod habitats at the ice-water interface with DIDSON sonar (dual frequency identification sonar), remotely operated vehicles (ROVs), and shallow-water scuba transects. The pilot study will provide statistical hypothesis testing between the open water, ROV and dive surveys, which will provide a baseline for subsequent surveys and provide sampling statistics, including variance estimators, for future time-series analyses.

The final products will include Geographic Information Systems (GIS) and report formats. Intermediate results will be provided for NEPA analyses.

Revised Date: September 2014

Environmental Studies Program: Alaska Annual Studies Plan FY 2015

Region: Alaska

Planning Area(s): All Alaska Planning Areas

Title: Seabird Distribution and Abundance in the Offshore Environment (AK-10-10)

BOEM Information Need(s) to be Addressed: More information on the distribution and timing of use by marine birds, including listed and candidate species under the ESA (Spectacled Eider, Steller's Eider, Short-Tailed Albatross, Kittlitz's Murrelet) is necessary to assess potential impacts of oil and gas exploration and development in the Chukchi Sea Planning Area. Data on the distribution of marine birds is needed for ESA Section 7 consultations and NEPA analyses, DPPs and other documentation. The information obtained from these surveys may assist in development of mitigation measures and strategies to reduce potential impacts.

Total Cost: \$300,000
plus Joint Funding

Period of Performance: FY 2010-2015

Conducting Organization: USFWS

BOEM Contact: [Catherine Coon](#)

Description:

Background: Basic information on timing and duration of use within designated (Chukchi Sea) and potential Beaufort Planning Areas is necessary to better define the impacts of perturbations and ultimately population effects. Breeding seabirds are generally monitored at colonies, yet they spend most of the year dispersed offshore. Additionally, one half or more of all seabirds do not breed in a given year, thus management of marine birds requires knowledge of spatial and temporal patterns of seabird distribution at sea. The North Pacific Pelagic Seabird Database (NPPSD) is used to consolidate marine bird survey data, but most of these data were collected in the 1970s-80s. Since then, many seabird species have declined and changes have occurred in ocean ecosystems. These changes may have affected the foraging patterns of seabirds. Further changes due to predicted Arctic climate change are anticipated. To address these needs, this project will build off of a recently established at-sea survey program, to collect distribution data on seabirds via partnership and collaboration among the USFWS, NOAA-Fisheries and other vessel-based programs.

Species composition of marine birds varies tremendously by season. For example, in the Bering Sea, shearwaters (*Puffinus* spp.) are the dominant species in summer and fall, accounting for 40-60 % of total marine bird density (birds/km²). When shearwaters return to their southern breeding grounds in winter and spring, seaducks (*Anatidae* spp.) and Murres (*Uria* spp.) dominate. These species groups have very different dispersal patterns and foraging behaviors, thus seasonal changes should be integrated into management schemes. Furthermore, there is little information on seabird

distribution during the migration and winter phases, and filling these information needs will be valuable for mitigating impacts from oil and gas exploration.

The results of this study will complement recent and on-going surveys of marine birds which are partially funded by the North Pacific Research Board (NPRB) and the USFWS. In 2006-2007, NPRB project placed 637 seabird observers on NOAA and NSF-funded vessel-based projects. During those two years, USFWS seabird observers joined 27 cruises and surveyed in excess of 42,000 km. Data on more than 547,000 birds were added to the NPPSD. However, only two of those cruises covered waters in the Chukchi or NAB areas. The at-sea survey program recently received additional funding from NPRB for 2008-2011, as part of the Bering Sea Ecosystem Integrated Research Program. Again, the funded surveys do not adequately provide coverage of the Chukchi or Beaufort areas. With minimal additional funding, the USFWS at-sea survey program could expand to other research cruises that will provide coverage of the lease sale areas. In combination, these surveys will provide a more complete and current data set on marine bird use of the region.

Objectives:

- Estimate the spatial distribution, species composition and seasonal changes in species and abundance for marine birds in designated and potential planning areas.
- Process the data for entry into the North Pacific Pelagic Seabird Database for future accessibility and facilitate management decisions for marine bird use of planning areas.

Methods: Seabird observers will be placed on ships of opportunity, primarily NOAA, BOEM, and NSF-funded research vessels. Based on on-going BOEM, NOAA and NSF programs, we anticipate availability of at least five additional cruises per year in the Chukchi and Beaufort planning areas or within the Bering Sea. Observers use standardized protocols for marine bird surveys and data is entered directly into a laptop computer with a GPS interface. The presence of marine mammals is also recorded, although the seabird protocol differs from those used exclusively for marine mammal surveys. Data will be processed for entry into the NPPSD, providing access to multiple users.

Revised Date: September 2014

Environmental Studies Program: Alaska Annual Studies Plan FY 2015

Region: Alaska

Planning Area(s): Chukchi Sea

Title: Hanna Shoal Ecosystem Study (AK-11-03)

BOEM Information Need(s) to be Addressed: This study will constitute a key component of Chukchi Sea environmental studies pertinent to Chukchi Sea oil and gas activity. The highest oil industry interest is in the Burger prospect bordering Hanna Shoal to the south. The BOEM analysts and decision makers will use the information in NEPA analysis and documentation for Lease Sales, EPs and DPPs, and in post-sale and post-exploration decision making in the Chukchi Sea.

Total Cost: \$5,665,144

Period of Performance: FY 2011-2016

Conducting Organization: CESU-University of Texas at Austin

BOEM Contact: [Dr. Heather Crowley](#)

Description:

Background: The ongoing COMIDA CAB study is highlighting the importance of Hanna Shoal in the NE Chukchi Sea as a biological oasis bordering the boundary between Chukchi and Arctic Ocean waters. The reason for this, however, is poorly understood. The shallower waters of the shoal have long been known as traps for grounding of bergy bits and deep-keeled sea ice, and a reoccurring polynya is created down current of the grounded ice.

Bering Sea water entering the Chukchi Sea and flowing north is thought to flow both to the east and west of the shoal. Historically, the transport of this warmer Bering Sea water past Hanna Shoal has resulted in melt out of open water “bays” in the ice cover on either side of Hanna Shoal. In most recent years with global warming, floating pack ice in summer persists in this area longer than elsewhere in the Chukchi, often surrounded by open water even to the north. This persistence strengthens the vertical stratification over Hanna Shoal as this residual summer ice melts and freshens the surface layer. Taylor columns may be responsible for maintaining ice in the regions of Herald and Hanna shoals. Circulation processes around Hanna Shoal are poorly understood, but the circulation here is part of a broader circulation field that connects the Chukchi and Beaufort. Waters draining through Herald Valley to the western Chukchi shelf and slope regions are carried to the eastern Chukchi, where outer shelf and slope waters are very likely brought back onto the shelf.

Biological “hot spots” in the Chukchi Sea are thought to be related to coupled pelagic and benthic productivity. A high abundance of bottom fauna is correlated with high pelagic primary production, possibly associated with the ice edge that reached the seabed mostly ungrazed. However, the mechanisms that must explain the productivity at Hanna Shoal are relatively poorly understood. With the retreat of the summer ice-

edge to deeper, more northern waters in recent years, this pelagic/benthic coupling may be weakening at Hanna Shoal. The ongoing productivity of this region depends on the timing and position of the ice edge. Other BOEM projects in the Chukchi are showing sustained benthic productivity in the area of Hanna Shoal accompanied by high concentrations of water birds, walrus, and whales. Ongoing BOEM studies looking at ocean heat transport across the central U.S. Chukchi Sea, to the south and at circulation to the east, toward Barrow Canyon will provide context to this study.

Objectives:

- Refocus the ecological monitoring started under COMIDA CAB to the region of Hanna Shoal, including nearby biological “hot spots.”
- Verify and enhance the food web/contaminant bioaccumulation structure developed in the COMIDA CAB study.
- Measure water column and benthic primary and secondary productivity and biomass, and determine the relation to oceanographic processes.
- Document annual circulation and density fields, as well as ice conditions, at Hanna Shoal throughout the year and examine important chemical, physical and biological interactions with the unique ecological regime in this highly productive area.
- Better understand the physical processes controlling circulation patterns in the region through analyses of numerical ocean process model results.
- Integrate effort and findings with recent and ongoing BOEM and other NE Chukchi Sea studies of higher trophic levels.
- Participate in the Distributed Biological Observatory for the Northeast Chukchi Sea

Methods: This project will continue COMIDA CAB benthic sampling, food web analysis, and contaminant measurements, focusing on the Hanna Shoal region. Water column primary and secondary production and biomass also will be measured. Cruise zooplankton data will be supplemented by data from moored zooplankton-sensing ADCP units capable of distinguishing copepod and euphausiid biomass signatures. Appropriate moored and shipboard measurements of currents, sea ice drift, and hydrography (including geochemistry) will examine circulation and density fields. Moorings will be used for long term profiling of temperature and salinity, including under ice measurements in winter. Additional oceanographic data may be obtained from other projects in the Chukchi, these data include: HF radar, moored acoustic Doppler current profilers (ADCP), meteorological buoys, gliders and moored zooplankton-sensing ADCP units capable of distinguishing copepod and euphausiid biomass signatures. Taxonomic information and vouchers for newly identified species will be provided to the National Museum at the Smithsonian Institution.

This study will use numerical ocean circulation model results for the Chukchi Sea to better understand the physical processes controlling circulation patterns in the region. Analyses will be performed on the model results to examine interactions of the flow field

and density structure with the topography and their relation to productivity and biomass distribution. Formal integration with other BOEM projects will be made through the “Marine Mammal/Physical Oceanography Synthesis” to provide upper trophic components to the study. Coordination will occur with other international, NSF, NOAA, ADEC, and industry research in the Chukchi Sea.

Revised Date: September 2014

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Environmental Studies Program: Alaska Annual Studies Plan FY 2015

Region: Alaska

Planning Area(s): Chukchi Sea

Title: Distribution of Fish, Crab and Lower Trophic Communities in the Chukchi Sea Lease Area (AK-11-08a; AK-11-08b)

BOEM Information Need(s) to be Addressed: This project continues collection of marine fish baseline in the Chukchi Sea, and will provide information on the abundance and distribution of fish, crab, and lower trophic communities in the Chukchi Sea lease area. The study will provide the basis for a better understanding of distribution and relative importance of fish communities. The Alaska OCS Region identified a need for continued fish and invertebrate baseline monitoring during the 2007 MMS-sponsored “Chukchi Sea Information Status and Research Planning Meeting” to provide useful information to upcoming NEPA reviews and post-sale needs.

Total Cost: \$2,790,000

Period of Performance: FY 2012-2016

Conducting Organization: University of Alaska Fairbanks; NOAA

BOEM Contact: [Catherine Coon](#)

Description:

Background: This study proposes to develop a broader understanding of abundance and distribution of demersal and pelagic fish, crab, and lower trophic communities needed to evaluate and mitigate the effects of offshore oil and gas development. Interim results from a current BOEM funded Coastal Marine Institute (CMI) project, “Current and Historic Distribution and Ecology of Demersal Fish in the Chukchi Sea Planning Area,” have identified temporal, seasonal, and spatial gaps in data on fish in the Chukchi Sea in particular to sampling on or near the lease areas. This proposal was designed specifically to fill these information needs. It will build upon recent information on invertebrate communities in the Chukchi offshore lease area obtained by the 2009 study “Chukchi Sea Offshore Monitoring in Drilling Area (COMIDA): Chemistry and Benthos (CAB).” This will also complement the 2010 LGL component of COMIDA CAB that undertook midwater and benthic fishery samples at 20 sites within the COMIDA CAB sample design. This study would utilize these data and create a similar survey design such that data sets were compatible, comparable, and extend the time series. This study would contribute to further knowledge of pelagic fishes in the northeast Chukchi Sea. Data from this study will provide abundance and distribution information for NEPA analysis on fish and invertebrate species.

In the well-studied Bering Sea, it is apparent that the distribution and community composition of fish has changed in recent decades and many species are shifting their distributions northward. A MMS Beaufort Sea fish survey in 2008 indicated presence of common Bering Sea species, such as walleye pollock and dense aggregations of snow

crab in the western Beaufort Sea. These species are also likely to be present in the adjacent Chukchi Sea. This study will increase the extent of fisheries information within the lease area and extend a baseline for further studies linking species distributions between the Bering and Beaufort Seas.

The demersal fish and invertebrate community of the Chukchi Sea is thought to be less dense and diverse than in the Bering Sea and does not support major commercial fisheries at this time. The Chukchi Sea, however, is critical to the existence of many protected species of marine mammals and birds. Alaskans living in coastal Chukchi villages depend on the sea for many of the subsistence foods critical to their way of life. Although the Chukchi has historically been considered a benthic dominated system, available data indicate that there is a large biomass of pelagic fish in the area that has not been adequately sampled. This pelagic fish community seems to be dominated by forage fish, including Arctic cod, sand lance and capelin. These species serve as an important mechanism of energy transfer to top predators such as birds, ice-dependent seals, and cetaceans.

Objectives:

- Document, characterize and understand the distribution of pelagic and demersal fish and invertebrate communities in the Chukchi Sea lease area for the open water season.
- Estimate the geographic range of fish, invertebrates, and lower trophic biomass in the lease area by comparing recent and historic fishery databases.
- Provide a comparison of these communities with that of prior studies, as well as adjacent regions (Beaufort and Bering Seas) and relate the data to oceanographic fronts.
- Provide an updated mass-balance food web model of the eastern Chukchi Sea with collected diet information from the bottom trawl and surface trawl surveys, and sensitivity analyses of the model using ranges of uncertainty measured in the data.
- Collect tissue samples of fish, crab, and zooplankton for genetic, energetic, isotopic, and other biological analyses.
- Collect information on ichthyoplankton and juvenile fish, including ecological and life history information, to support Essential Fish Habitat analysis.
- Provide GIS based maps and attribute tables of marine fish and lower trophics for NEPA and other analyses into the AOOS Arctic Portal.

Methods: Conduct a two year field study with fisheries and lower trophic survey in the Chukchi Sea region to obtain baseline data on the structure and function of these ecosystems and on the ecology of important fish species. Samples locations will be determined such that it compliments and extends recent work in the COMIDA CAB. The abundance of pelagic fish, jellyfish, and large zooplankton (e.g., euphausiids) will be estimated with a multi-frequency echo-sounder and ground-truthed using pelagic gear. The results will be directly comparable to historic surveys conducted by COMIDA CAB,

RUSALCA, Conoco/Shell, and Beaufort surveys which will allow them to be placed into a broader latitudinal context. A series of coordinated bottom trawls would use the same survey methodology used by in the 1990/1991 Chukchi Sea Survey, and the RUSALCA surveys 2004-2008. The results will extend the time series (2004-2008) and build upon the earlier surveys (1990, 1991) of demersal fish and invertebrate communities. To interpret the distribution of fishes and their importance as prey, water column properties (temperature, salinity, light level, chlorophyll fluorescence) will be measured at all trawl stations. This study will coordinate with other ongoing BOEM or other agency or university studies in oceanography and biology to maximize data needs and study design. Food web model will be based on the Ecosim modeling framework as extended by NOAA and UAF PIs to include perturbation analysis and statistical analysis of uncertainty. This study has several collaborators who reference the study as Arctic Ecosystem Integrated Survey (Arctic EIS).

Revised Date: September 2014

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Environmental Studies Program: Alaska Annual Studies Plan FY 2015

Region: Alaska

Planning Area(s): Beaufort Sea

Title: Shorebirds and Infaunal Abundance and Distribution on Delta Mudflats along the Beaufort Sea (AK-11-10a)

BOEM Information Need(s) to be Addressed: More information is needed about the species composition, abundance, or distribution of the microfauna and meiofauna invertebrates that shorebirds depend upon for pre-migratory fattening along the Beaufort Sea coast. This study will assess the lower trophic levels forming the base of complex food webs and the biochemistry that influences these relationships. The infaunal abundance contributions to shore bird foraging, migration, and reproductive biology as well as bioremediation of oil spills has been shown to be important factors in the recovery and cleanup of past oil spill events in Alaska and other regions. The information obtained from this jointly-funded research will contribute to development of mitigation measures and strategies to reduce potential impacts from post-lease exploration and development.

Total Cost: \$237,169
plus Joint Funding

Period of Performance: FY 2011-2016

Conducting Organization: USGS

BOEM Contact: [Rick Raymond](#)

Description:

Background: The Beaufort Sea coast includes a variety of biologically productive habitats in lagoons, barrier islands, river deltas, and adjacent tundra areas. These habitats support diverse biota and could be affected by oils spills or disturbance resulting from offshore oil exploration in the Beaufort Sea. Oil spills could impact shorebirds through direct oiling, potentially impacting their prey and the benthic invertebrate community. The impacts of oil on aquatic invertebrates can be significant. Some components of the infaunal invertebrate community would be extirpated, while in others recovery may take 3-5 years depending on the conditions of the oil and environment. These ecosystems are particularly vulnerable to predicted climate-change effects, such as inundation and increased erosion caused by rising sea levels and longer periods of open water. More information is needed about the species composition, abundance, or distribution of the aquatic invertebrates that shorebirds depend upon for pre-migratory fattening along the Beaufort Sea coast. This information need extends to the lower trophic levels forming the base of these complex food webs and the biochemistry that influences these relationships. Their contributions to shore bird foraging, migration, and reproductive biology as well as bioremediation of oil spills has been shown to be important factors in the recovery and cleanup of past oil spill events in Alaska and other regions. Microfauna (e.g. bacterial, fungal, or protozoan populations), and meiofauna (nematodes, gastrotriches, and other eukaryotic organisms) living within

the interstitial spaces of these zones become important considerations in mitigation of long and short-term damage due to anthropogenic oil spill contamination in these microhabitats and surrounding environments. Additionally understanding the chemical factors that determine the distribution of these microfauna and meiofauna is necessary.

Quality foraging habitat for shorebirds is determined by the abundance of benthic invertebrates, but can also be influenced by lagoon water levels that can inundate the delta making the habitat inaccessible to shorebirds. Most of the change in water level on delta mudflats comes from wind driven waves. If wind patterns are consistent then available habitat is predictable, but changes in tide due to westerly storms can be significant and may inundate the whole delta for several days. Climate change may change the frequency of storms and seems to have changed the intensity of the storms by increasing the size of waves because the reduced amount of ice results in fewer impediments to wave build up. This has the potential to change the availability of shorebird feeding areas, making the occurrence of this habitat less predictable to birds during the post-breeding period.

In addition to quantifying invertebrate resources, the study will assess whether the resources available to shorebirds are sufficient to prepare the birds for their fall migration. A functional response model will be used for this assessment based on the capture rate and handling time modeled against invertebrate abundance.

This study will survey the shorelines and consist of taking core samples for laboratory analysis for chemical analysis, population structure, numbers of individuals, and diversity of populations from the interstitial spaces within the littoral zone of coastlines along the Beaufort Sea.

Objectives: The specific objectives of this study are to:

- Quantify the spatial and temporal distribution of macrofauna assemblages at coastal lagoons and river deltas along the Beaufort Sea coast within the USFWS Arctic Refuge- at 3 sites associated with the coastal lagoons at the Jago, Hulahula/Okpilak, and Canning Rivers.
- Assess whether patterns of invertebrate abundance and distribution correspond to foraging shorebird abundance and distribution.
- Develop a model describing the connection between wind patterns and water levels on the mudflat and sediment dispersion that can be used to assess available foraging habitat for shorebirds.
- Assess whether shorebirds respond physiologically to a greater abundance in food resources through body condition measurements and increased triglyceride levels.
- Assess whether available invertebrate resources in the coastal lagoons and river deltas along the Beaufort Sea are sufficient for pre-migratory fattening of shorebirds or provide information for bioremediation.

Methods: This study builds on an existing study with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) and tiers off a previous MMS/CMI shorebird study by Abby Powell across the Beaufort and Chukchi Sea coasts. This study focuses intensively on a few sites along the coast of the USFWS Arctic Refuge and two years data collection has been funded by USFWS. This project is also in collaboration with the Arctic Landscape Conservation Cooperative (LCC). The USGS/BOEM partnership would collect data on a few sites intensively within the USFWS Arctic Refuge at 3 sites associated with the coastal lagoons at the Jago, Okpilak, and Canning Rivers for two additional field seasons. This project will provide additional sampling locations and core analysis to analyze population structures, chemical footprint, numbers of individuals, and diversity of populations from the interstitial spaces within the littoral zone. The project will continue to map the distribution of common functional groups of invertebrates using spatial analysis kriging techniques. Results will produce data reflecting measures of abundance of benthic invertebrates using mudflat core samples to determine availability of food resources for shorebirds.

Revised Date: September 2014

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Environmental Studies Program: Alaska Annual Studies Plan FY 2015

Region: Alaska

Planning Area(s): Beaufort Sea

Title: Wading Shorebird Habitats, Food Resources, Associated Infauna, Sediment Characteristics and Bioremediation Potential of Resident Microbiota of Deltaic Mudflats (AK-11-10b)

BOEM Information Need(s) to be Addressed: More information is needed about species composition, abundance, or distribution of the microfauna and meiofauna living within the interstitial spaces of the littoral zones along the Beaufort Sea coast. Shorebirds depend on meiofauna for food for pre-migratory fattening. Additionally, these organisms make important contributions to bioremediation of oil spills as well as the chemical factors that determine their distribution. The information obtained from this research will contribute to development of mitigation measures and strategies to reduce potential impacts from post-lease exploration and development.

Total Cost: \$365,236

Period of Performance: FY 2011-2015

Conducting Organization: University of Alaska Fairbanks

BOEM Contact: [Rick Raymond](#)

Description:

Background: Nearshore shelf areas of the Beaufort Sea are defined by specific biological and physical gradients that have influence on the Arctic ecosystem including trophic structure, productivity, and the species that inhabit there. Massive freshwater discharges from the Mackenzie River along with numerous smaller rivers produce an environment that is estuarine in characteristic. The features of these estuarine ecosystems vary in trophic structure and productivity. The role of terrestrial carbon in these estuarine food webs is especially important in view of current warming trends in the Arctic and from post-lease exploration and development. Shorebirds depend on invertebrates for food for pre-migratory fattening along the delta mudflats that are at the river face. Smaller organisms that supply food sources for these organisms may also make important contributions to bioremediation of oil spills as well as the chemical factors that determine their distribution. More information is needed about species composition, abundance, or distribution of the microfauna and meiofauna living within the interstitial spaces of the littoral zones along the Beaufort Sea coast. Combined with the distribution of these microfauna and meiofauna a link can be generated with a collection of the chemical stimulation of this biota by describing sediment size and the amount and source of organic carbon.

The Beaufort Sea coast includes a variety of biologically productive habitats in lagoons, barrier islands, river deltas, and adjacent tundra areas. These habitats support diverse biota and could be affected by oils spills or disturbance resulting from offshore oil

exploration in the Beaufort Sea. These ecosystems are particularly vulnerable to predicted climate-change effects, such as inundation and increased erosion caused by rising sea levels, glacial melt, and longer periods of open water. More information is needed about the species composition, abundance, or distribution of the aquatic invertebrates along the Beaufort Sea coast. This information need extends to the lower trophic levels forming the base of these complex food webs and the biochemistry that influences these relationships. Their contributions to shore bird foraging, migration, and reproductive biology as well as bioremediation of oil spills has been shown to be important factors in the recovery and cleanup of past oil spill events in Alaska and other regions.

Objectives: The specific objectives of this study are to:

- Quantify the spatial and temporal distribution of bacterial assemblages, meiofauna, and macrofauna at coastal lagoons and river deltas along the Beaufort Sea coast within the USFWS Arctic Refuge at three sites associated with the coastal lagoons and deltas of Jago, Hulahula/Okpilak, and Canning Rivers.
- Characterize the sediment pore water chemistry for salinity, ammonium, organic carbon, chlorophyll a, stable carbon isotopic signature, and sediment grain size at sample locations representative of each site.

Methods: This study builds on an existing study with USGS to assess shorebird abundance and macrofauna assemblages and tiers off a previous MMS/CMI previous shorebird study by Abby Powell across the Beaufort and Chukchi Sea coasts. This study focuses intensively on a few sites along the coast of the USFWS Arctic Refuge. The USGS/ UAF/ BOEM partnership would collect data on a few sites intensively within the USFWS Arctic Refuge at 3 sites associated with the coastal lagoons at the Jago, Okpilak, and Canning Rivers. This project will provide additional sampling locations and core analysis to analyze population structures, chemical footprint, numbers of individuals, and diversity of populations from the interstitial spaces within the littoral zone. The project will continue to map the distribution of common functional groups of invertebrates using spatial analysis kriging techniques. Results will produce data reflecting measures of abundance of benthic invertebrates using mudflat core samples to determine availability of food resources for shorebirds.

Revised Date: September 2014

Environmental Studies Program: Alaska Annual Studies Plan FY 2015

Region: Alaska

Planning Area(s): Beaufort Sea

Title: U.S.-Canada Transboundary Fish and Lower Trophic Communities (AK-12-04)

BOEM Information Need(s) to be Addressed: Arctic OCS development interests have recently intensified in the eastern Beaufort Sea, accelerating the need to collect ecological baseline data for fish and lower trophic organisms in transboundary marine waters. Information needs include documentation of fish species presence, abundance and distribution in the lease area as well as their ecological interactions with habitat and other trophic levels (prey species and plankton). This project extends recent marine fish and lower trophic surveys in the Beaufort Sea to assess potential effects of offshore development on lower trophic food webs and essential fish habitat (EFH). Study information will support NEPA and other environmental analyses for future lease sales, exploration plans, and potential development and production plans in both the U.S. and Canada.

Total Cost: \$5,191,125
plus Joint Funding

Period of Performance: FY 2012-2016

Conducting Organization: UAF; Department of Fisheries and Oceans, Canada

BOEM Contact: [Kate Wedemeyer](#)

Description:

Background: Information needs in the eastern Beaufort Sea are growing, especially in light of new emphasis on marine spatial planning, EFH consultation, food web modeling and Arctic climate change issues. Currently, NEPA analysts must rely on limited historical data and extrapolation to analyze potential development impacts on eastern Beaufort Sea marine fish and lower trophic communities. A 2008 MMS fish survey in the western Beaufort documented unexpected diversity, including several commercial fish species (cod, pollock, crab) previously unknown in the region. We need better information in the eastern Beaufort about what fish species inhabit the lease area, as well as baseline information about abundance, distribution, habitat, and seasonal and inter-annual variability of fish and invertebrates in the understudied lower foodweb. An under-ice fish and invertebrate baseline, while challenging to obtain, is needed because Beaufort species live under ice three-fourths of the year. Additional oceanographic information about currents, upwelling, and hydrographic structure through fine-scale CTD resolution is needed to document biological habitats. Data from the study will support NEPA analysis to meet NOAA requirements for Essential Fish Habitat (EFH) ecological analyses of fish, their prey and their habitat established for three additional Beaufort fish species (Arctic cod, saffron cod, and snow crab).

This transboundary survey effort, jointly-funded with the Canadian Department of Fisheries and Oceans (DFO), Central and Arctic Region, will share a research vessel, as well as expertise and methods. Costs will be shared in proportion to area surveyed. The collaboration will advance our knowledge of the Beaufort Sea shelf ecosystem, transboundary fish stocks, essential fish habitat, life stage history, and oceanographic variability. Inclusion of invertebrate and primary production sampling will address lower trophic food webs and ecological relationships to bird and marine mammal populations. This work will also contribute to other studies including long-term monitoring efforts near Camden Bay and future international Arctic cod studies.

Objectives:

- Document baseline fish and invertebrate species presence, abundance, distribution and biomass.
- Analyze dietary habits, age and growth patterns of the most abundant species to support Canadian development of a Beaufort shelf fish and marine mammal food web model.
- Test under-ice methods and provide baseline information for the ice-covered season.
- Estimate seasonal variability of fish and habitats.
- Document the hydrographic structure of the eastern Beaufort shelf.
- Enhance understanding of how habitat variables (such as temperature and salinity) affect distributions under different climate conditions.

Methods: The survey will sample fish, invertebrates, and related biological and oceanographic habitat characteristics between longitudes 141° and 147° in the U.S. and into Canadian waters to ~138° (across the Canadian border to Herschel Island and the Mackenzie canyon). Field surveys will be performed every other year in order to reduce autocorrelation of climate conditions and to refine sampling strategy based on analysis of first year data. Field sampling will occur in years 1 and 3. Additional funds will be sought for a third survey in year 4 to better evaluate inter-annual variability.

This survey will expand the scope and reach of a Beaufort Sea Pilot Fish Survey conducted in 2008. Methodologies will follow those from the 2008 survey and the ongoing BOEM Central Beaufort Sea Fish Survey, modified in consideration of lessons learned from the earlier work. Sampling will deploy gear types such as beam trawl (10m wide), otter trawl, Isaacs-Kidd, and bongo nets. This study will include additional field surveys in both the under-ice and open water seasons to provide a better understanding of variability and collect additional habitat characteristics; collect invertebrates in both the water column and benthos; collect CTD data to document hydrographic structure; and collect and analyze ecological (e.g. energetics, isotope, genetic and otolith) samples for a foodweb model. This contemporaneous collection of integrated data over the lower food chain and physical environment supports an ecosystem management approach.

Products will include annual progress reports, final synthesis, databases, and GIS based maps and attribute tables of marine fish and lower trophic communities for inclusion in the in-house fisheries database and use in NEPA analyses.

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Environmental Studies Program: Alaska Annual Studies Plan FY 2015

Region: Alaska

Planning Area(s): Beaufort Sea, Chukchi Sea

Title: Distribution and Habitat Use of Fish in the Nearshore Ecosystem of the Beaufort and Chukchi Seas (AK-12-06)

BOEM Information Need(s) to be Addressed: Information is needed on nearshore habitats and fish abundance in the Beaufort and Chukchi Seas to refine the legal definitions of Essential Fish Habitat (EFH) as presented in the Arctic FMP, adopted by NOAA in 2009. Fish in the ecologically fragile nearshore environments are particularly vulnerable to oil spills. Information from this study will support better identification and description of EFH in NEPA analyses and a better understanding of how fish species respond to habitat variables to improve predictions on distributions under different climate conditions. This project will operate concurrently with other fish sampling efforts (AK-10-06 and AK-11-08) to provide a seamless baseline of forage fish data from the beach to the offshore environment.

Total Cost: \$184,000
plus Joint Funding

Period of Performance: FY 2012-2016

Conducting Organization: NOAA

BOEM Contact: [Catherine Coon](#)

Description:

Background: The Arctic is one of the most rapidly changing ecosystems in the world, yet information on EFH and what species and life stages use these habitats is very limited. Information is very sparse for fishes in the Arctic, especially in shallow, nearshore waters (shoreline out to 8 m depth). Nearshore habitats are some of the most productive habitats in Alaska and the most at risk to development and oil spills. Many species included in the Arctic Fisheries Management Plan for the Arctic, such as capelin and rainbow smelt, use nearshore habitats at some time in their life but estimates of their abundance and habitat use are poorly documented. Nearshore habitats differ from offshore (>30 m depth) habitats, as do fish assemblages in each area. Recent nearshore research in the Arctic has been limited to the Barrow area, which represents only a small fraction of the nearly 1,700 km of the U.S. Arctic coastline. Prior to major development or transportation activities in the Arctic, more information is needed on fish distribution and habitat use, life history characteristics, food webs, and species at risk to make informed management decisions regarding potential effects from global climate change and human disturbance. In addition, warming conditions in the Arctic will likely result in a reorganization of community structure; new fish species are expected to migrate to the Arctic with unknown consequences to existing stocks and food webs.

Many Arctic fish species are important in the diet of higher-level predators and in Inupiat subsistence fisheries. For example, in the Bering, Beaufort, and Chukchi seas,

Arctic cod and saffron cod occur in the diets of 13 marine mammal species and 20 seabird species. Availability of prey is critical to some Arctic marine mammals such as ice seals, which themselves are important in the diet of polar bears. Larger predators are already under stress by reduced ice cover. The distribution, diversity, and habitat use of nearshore fishes is largely unknown in other areas of the Arctic, especially in the Chukchi Sea. The proposed study would expand fish distribution and habitat use information to the eastern Beaufort Sea and western Chukchi Sea.

Objectives:

- Inventory the distribution and diversity of nearshore fish, their habitat and prey along high priority sites in the Beaufort and Chukchi Seas
- Assess age and diet of fish important as prey species
- Describe oceanographic features of areas with nearshore fish
- Understand how habitat variables like temperature and salinity affect fish species distributions
- Develop a public outreach document entitled Arctic Coastal Impressions with photographs of the US Arctic Coastline.

Methods: Beach and small otter trawl sampling will occur in areas of high importance, defined as locations near oil and gas production, or close to foraging areas for birds or marine mammals, followed by areas with opportunities for research platforms for three sampling seasons. In the summer and fall 2013/2014 two primary areas will be at sites between Barrow and Peard Bay to establish a baseline of fish and habitat use and as reference sites to the Chukchi Lease area.

A random sample of key fish species (e.g., Arctic cod, saffron cod, and capelin) will be collected for age and diet analyses. A sample of select fish species will also be collected, frozen, and archived for later fatty acid and genetic analyses. Habitat will be measured at each sampling site. At seine sites each beach will be profiled according to ShoreZone protocols. Intertidal invertebrates and macroalgae will also be recorded. Additionally, a drop camera will be deployed, depending on water visibility, to search for and identify unusual habitat types and other fish species that may not be captured by seine or trawl. Models will be generated to predict habitat use by fishes according to habitat variables. Maps will be generated to describe species distribution relative to multiple habitat variables. Information that may lead to NOAA's EFH general distribution will be shared. Relational databases will be built that contain data on species presence and abundance that will expand the current BOEM fish database, be suitable for use in GIS, and complement ShoreZone mapping efforts.

This project collaborates with staff and funding with the Alaska Coastal Ecosystem Survey (ACES) with joint funding from NPRB. The public outreach document entitled Arctic Coastal Impressions with photographs of the US Arctic Coastline uses photographs from the ShoreZone project along the North Slope and Western Alaska.

Revised Date: September 2014

Environmental Studies Program: Alaska Annual Studies Plan FY 2015

Region: Alaska

Planning Area(s): Beaufort Sea, Chukchi Sea

Title: Genomics of Arctic Cod: A Sentinel Species in a Changing Environment (AK-14-03)

BOEM Information Need(s) to be Addressed: To evaluate potential development effects in NEPA documents BOEM needs to understand whether Arctic cod on the OCS are part of a single pan-mictic population or part of more vulnerable sub-populations, and whether or not they exhibit genetic characteristics that will enable them to adapt to retreating sea ice and continue to feed their upper trophic predators. Thus, Arctic cod dynamics are important to multiple EFH- and ESA-related NEPA analyses.

Total Cost: \$300,000
plus Joint Funding

Period of Performance: FY 2014-2017

Conducting Organization: USGS

BOEM Contact: [Kate Wedemeyer](#)

Description:

Background: Arctic cod (*Boreogadus saida*) are estimated to funnel 93% of lower trophic energy to upper trophic predators including birds, seals, polar bears, beluga whales, and eventually to humans. Although Arctic cod are considered a sentinel species in the U.S. Arctic marine ecosystem, information about them is limited because of the difficulty of studying this ice-associated species. Despite the recognized importance of Arctic cod it is unknown whether there is a single pan-mictic population or whether there are sub-populations. This is an important distinction with respect to potential impact assessment. A sub-population limited to a smaller geographic location or a specialized habitat in the OCS would be more vulnerable to impact from an offshore development than a pan-mictic population spread across the circumpolar Arctic. BOEM needs a greater understanding of the ecological role this sentinel species plays as the primary pathway funneling lower trophic production to many marine mammals, birds and fish.

In 2012, a successful BOEM-funded pilot study conducted by USGS in collaboration with a Canadian genetics lab demonstrated that there is in fact a genetic break somewhere between the Chukchi/Western U.S. Beaufort and far eastern Canadian waters. This genetic break indicates that, rather than a single pan-mictic Arctic cod population, there may indeed be sub-populations. The pilot study relied on samples collected in 3 separate BOEM surveys in the northeast Chukchi and the western and central Beaufort seas. Now that a genetic break has been identified, it is important to fill in the large spatial area between the Central U.S. Beaufort and the far eastern Canadian Beaufort with additional genetic samples and analyses to delineate sub-populations.

Additionally, a greater understanding of the ability of Arctic cod to survive and adapt as the ice retreats is needed to separate potential effects of oil and gas development on Arctic cod and its predators from the cumulative effects of climate change. Recent climate-change modeling suggests that as the arctic ice retreats Arctic cod may be at risk of extirpation in the OCS by 2030. Genetics, transcriptomes and genomics can provide insight into whether any Arctic cod lifestages are truly ice-obligate or whether they are simply ice-associated or ice-dependent and can potentially adapt to retreating ice conditions. Identifying whether there are genetically separated sub-populations, particularly near-shore and off-shore populations, could provide a clue that there may be differential adaptability due to differential gene expression rather than different genes. Transcriptomes can identify differential expression of the single ‘antifreeze’ gene that may confer adaptability to loss of ice habitat. Genomics can facilitate transcriptomics by identifying additional genes associated with possible ice-obligation.

The large spatial gap from the eastern U.S. Beaufort Sea across the Mackenzie River Canyon into the Western Canadian Beaufort coincides with the footprint of the current field study “US-Canada Transboundary Fish and Lower Communities.” That field study will collect the genetic samples needed for the work described here. The USGS Alaska genetics lab, which recently published similar groundbreaking Polar Bear genetics research, will lead the Arctic cod lab research.

Objectives:

- Identify genetic differences that would change the BOEM approach to Arctic cod effects analyses from evaluating Arctic cod as a single pan-mictic population to evaluating several geographic sub-populations of Arctic cod.
- Test hypotheses that onshore/offshore differences in the extent of ice-obligation genes may be related to differences in either genes (genetics) or gene expression (transcriptomics).
- Test hypothesis that ability to survive loss of Arctic ice may be related to differences in gene expression (transcriptomes).
- Test the ice-obligate hypothesis by identifying both differential genetic (‘deep’ genomic) and differential gene expression (targeted transcriptomic) pathways.
- Archive genetic specimens for future use in new hypothesis tests or with new technologies and methods.

Methods: The USGS genetics lab will analyze the field samples (supplied by the US-Canada Transboundary survey) for both mitochondrial and microsatellite DNA to identify sub-populations. Genetics results will direct how the next year's samples should be spaced to test the hypothesized dichotomies of coastal vs. continental slope populations; eastern vs. western; warm freshwater inputs vs. cold saline marine waters populations. Laboratory analyses of samples collected during 2012 and 2013 fieldwork will be used to identify optimal sampling locations for the 2014 field season. Initial profiles of the ‘antifreeze’ gene transcriptome will be analyzed for variation in gene expression across and within hypothesized sub-populations. A complete genomic sequence of a single

individual will be constructed to identify additional genes that may provide adaptive expression to climate change. The investigators will continue to coordinate and collaborate with a parallel Canadian collection and genetic analysis effort.

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Environmental Studies Program: Alaska Annual Studies Plan FY 2015

Region: Alaska

Planning Area(s): Cook Inlet

Title: Ecological Processes in Lower Cook Inlet and Kachemak Bay: A Partnership in Monitoring (AK-14-x10; AK-14-x11; AK-14-x12)

BOEM Information Need(s) to be Addressed: The BOEM *Proposed Final Outer Continental Shelf Oil & Gas Leasing Program 2012-2017* includes a lease sale in the Cook Inlet Planning Area in 2016. An OCS Cook Inlet Lease Sale NEPA analysis hasn't been undertaken since 2003. NEPA analysts require updated information regarding the physical and biological environment, including variability in oceanographic conditions and plankton communities, as well as data related to sensitive species. The results will support NEPA analyses and documentation for lease sales, Explorations Plans (EPs), and Development and Production Plans (DPPs). Collected oceanographic, benthic and seabird data will support validation and sensitivity testing of ocean circulation models used for BOEM's Oil-Spill Risk Analysis efforts.

Total Cost: \$350,000
plus Joint Funding

Period of Performance: FY 2014-2017

Conducting Organization: NOAA; USFWS; NPS

BOEM Contact: [Catherine Coon](#)

Description:

Background: Cook Inlet circulation patterns are influenced by intrusions of the Alaska Coastal Current, large seasonal changes in freshwater input, geographically-influenced wind forcing and a large tidal range. The lower Cook Inlet and Kachemak Bay also support rich nearshore and pelagic biological communities. Improving understanding of this complex marine environment will improve understanding of biological variability and potential impacts from oil and gas development activities.

The *Exxon Valdez* Oil Spill Trustee Council (EVOSTC) and state and federal agencies are currently supporting a five-year, \$12 million long-term monitoring program in the Gulf of Alaska region affected by the 1989 *Exxon Valdez* oil spill, including lower Cook Inlet. The multidisciplinary monitoring program, called GulfWatch Alaska, seeks to build upon the extended restoration research and monitoring by providing data to identify and help understand the impacts of multiple ecosystem factors on the recovery of injured resources. This program, headed by the Alaska Ocean Observing System (AOOS), Prince William Sound Science Center, and the NOAA Kasitsna Bay Laboratory, links changes in environmental conditions with population trends in nearshore benthic and pelagic species. In lower Cook Inlet and Kachemak Bay, the program includes seasonal oceanographic and plankton surveys, annual near-shore benthic surveys, and opportunistic seabird and marine mammal surveys. BOEM will utilize the results of 4

primary transects within these surveys to support NEPA analysis and documentation for the initial lease sale in 2016, and subsequent assessments.

Data management for the GulfWatch Alaska program is coordinated by AOOS and science synthesis is led by the NOAA Kasitsna Bay Laboratory. Oceanographic data from this study will also support NOAA's ongoing validation efforts for the NOS circulation model to improve model use in environmental assessments and oil-spill response planning. Collaboration with the GulfWatch Alaska program and partner organizations (AOOS, NOAA, USGS, UAF, ADF&G, USFWS, etc.) presents a unique opportunity for BOEM to leverage funds and obtain needed information through support of expanded ecosystem monitoring efforts in lower Cook Inlet.

Objectives:

- Quantify seasonal and inter-annual variability in oceanographic conditions and plankton communities and provide information to assess long-term trends.
- Enhance monitoring of sensitive species (seabirds, sea otters) in conjunction with monitoring of environmental conditions.
- Improve understanding of water mass movement in lower Cook Inlet/Kachemak Bay for use in environmental analysis and circulation model validation.
- Compile existing historical data and literature in regards to intertidal studies and canopy kelps in the subtidal from Cook Inlet. Information will be accessible for use in planning as well as for use in future site selection and recommendation for more extensive evaluations.

Methods: This study will enhance existing oceanographic surveys, plankton surveys, near-shore benthic surveys, and upper trophic level surveys of seabirds and marine mammals to support NEPA analyses. Collected data include: temperature, salinity, phytoplankton and zooplankton samples, water samples for acidification analyses, benthic surveys, and seabird and sea otter observations when possible. Currently, oceanographic and plankton surveys are conducted quarterly along three transects in lower Cook Inlet and two transects in Kachemak Bay. Based upon consideration of results from analysis of data collected in 2012, surveys will be expanded in time and/or space to improve assessment of seasonal conditions. The need for expanded benthic monitoring will be assessed and implemented if appropriate. This study will also provide for addition of seabird and marine mammal observers to all surveys in Cook Inlet. Standard agency protocols are used for intertidal, bivalve and subtidal canopy kelp, at-sea seabird and marine mammal monitoring.

Revised Date: September 2014

Environmental Studies Program: Alaska Annual Studies Plan FY 2015

Region: Alaska

Planning Area(s): Chukchi Sea

Title: Trophic Links: Forage Fish, Their Prey, and Ice Seals in the Northeast Chukchi Sea (AK-08-12-05)

BOEM Information Need(s) to be Addressed: This study will provide BOEM NEPA analysts with needed basic diet information for both fish and seals in the Chukchi Sea. Because of the close association of the three trophic levels, it will greatly increase understanding of the ecological connections between invertebrates, fish, and seals and also provide measures of natural variability across a series of years that include both warm and cold ocean temperatures. This information will support Essential Fish Habitat, Marine Mammal Protection Act, and NEPA requirements for Chukchi Lease Sales.

Total Cost: \$532,173
plus Joint Funding

Period of Performance: FY 2009-2014

Conducting Organization: CMI, UAF

BOEM Contact: [Kate Wedemeyer](#)

Description:

Background: In preparation for oil and gas exploration and the impending Lease Sale 193, MMS Alaska OCS Region conducted a Chukchi Offshore Monitoring in Drilling Area (COMIDA) workshop in November 2006. That workshop identified a clear need for knowledge about distribution and abundance of forage fish prey resources for marine mammals in the Chukchi Sea. Not only is there a pressing need for knowledge about fishes in the Chukchi Sea, but it is also essential to evaluate those fishes as prey resources for marine mammals. An additional factor that is making the requirement for information in the Chukchi Sea imperative is the potential listing of three species of ice seals under the Endangered Species Act. The decision to list is still pending for ringed seals (*Phoca hispida*), bearded seals (*Erignathus barbatus*), and spotted seals (*Phoca largha*). The petition for listing prepared by the Center for Biological Diversity states that global warming is threatening ice seals with extinction due to loss of sea ice habitat as argued for the recently-listed polar bears. An additional ice seal species, the ribbon seal (*Phoca fasciata*), was also proposed for listing, but NOAA decided not to list the ribbon seal at this time.

Oil exploration is likely to take place in the northeast Chukchi Sea simultaneously with ever-increasing rates of global warming. It will not be possible to discern the cause or extent of effects on this Arctic ecosystem without first determining its current status. There is a paucity of data and limited ecological understanding for pelagic and demersal fishes in Lease Sale areas. The rapidly receding sea ice in the Arctic has received much attention recently and record minima were recorded in both 2007 and 2008. The loss of

habitat for ice seals has resulted in three species being considered for listing under the Endanger Species Act. Dietary differences among forage fishes in the Lease Sale area may propagate into higher trophic levels such as ice seals. Thus, it is essential to evaluate fishes as prey resources, or “forage,” for marine mammals. The study design aligns fish, prey and seals sampled in the Chukchi Sea, not only across both diet and isotopic signals, but also matched over three recent and consecutive years to provide an essential measure of interannual variability. The proposed study will produce a more comprehensive picture of forage fishes in the Chukchi Sea and then trophically relate fishes and their prey to ice seals and their diets in the Chukchi Sea to provide an essential new understanding of the ecosystem. The resulting increase in basic knowledge of the Chukchi Sea ecosystem will facilitate good stewardship by the oil and gas industry.

Objectives:

- Assess the diet composition of forage fishes;
- Establish trophic level of forage fish species and of their prey;
- Analyze interannual differences in diet of fishes and in the trophic level of fishes and their prey;
- Document the trophic level of ice seals;
- Document ice seal trophic history;
- Develop isotopic mixing models;
- Compare trophic levels of forage fishes to those of ice seals;
- Provide diet and trophic level data to BOEM in electronic format;
- Complete data archiving with NODC and make available to BOEM in a GIS compatible format.

Methods: This study will: 1) conduct interannual diet and trophic analyses using fishes caught during 2007, 2008 and 2009; 2) analyze fish muscle for the effect of lipid-removal on stable carbon and nitrogen ratios; 3) assess the relative importance of functional groups of prey taxa in the diet of each fish species; 4) perform stable isotope analysis to assess the trophic level of the fish species that are consumed by ice seals.

Revised Date: September 2014

Environmental Studies Program: Alaska Annual Studies Plan FY 2015

Region: Alaska

Planning Area(s): Beaufort Sea, Chukchi Sea

Title: Population Assessment of Snow Crab, *Chionoecetes opilio*, in the Chukchi and Beaufort Seas Including Oil and Gas Lease Areas (AK-08-12-09)

BOEM Information Need(s) to be Addressed: This study will provide information on historic and current data on abundance, biomass, stock structure, diet, and trophic position of snow crab (*Chionoecetes opilio*) in the Chukchi and Beaufort Seas including lease sale areas and relate patterns to environmental variables. This information will be used to evaluate and mitigate the potential environmental effects on marine invertebrates of offshore development. Information from this study will support NEPA analysis for potential lease sales, EPs and DPPs, mitigation, and monitoring in the Beaufort and Chukchi Seas.

Total Cost: \$181,019
plus Joint Funding

Period of Performance: FY 2011-2015

Conducting Organization: CMI, UAF

BOEM Contact: [Catherine Coon](#)

Description:

Background: Changing climate in the Arctic is manifesting as warming temperatures and changing sea ice conditions, which appear to be causing changes in marine communities and northward range contractions of Arctic species. For commercially important or subsistence species in particular, we must understand the ecological and environmental parameters that influence population structure and species distributions if we are to predict how climate change or human activities such as oil and gas exploration will affect both new and established populations in sensitive areas. Snow crab (*Chionoecetes opilio*) concentrations have recently contracted northward in the Bering Sea. It is a current predominant commercial fishery in this region and is thought to be a very common species throughout the Chukchi and parts of the Alaskan Beaufort Seas, including oil and gas lease sale areas. However, existing knowledge for adequate management planning and risk assessment is sparse and more background information on stock size and structure and reproductive condition is needed.

To conduct a current assessment of Arctic snow crab, this proposal will cost-effectively use recently collected snow crabs from the Chukchi and Beaufort Seas, in addition to new collections to be made during the 2011 central Beaufort Sea fish survey and a NOAA-funded 2012 Chukchi Sea survey. The proposed work will address a BOEM research need by providing information to better understand potential resources and marine environments potentially affected by offshore oil and gas exploration and

extraction. This information will also aid in defining the general distribution for crab species Essential Fish Habitats (EFH).

Sensitivity of fauna to potential oil and gas-related pollution is related to trophic level (the position of a taxon in a food web), because bioaccumulation and biomagnification potential of persistent pollutants, including a suite of chemicals contained in petroleum products, are dependent on the trophic position of an organism. Snow crab prey includes polychaete worms, crustaceans, bivalves and brittle stars with some regional and age-specific variability in dominant prey items. Recent research indicates that Snow crabs in the southern Chukchi Sea occupy a trophic level among the highest levels of dominant invertebrates and fishes in the region. Organisms feeding at high trophic levels have a high potential for biomagnification, the accumulation of chemicals in organism tissues through dietary accumulation. Combining stable isotope analysis to determine trophic level and stomach content analysis to determine prey taxa will allow us to interpret the food web connections of snow crab and their bioaccumulation and biomagnification potential in light of food availability and distribution within and outside oil and gas exploration areas.

Objectives:

- To estimate abundance and biomass and assess distribution of snow crab in the Chukchi Sea and Beaufort Sea lease sale areas and adjacent regions in relation to water depth, bottom water temperature and salinity, water mass and sediment type using existing and new data.
- To determine stock structure including: sex ratio, size-frequency distribution, size at maturity, fecundity of female snow crab, and sperm reserves in spermathecae.
- To identify diet and trophic position of snow crab in different geographic areas.
- To compare our findings between years at re-sampled Chukchi Sea stations, compare to existing recent data from the northern Bering Sea and to the few available earlier quantitative studies in the Chukchi.

Methods: Adult specimens of *C. opilio* collected throughout the Bering, Chukchi and Beaufort seas will be examined for degrees of genetic variation in adult populations using a microsatellite approach. Additionally, a limited number of mitochondrial gene sequences will be generated for inclusion in phylogenetic studies and for DNA bar coding purposes. Polymorphic DNA microsatellite loci from adult specimens will be isolated and compared with the genotypes of adult crab between regions using isolation by distance models. This will indicate spatial scales of genetic exchange. This project will provide genetic data from a public database, which can be used to meet BOEM planning needs.

Revised Date: September 2014

Environmental Studies Program: Alaska Annual Studies Plan FY 2015

Region: Alaska

Planning Area(s): Beaufort Sea, Chukchi Sea

Title: Sensitivity to Hydrocarbons and Baselines of Exposure in Marine Birds on the Chukchi and Beaufort Seas (AK-13-03-02)

BOEM Information Need(s) to be Addressed: Baselines of exposure levels on avian species in the U.S. Arctic would provide invaluable reference information for monitoring population status and restoration efforts. Identification of sensitive species and populations will assist in assessments of new development activities, and development of long term monitoring strategies. BOEM analysts and decision makers will use this information in NEPA analysis and documentation for Lease Sales, EPs and DPPs.

Total Cost: \$194,676
plus Joint Funding

Period of Performance: FY 2013-2016

Conducting Organization: CMI, UAF

BOEM Contact: [Rick Raymond](#)

Description:

Background: With prospects of increasing development of oil and gas resources in the Chukchi and Beaufort Seas, establishment of baselines and assessment of sensitivity of arctic biota to hydrocarbon exposure would provide vital information needs for management and conservation of natural resources potentially impacted by development. Evaluating baselines of hydrocarbon exposure in selected avian species of subsistence importance [king eider (*Somateria spectabilis*), common eider (*Somateria mollissima*), and greater white-fronted goose (*Anser albifrons*)] in the Chukchi and Beaufort Seas will provide measurements of liver cytochrome P450 (CYP1A) enzyme activity. Study results will provide a first assessment of baselines for hydrocarbon exposure by forming a basis for further development of field programs for monitoring of exposure levels in marine birds in the Chukchi and Beaufort Sea region. In addition, results will provide information for assessment of current and future safety of subsistence caught food.

Bird sensitivity to hydrocarbons will be evaluated in a broader suite of marine bird species using species-specific cell culture methods. This longer list of species includes spectacled eider, Steller's eider (*Polysticta stelleri*), king eider, common eider, long-tailed duck (*Clangula hyemali*), greater white-fronted goose, black brant (*Branta bernicla*), and three species of alcids. These species represent a broader spectrum of candidate bioindicators of exposure and additional species of conservation and subsistence importance. Results from this study will provide guidance on further selection of suitable bioindicator species, based on their responses and sensitivity to

hydrocarbon exposure will provide information for assessment of relative risks of hydrocarbon exposure to the arctic biota.

Objectives:

- Measure baselines of hydrocarbon exposure in selected species of marine bird indicator species (species of subsistence importance) liver cytochrome (p450) activity.
- Assess and measure comparative sensitivity to hydrocarbon exposure in selected marine bird indicator species (larger suite of marine birds).
- Coordinate and collaborate field work with the North Slope Borough, Department of Wildlife.
- Coordinate with North Slope subsistence hunters to gather cell samples (spring, summer and fall).
- Conduct cell culture assays in laboratory.
- Share study findings to local communities through public outreach programs, produce poster and flyer and present at scientific conferences.

Methods: This study will utilize multiple criteria to select and identify suitable avian species as candidates for ecological monitoring programs. Measurement of liver 7-ethoxyresorufin-O-deethylase (EROD) activity in liver cultures allows for species specific assessment of magnitude and duration of cytochrome P450 (CYP1A) induction. EROD is widely used as an indicator of CYP1A induction and EROD results can be combined with other measurements to determine cellular or genetic effects, allowing evaluation of potential cellular or genetic pathology associated with hydrocarbon exposure. Liver samples to measure hydrocarbon-inducible CYP1A activity will be collected in collaboration with the North Slope Borough, Department of Wildlife Management and local hunters. Ultimately, this study will help in the development of guidelines and field sampling protocols by refining techniques for sample collection.

Revised Date: September 2014

Environmental Studies Program: Alaska Annual Studies Plan FY 2015

Region: Alaska

Planning Area(s): Cook Inlet

Title: Testing the Use of Unmanned Aircraft Systems for Intertidal Surveys – proof of concept (AK-13-03-08)

BOEM Information Need(s) to be Addressed: This study will promote better understanding of marine, coastal, or human environments potentially affected by offshore oil and gas exploration and extraction. It will improve benchmark data on the biological communities that may be impacted by these stressors. This information will support analysis of potential impacts from oil spills in Cook Inlet. BOEM analysts and decision makers will use this information in NEPA analysis and documentation for the upcoming Cook Inlet Lease Sale 244, as well as potential future lease sales, EPs and DPPs.

Total Cost: \$25,254
plus Joint Funding

Period of Performance: FY 2014-2016

Conducting Organization: CMI, UAF

BOEM Contact: [Rick Raymond](#)

Description:

Background: Intertidal monitoring is important to sustain ecosystem health and functioning, as coastal systems are particularly vulnerable to environmental stressors from potential oil spills and other human impacts. Traditional land based intertidal monitoring efforts are currently limited in their practicality and usefulness because these methods greatly limit the spatial extent from which data can be collected. Presently, surveys are restricted to extreme low tide periods and researchers can only survey the various intertidal strata on small stretches of specific beaches. Ground surveying of multiple beaches or longer stretches of beach is time consuming, requires multiple investigators, and increases the costs of a monitoring program considerably. Because of the extremely high spatial heterogeneity in intertidal systems, monitoring programs need to cover extended areas to produce the most useful data for decision making and management.

Using imagery obtained with unmanned aircraft systems (UAS) to collect larger scale benchmark data on intertidal communities is a cost-effective alternative to expand intertidal monitoring. As a proof-of concept, this study will build on existing, traditional monitoring efforts in the rocky intertidal and sea grass systems in Kachemak Bay, Alaska, which will allow ground-truthing of the UAS-derived data.

Objectives: The overall goal is to determine if UASs can be used to expand current intertidal monitoring in Cook Inlet, and ultimately elsewhere. Specific objectives include:

- Identify whether there is a statistical difference in intertidal community data collected by unmanned aircraft system using imagery for longer 1-km transects compared to shorter 50-m ground surveys using the quadrat method over the same spatial extent of surveyed beach.
- Identify whether longer beach stretches surveyed by UAS will capture more natural variability in intertidal systems, thus having higher variance in longer 1-km transects when compared to shorter 50-m transects.

Methods: Field work will be conducted along intertidal zones in Kachemak Bay during the summer season of 2014. Derived data will be used to assess the state, natural variability, and impacts of disturbances on intertidal communities. As part of the Gulf Watch Alaska monitoring program, intertidal systems will be examined using quadrat sampling to quantify biological variables such as percent cover of sessile organisms. Using Gulf Watch protocols, four intertidal strata (high, mid, low, -1 m) will be surveyed along 50 m transects at various beach sites (five rocky beaches and four seagrass sites). Along each transect, ten 1-m² quadrats will be surveyed for percent cover of sessile invertebrates and algae. Because the spatial extents of intertidal surveys are limited, UAS-supported imagery will expand the spatial coverage at one rocky and one seagrass site in Kachemak Bay. UAS surveys will allow comparable data to be collected from a much larger area than was previously possible using traditional ground quadrat sampling.

Revised Date: September 2014

Environmental Studies Program: Alaska Annual Studies Plan FY 2015

Region: Alaska

Planning Area(s): Beaufort Sea

Title: Marine Arctic Ecosystems Study (MARES): A Multi-Agency NOPP Partnership (NT-13-05)

BOEM Information Need(s) to be Addressed: Through this multi-agency agreement under the National Oceanographic Partnership Program (NOPP) BOEM expects to enhance multi-lateral arctic research coordination and to improve regulatory decisions and NEPA analyses pertinent to lease sales in the Beaufort Sea. The partnership will lead to specific task orders and objectives that will be developed and procured as discrete study profiles. Final reports will be available for lease sales and post-sale decisions; interim data products and inputs will be used to address information needs.

Total Cost: \$5,000,000
plus Joint Funding

Period of Performance: FY 2015-2019

Conducting Organization: Stantec Consulting Services Inc.

BOEM Contact: [Carol Fairfield](#)

Description:

Background: BOEM needs additional comprehensive and integrated information in the Arctic on the spatio-temporal distribution of fundamental physical, biological and chemical variables, their associated interactions and regulating mechanisms, as well as the distribution of cultural and subsistence resources which sustain local communities. This information will be used to better understand and assess arctic ecosystem sensitivities and vulnerabilities as a function of space and time to aid decision-makers in minimizing the impact of the oil & gas industry on the Outer Continental Shelf. The resulting information will support NEPA analyses, environmental impact assessments, in validating models, as well as in Oil-Spill Risk Analysis. Additionally, these observations and improved description and understanding of biogeochemical and physical interactions will aid to improve the accuracy of model simulations and forecasts. Coordinated observational and modeling efforts will produce information that will be analyzed from different perspectives: a) ecosystem understanding and environmental protection, b) climate change and monitoring, and c) Oil-Spill Risk Analysis.

This partnership between BOEM, NOAA, ONR, NSF, IOOS, USCG, USARC, USGS, MMC and Shell responds to the National Ocean Policy in addressing Arctic, climate change & acidification, and monitoring through an integrated ecosystem approach while coordinating the efforts of several federal agencies. It is also responsive to the Interagency Arctic Research & Policy Committee (IARPC) 5-year plan (2014-2018) and research priorities. In addition this study will also address (a) USGS Arctic report

recommendations: 3.01, 3.02, 3.03, 3.07 & 4.01, (b) the MMS study recommendations: 2010-018 (Beaufort Sea Physical Oceanography) and 2010-032 (ANIMIDA and cANIMIDA), (c) and the recommendations of the White House's Council for Environmental Quality (CEQ) of 2010. By entering into a NOPP partnership, BOEM anticipates that all participating agencies will leverage funds and resources and thus avoid redundant efforts while contributing their complementary expertise.

Objectives:

- Identify and delineate areas of high biological productivity, as well as relative sensitivities and resiliencies to changes in environmental conditions within ecosystem components. This includes a detailed description of different trophic levels and their composition in terms of species abundance, distribution, and behavior in both ice free and ice covered habitat.
- Identify cultural, historic and subsistence resources which could be sensitive to human activities, such as increased shipping, intensified offshore energy development, and expanded tourism.
- Provide a qualitative and quantitative description of the biogeochemical-physical interactions and feedback processes in ice free and ice covered areas.
- Provide a detailed spatio-temporal description of ocean currents at different depths along the Beaufort continental shelf, including ice covered areas.

Methods: Proposed studies will emphasize an integrated, or ecosystems approach to data collection or synthesis. Each study will be based on the application of appropriate scientific methodologies, coordinating observational and modeling efforts, while focused on essential processes, functions and interactions among organisms and their environment. Proposed studies will recognize that humans, with their cultural diversity, are an integral component of ecosystems, and will accommodate appropriate methods of integration where possible, including access to traditional knowledge with active involvement of Alaska Natives in research planning and execution. Proposed studies will also seek to advance, where appropriate, the use of technology and instrumentation in monitoring and understanding complex ecosystem processes.

Revised Date: September 2014

Environmental Studies Program: Alaska Annual Studies Plan FY 2015

Region: Alaska

Planning Area(s): Chukchi Sea

Title: Pinniped Movements and Foraging: Walrus Habitat Use in the Potential Drilling Area (AK-09-01)

BOEM Information Need(s) to be Addressed: Large numbers of pinnipeds migrate through and potentially occupy areas of high oil and gas potential in the Chukchi Sea, including habitat near the Burger Prospect. Pinnipeds may be affected in a variety of ways during all stages of oil and gas exploration, development, and production. Study findings will support NEPA analyses for potential future lease sales, review of EPs, DPPs and other reviews for post-sale and post-exploration BOEM decision-making and mitigation.

Total Cost: \$1,529,137

Period of Performance: FY 2009-2016

Conducting Organization: ADF&G

BOEM Contact: [Catherine Coon](#)

Description:

Background: The majority of the reproductive component of the Pacific walrus population (i.e., females, calves, and juveniles) migrate through the Chukchi Sea twice annually between winter and summer areas. Each summer, as winter pack ice receded, walruses, bearded seals, and other pinnipeds have followed the ice edge from wintering areas to its northern margin. For example, large numbers of walruses migrated past the Lisburne Peninsula northward over rich potential feeding habitat such as Hanna Shoal and adjacent areas of high oil and gas potential. During this northward migration, many walruses moved along coastal leads between Point Hope and Point Barrow and were hunted by Natives.

Over the past few years, summer distribution of walruses may be changing as a result of changes in summer pack ice. Concern has been expressed by Native hunters that in recent summers, sea ice (which females use as a platform for rest between feeding bouts) has been receding faster and further to the north, making walrus less available to the communities that depend on them. Walruses are less likely to follow the ice edge beyond the shelf break and have been using land haul-outs instead. For example, in summer 2007, large numbers of walruses were hauled out on land between the villages of Point Lay and Wainwright. Many additional tens of thousands hauled out along the Chukchi coastline in Russia. In the future, less sea ice will likely make land haul-outs more important and feeding areas near those haul-outs of great importance. Updated information is needed on how walruses move through this region, where they haul out, and where they forage.

The Burger Prospect has potentially strong renewed interest for oil and gas exploration and development and is located just south of Hanna Shoal. It is thus situated between winter habitat and potentially important summer feeding habitat on, and around, Hanna Shoal. Plans for geophysical exploration, field delineation, and development of production facilities and pipelines in that region are being developed and such activities may have consequences for pinniped movements and habitat utilization, which in turn could further alter the availability of walrus and ice seals for subsistence by Natives in villages along the Northwestern Alaskan coastline. Identification of migration routes and high-use habitat areas is critical to assessment of potential impacts from oil- and gas-related industrial activities on pinniped populations and subsistence use by Alaskan Natives. A planning phase is currently being accomplished under a cooperative agreement with the University of Alaska-Fairbanks by the Alaska Department of Fish and Game.

Objectives:

- Develop a phased cooperative project to study the movements and habitat use of Pacific Walrus in the Chukchi Sea Planning area.
- Develop considerations for enhanced monitoring of changes in habitat use and movements.

Methods: This study is modeled on a cooperative study of bowhead whale distribution and movements that is currently supported by BOEM. Review literature and existing data to develop hypotheses about habitat use and seasonal movements between winter and summer habitat. Work with Natives in coastal villages to compile and analyze traditional ecological knowledge concerning pinniped movements and habitat use. Train Native hunters or other coastal village residents to deploy satellite transmitters on walrus in the vicinity of respective villages or research vessels. Deploy transmitters to test hypotheses developed. Since tags will have a relatively short lifespan, sampling is to be spread among villages and to the extent possible divided among northward and southward migrating walrus. Involve local Natives in shore-based monitoring of walrus hauling out along the Chukchi Sea coastline with emphasis on relationships between tagged-walrus behaviors and general haul-out use patterns. Analyze data to test hypotheses and develop considerations for enhanced monitoring of changes in habitat use and migration. Maintain data in a Geographical Information System (GIS) database and provide summaries of individual movements regularly on a public website. Share results with residents of communities near the study area. Encourage participation of local Natives, especially young people, in analysis and interpretation of findings and conclusions to the extent possible.

Revised Date: September 2014

Environmental Studies Program: Alaska Annual Studies Plan FY 2015

Region: Alaska

Planning Area(s): Beaufort Sea, Chukchi Sea

Title: COMIDA: Factors Affecting the Distribution and Relative Abundance of Endangered Whales: Passive Acoustic Detection and Monitoring of Endangered Whales in the Arctic (AK-09-02a)

BOEM Information Need(s) to be Addressed: Information from this study will document the general presence of bowhead, right, fin, gray, and other baleen whales in areas of potential seismic, drilling, construction, and production activities. Study results may be useful for estimating temporal limits and formulating designs of mitigation for such activities. Findings may be used for evaluating potential deferral areas and other potential limitations on offshore leasing and development. This study will provide useful information needed to support NEPA analysis and documentation for Beaufort and Chukchi Sea Lease Sales, DPPs, and monitoring. Results will support ESA consultations, MMPA permitting, and preparation of Biological Evaluations and Biological Opinions.

Total Cost: \$4,304,300
plus Joint Funding

Period of Performance: FY 2010-2015

Conducting Organization: NOAA-NMML

BOEM Contact: [Dr. Heather Crowley](#)

Description:

Background: The observed northward retreat of the minimum extent of summer sea ice has the potential to expand oil and gas-related exploration and development into previously closed seasons and localities in the Alaskan Arctic. This change, coupled with steadily increasing abundance and related seasonal range expansion by the bowhead, gray, humpbacked, fin, and possibly other whales, indicates that more complete information on the year-round presence of large whales is needed in the western Beaufort Sea and Chukchi Sea planning areas. Aerial surveys can provide some of the needed coverage, but are not cost-effective for extended use on a year-around basis. Nor will planned aerial surveys provide the geographic extent of coverage potentially available from passive acoustic monitoring.

Passive acoustic detection and tracking is a proven tool for assessment of large whales in Alaskan seas. Specifically, acoustic detection has proven a key addition to the census of bowhead whales (*Balaena mysticetus*) during their spring migration past Barrow, and in relation to oil and gas development activities offshore Prudhoe Bay. More recently, gray whale calls have been detected year-round near Barrow on long-term recorders deployed in collaboration with the NSF/Shelf-Basin Interaction Study. Other data have been obtained on North Pacific right, humpback, and fin whales in the southern Bering Sea.

The proposed study will fund the fabrication and deployment of arrays of long-term acoustic recorders in the Beaufort and Chukchi seas that are capable of continuous recording, year-round. Acoustically recording the Beaufort and Chukchi seas year-round for several years will provide previously unattainable assessment of the seasonal occurrence of large whales in these regions and their response to environmental changes (including climate and anthropogenic use of the area).

Objectives:

- Assess the year-round seasonal occurrence of bowhead, gray, and other baleen whale calls in the Beaufort and Chukchi Seas.
- Track individuals through a hydrophone array to estimate relative abundance.
- Evaluate whether changes in seasonal sea ice extent is enabling a northward shift of Bering Sea cetacean species such as fin, humpback and North Pacific right whales.
- Provide long-term estimates of habitat use for large whale species and compare this with annual ice coverage in order to establish predictive variables to describe large whale occurrence.
- Collaborate with the study entitled: “COMIDA: Factors Affecting the Distribution and Relative Abundance of Endangered Whales: Biophysical Moorings and Climate Modeling” in order to evaluate the extent to which variability in environmental conditions such as sea ice, oceanic currents, water temperature and salinity, and prey abundance influence whale distribution and relative abundance.

Methods: Build autonomous hydrophones based on a proven design, modified for cold, shallow water deployment for 365 days per deployment. Deploy instruments in tight arrays having a minimum of 3 instruments to facilitate evaluating the movements of individual animals. Refurbish and redeploy instruments annually. Analyze annual data for whale calls to estimate: seasonal occurrence by species, inter-annual differences in occurrence by species, variation in occurrence due to changes in ice extent, types and strengths of anthropogenic noise in the study area.

Revised Date: September 2014

Environmental Studies Program: Alaska Annual Studies Plan FY 2015

Region: Alaska

Planning Area(s): Beaufort Sea, Chukchi Sea

Title: Migration and Habitat Use by Threatened Spectacled Eiders in the Eastern Chukchi Near and Offshore Environment (AK-09-03)

BOEM Information Need(s) to be Addressed: Research focusing on the distribution and timing of habitat use by the threatened (ESA) Spectacled Eiders was identified as an information need at the COMIDA workshop held on Nov. 1-3, 2006. Lease sales are planned for the Chukchi Sea Planning Area in 2010 and 2012. This information will support ESA Section 7 consultations, NEPA analyses, Exploration Plans, DPPs and other documentation. The information obtained from this jointly-funded research will contribute in development of mitigation measures/strategies to reduce potential impacts.

Total Cost: \$1,200,000
plus Joint Funding

Period of Performance: FY 2009-2014

Conducting Organization: USGS

BOEM Contact: [Catherine Coon](#)

Description:

Background: Basic information on timing and duration of habitat use by Spectacled Eiders within the Chukchi Sea Planning Area (CSPA) and the Beaufort Sea Planning Area (BSPA) is necessary to better define parameters used to model the impacts of perturbations and ultimately population effects. Recent improvements in satellite telemetry have yielded some information on the distribution and movements of Long-tailed Ducks and King and Common Eiders, many of which stage, migrate or molt in the Eastern Chukchi Sea. Changing patterns of sea ice could shift some use to the BSPA. In 1996 the spectacled eider was listed by USFWS as threatened species. When the petition to list was submitted, studies began in 1993 to map and document the distribution, timing of migration, and wintering areas of the three populations. At that time, the molting, staging, and wintering areas of Spectacled Eiders in the Arctic and North Pacific Oceans were unknown. Subsequently, Ledyard Bay, Point Lay, and Peard Bay were identified as areas used by migrating, molting, and staging eiders that bred on the Indigirka River Delta, Russia; Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta, western Alaska; and the Prudhoe Bay region. Information on the timing and use of areas by Spectacled Eiders during fall migration, staging, and molting is now dated and limited because of small sample sizes. There is little information available about the timing of spring migration or locations of spring staging areas.

Objectives:

- Estimate the spatial distribution, demographic composition, timing of use, and residence times of male and female spectacled eiders in the Chukchi Sea Planning Area and the Beaufort Sea Planning Area.
- Evaluate the fidelity of individual Spectacled Eiders to areas within the eastern Chukchi Sea and western Beaufort Sea.

Methods: This study will use implantable satellite transmitters to document spatial distribution and timing of use by adult and juvenile Spectacled Eiders. Each tagged individual will supply two years of data from which assessments of individual and population affinity and variation will be made. Also using satellite telemetry, scientists will document both local and long-distance movements of individual Spectacled Eiders during migration; they will identify spring and autumn staging areas, and molting sites. After examining measures of bathymetry, weather, ice, and bird status, the project will develop models to represent factors influencing timing of movements and distribution of individual Spectacled Eiders during spring, summer (molt), and autumn.

Revised Date: September 2014

Environmental Studies Program: Alaska Annual Studies Plan FY 2015

Region: Alaska

Planning Area(s): Beaufort Sea, Chukchi Sea

Title: Demography and Behavior of Polar Bears Summering on Shore in Alaska (AK-09-05a; AK-09-05b)

BOEM Information Need(s) to be Addressed: A jointly-funded study could address information needs identified in a 2005 MMS funded workshop hosted by the USFWS, “Beaufort Sea Polar Bear Monitoring Workshop.” It would provide useful information on the sub-population of polar bears summering in areas of increasing oil and gas activities along the Alaskan Arctic coastline. New information will support NEPA analysis and documentation for Beaufort and Chukchi Sea Lease Sales, Draft Production Plans, ESA consultations, MMPA permitting, and development of related mitigation.

Total Cost: \$1,480,767
plus Joint Funding

Period of Performance: FY 2009-2015

Conducting Organization: USGS Alaska Science Center; USFWS Marine Mammals Management

BOEM Contact: [Carol Fairfield](#)

Description:

Background: Polar bear use of terrestrial habitat along the Beaufort and Chukchi Sea coastlines of Alaska has increased in recent years, with up to 10% of the polar bears inhabiting the southern Beaufort Sea remaining on land during the open water period. The remaining bears continue to summer on the pack ice, but now find themselves far north of the productive waters over the continental shelf. Neither situation seems favorable for polar bear foraging, and recent observations of starvation, cannibalism, drowning, and poor survival of young, suggest that polar bears in this region are increasingly subject to nutritional stresses. Although future survival of polar bears will depend on the strategies adopted in the diminishing ice environment; relative advantages and consequences of summering on land or Arctic sea ice over deep waters are unknown. Simultaneously, long-term expansion of oil and gas development is being contemplated in the southern Beaufort Sea and northern Chukchi Sea. Polar bear-human interactions may increase because areas of importance to polar bears for resting, feeding, and traveling are becoming coincident with areas of high interest for oil- and gas-related development.

Results from aerial surveys as well as a recent study monitoring polar bears feeding on bowhead whale carcasses at Barter and Cross islands indicates that all age/sex classes of polar bears are present along shore during the fall open water period and that approximately 50 percent of the bears are represented by family groups. Large numbers of bears have been observed near Barter Island, Cross Island, and Barrow. Industrial operators in the Prudhoe Bay area report an increasing trend in the numbers, frequency, and duration of polar bear use during the open water period.

Objectives:

- Estimate the demographic composition and inter-annual patterns of use of coastal areas by the sub-population of polar bears summering on land in Alaska.
- Evaluate the implications of extended use of land during the open water period to polar bear health, behavior, and population status.
- Estimate the potential for the health and behavior of polar bears summering along the Beaufort Sea and Chukchi Sea coastlines to be influenced by oil- and gas-related activities and development.
- Develop draft conservation recommendations to reduce the possibility that industrial activity and changing environmental conditions will interact to the detriment of the polar bear population.

Methods: The investigator will conduct a thorough literature review and develop hypotheses about implications 1) to the management and stability of the polar bear population, and 2) to the health and behavior of individual bears in specific demographic groups of increasing numbers of polar bears remaining on land for extended periods during the open water period. Behavioral observations supported by application of appropriate technology (e.g. satellite tags, radio-frequency tags, and similar tags) will be used to monitor representative polar bears in Alaska that show a tendency to remain on land during the open water period. Movements, site fidelity, and limited life history data will be used to test specific hypotheses. Physical exams will be used to evaluate the health and physical condition of representative bears to test specific hypotheses. Predictions and observations will be reconciled and a plan developed to reduce the possibility of negative interactions between polar bears and oil- and gas-related development in a changing physical environment.

Revised Date: September 2014

Environmental Studies Program: Alaska Annual Studies Plan FY 2015

Region: Alaska

Planning Area(s): Beaufort Sea, Chukchi Sea

Title: Distribution and Relative Abundance of Marine Mammals in the Chukchi Sea and the Fall Migration of Bowhead Whales in the Beaufort Sea – Personnel Needs (AK-10-05)

BOEM Information Need(s) to be Addressed: This study will generate information pertaining to possible impacts to marine mammals from exploratory offshore seismic surveying for oil and gas and subsequent leasing in the Chukchi and Beaufort Seas. The information will assist BOEM in NEPA analyses, ESA Section 7 consultations, MMPA documentation for Lease Sales, EPs and DPPs, and post-sale and post-exploration decision-making in the Beaufort and Chukchi Seas.

Total Cost: \$4,786,585
plus Joint Funding

Period of Performance: FY 2011-2016

Conducting Organization: NOAA-NMML

BOEM Contact: [Carol Fairfield](#)

Description:

Background: Bowhead whales (*Balaena mysticetus*), gray whales (*Eschrichtius robustus*), beluga whales (*Delphinapterus leucas*), Pacific walrus (*Odobenus rosmarus divergens*), polar bears (*Ursus maritimus*), bearded seals (*Phoca fasciata*), and several other species of ice seals are known to occupy the Chukchi Sea, at least during some seasons. All of these species are subject to changes in environmental variables such as oceanographic currents, sea temperature, sea ice cover, prey availability, and anthropogenic impacts. Moreover all of these species are used for subsistence both in Russia and the US and form an important part of the diet and cultural base for most people in villages along the Chukchi coast. Having a good understanding of the seasonal distribution, relative abundance, and habitat use of marine mammals in the Chukchi Sea is fundamentally important to evaluating the potential environmental impacts associated with oil and gas exploration and development and other anthropogenic activities. Reliable, up-to-date information of this type is needed for marine mammal populations in the Chukchi Sea. Aerial surveys of marine mammals are an efficient tool because they offer quick coverage of large marine areas. Past surveys are available for comparison with new data to assess whether changes in distribution or abundance have occurred since the earlier surveys were completed.

A recent, BOEM-funded investigation of the seasonal migration of the bowhead whales using satellite-tracked animal tags revealed that they are resident in the Bering Sea during the winter and return to the Beaufort Sea in the summer when opening spring leads allow for passage along the Alaskan and Canadian coasts. The bowheads leave the Beaufort in the fall and cross the Chukchi Sea before moving back into the Bering Sea for the winter.

Since 1979, aerial surveying of the fall migration of the bowheads has been conducted, initially by the Bureau of Land Management and subsequently by MMS, now BOEM. This is one of the longest-maintained monitoring of a biological phenomenon and has produced an invaluable baseline of the distribution and habitat use of the bowheads. The baseline can be used to observe changes in distribution and habitat use that may occur due to changing atmospheric and oceanic climates and to offshore oil and gas development activities. This investigation will continue the aerial observations of the fall migration for evidence of these changes

Since the beluga whales and other marine mammals seasonally or otherwise resident in the Beaufort and Chukchi are often sighted during the bowhead whale aerial surveys, their occurrence will also be part of the acquired data. This will be coincidental sightings, but of scientific value nonetheless.

Objectives:

- Document the distributions and relative densities of marine mammals in the Chukchi Sea Planning Area.
- To the extent possible, delineate the areas that are most important to marine mammals during critical seasons of their annual life history cycles such as molting, calving/pupping, and feeding.
- Define the annual fall migration of bowhead whales, significant inter-year differences, and long-term trends in the distances from shore and water depths at which whales migrate.
- Monitor temporal and spatial trends in the distribution, relative abundance, habitat, and behaviors (especially feeding) of endangered whales in arctic waters.
- Provide real-time data to BOEM and NMFS on the general progress of the fall migration of bowhead whales across the Alaskan Beaufort Sea for use in protection of this Endangered Species, if needed.
- Provide an objective wide-area context for management understanding of the overall fall migration of bowhead whales and site-specific study results.
- Record and map beluga whale distribution and incidental sightings of other marine mammals.
- Determine seasonal distribution of endangered whales in other planning areas of interest to BOEM.

Methods: Aerial line-transect surveys will be flown in the Chukchi Sea Program Area during two time periods: late-July to early-August and October to early-November. Aerial line-transect surveys will be flown in the Beaufort Sea to observe the fall migration of the bowhead whales, continuing the decades-long set of observations. For surveys in both seas, the observational and data recording methodology shall follow protocols used by the BOEM in the past surveys of the bowhead fall migration.

The observations, data recording, and subsequent data analysis will be performed by scientists and support personnel at the National Marine Mammal Laboratory. Additionally, the scientists will be responsible for the management of this project, all necessary training of support personnel, providing all needed field equipment, conducting all logistical tasks, and insuring the safety of all people involved.

Aircraft support is funded under the companion study titled “Distribution and Relative Abundance of Marine Mammals in the Chukchi Sea and the Fall Migration of Bowhead Whales in the Beaufort Sea – Aircraft Needs.”

Revised Date: September 2014

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Environmental Studies Program: Alaska Annual Studies Plan FY 2015

Region: Alaska

Planning Area(s): Beaufort Sea, Chukchi Sea

Title: Synthesis of Arctic Research (SOAR) Physics to Marine Mammals in the Pacific Arctic (AK-11-05)

BOEM Information Need(s) to be Addressed: The changing physical environment of the U.S. Arctic OCS is hypothesized to drive a rapid tempo of change in the distribution and behavior of a number of protected marine mammals that inhabit those waters. The same species may be affected by oil and gas activities within BOEM Planning Areas, with strong potential for deleterious interactions between natural and human induced phenomena. Under NEPA and the ESA, BOEM is required to evaluate whether and how federal actions associated with oil and gas development may affect these protected populations. Information on ocean circulation and hydrography is useful for those evaluations as well as for input into various models used to predict the outcome of oil spills and other physical phenomena. Given recent high investment in interdisciplinary biological and oceanographic research by the Governments in the region, a synthesis of results of completed and ongoing studies would be useful to inform management decision-makers and may be useful in determining needs of future research activities.

Total Cost: \$1,798,459
plus Joint Funding

Period of Performance: FY 2011-2016

Conducting Organization: NOAA- Pacific Marine Environmental Laboratory

BOEM Contact: [Dr. Heather Crowley](#)

Description:

Background: The physical climate of the western Arctic appears to be rapidly changing. The summer minimum sea ice extent in 2007 and 2008 covered an area which was 37% less than the areal coverage of two decades ago and 20% less than the previous minimum coverage in 2005. High water temperatures and dense concentrations of zooplankton have been observed near Barrow. The rapidity of these changes was unexpected, as the consensus of the climate research community just a few years ago was that such changes would not be seen for another 30 years, as expected from the CO₂ anthropogenic contribution alone.

During the same period, several marine mammals have exhibited unusual movements or behaviors that may be related to these environmental changes. The range of humpback whales has moved northward to include the northern Chukchi and western Beaufort Seas. Fin whales have expanded their range northward to include waters north of Icy Cape in the Chukchi. In 2009, bowhead whales fed extensively in the northern Chukchi Sea, a phenomenon not observed since the end of commercial whaling one hundred years ago. In recent years, gray whales have fed in increasing numbers along

the coastline between Wainwright and Barrow. In 2007 and 2009, walrus formed large aggregations on shore between Norton Sound and Barrow. This behavior appears to be related to the summer retreat of sea ice well northward of traditional walrus feeding areas on the shelf break.

Given the continuing retreat of sea ice and the known high-latitude range of these species in other oceans, it is likely that the recent sightings represent a climate-related range expansion that will continue in future years. Other changes in behavior and/or expansion of feeding areas also may accelerate as ice continues to degrade and water temperatures rise.

Between the years 2005 and 2015 MMS/BOEM will have invested more than \$50,000,000 in marine mammal and related oceanographic studies in the western Arctic. These data will increase our body of knowledge about the region considerably, but interpretation will be complicated by concurrent environmental changes. This study proposes a synthesis of research from the ongoing studies in the Region. These studies include, but are not limited to:

- Bowhead Whale Feeding Variability in the Western Alaskan Beaufort Sea: Satellite Tracking of Bowhead Whales & Oceanography and Feeding
- Passive Acoustic Detection and Monitoring of Endangered Whales in the Arctic
- Ecosystem Observations in the Chukchi Sea: Biophysical Mooring and Climate Modeling
- Distribution and Relative Abundance of Marine Mammals in the Chukchi Sea and the Fall Migration of Bowhead Whales in the Beaufort Sea
- Walrus Habitat Use in the Potential Drilling Area
- Pinniped Movements and Foraging: Bearded Seals
- Arctic marine research studies supported through NOPP
- Studies conducted by the State of Alaska and the North Slope Borough under the USDOJ Coastal Impact Assistance Program (CIAP)

Objectives:

- Increase scientific understanding of the inter- and intra-relationships of oceanographic conditions, lower trophic prey species, such as small fish and krill, and marine mammal distribution and behavior in the Chukchi Sea lease area, and adjacent waters.
- Enhance capability to predict future changes in oceanographic features such as currents, upwellings, and ice leads and associated changes in the behavior of marine mammals and their prey.

Methods: Using a synthesis approach, PIs will analyze data available from BOEM supported, and related, studies in the Chukchi Lease Sale Area and adjacent waters, using available statistical and other models to identify and test hypotheses that cross scientific disciplines. This study will be guided by an oversight committee formed of senior scientists and accomplished through annual, or more frequent, meetings (with significant data preparation and analysis beforehand). In the first meeting participants will inventory available data and deem its sufficiency for use to address specific hypotheses

and questions identified by the participants in facilitated sessions. Recommendations for further analyses and publication development will be provided in a report to BOEM summarizing that meeting. After BOEM review and approval, subgroups of interdisciplinary scientists will work together to prepare data for integration and conduct appropriate statistical analyses or modeling to identify interdisciplinary relationships and/or test hypotheses previously identified. If useful, PIs may integrate data with on-going oceanographic programs (e.g. RUSALCA and the Distributed Biological Observatory) to inform ecosystem models and enhance their predictive capability. After analyses are completed, sub-groups will prepare multi-authored manuscripts for publication in appropriate peer-review literature. Topics for synthesis include, but are not limited to, inter- and intra-relationships of oceanographic circulation, sea ice, hydrography, lower-trophic abundance and distribution, and marine mammal distributions and behavior. Deliverables from this study will include multiple workshop proceedings and summary recommendation reports, as well as multiple peer-review journal publications.

Revised Date: September 2014

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Environmental Studies Program: Alaska Annual Studies Plan FY 2015

Region: Alaska

Planning Area(s): Beaufort Sea, Chukchi Sea

Title: Distribution and Relative Abundance of Marine Mammals in the Chukchi Sea and the Fall Migration of Bowhead Whales in the Beaufort Sea – Aircraft Needs (AK-11-06)

BOEM Information Need(s) to be Addressed: This study will generate information pertaining to possible impacts to marine mammals from exploratory offshore seismic surveying for oil and gas and subsequent leasing in the Chukchi and Beaufort Seas. The information will assist BOEM in NEPA analyses, ESA Section 7 consultations, MMPA documentation for Lease Sales, EPs and DPPs, and post-sale and post-exploration decision-making in the Beaufort and Chukchi Seas.

Total Cost: \$9,800,000

Period of Performance: FY 2011-2016

Conducting Organization: USDOJ National Business Center

BOEM Contact: [Carol Fairfield](#)

Description:

Background: Bowhead whales (*Balaena mysticetus*), gray whales (*Eschrichtius robustus*), beluga whales (*Delphinapterus leucas*), Pacific walrus (*Odobenus rosmarus divergens*), polar bears (*Ursus maritimus*), bearded seals (*Phoca fasciata*), and several other species of ice seals are known to occupy the Chukchi Sea, at least during some seasons. All of these species are subject to changes in environmental variables such as oceanographic currents, sea temperature, sea ice cover, prey availability, and anthropogenic impacts. Moreover all of these species are used for subsistence both in Russia and the US and form an important part of the diet and cultural base for most people in villages along the Chukchi coast. Having a good understanding of the seasonal distribution, relative abundance, and habitat use of marine mammals in the Chukchi Sea is fundamentally important to evaluating the potential environmental impacts associated with oil and gas exploration and development and other anthropogenic activities. Reliable, up-to-date information of this type is needed for marine mammal populations in the Chukchi Sea. Aerial surveys of marine mammals are an efficient tool because they offer quick coverage of large marine areas. Past surveys are available for comparison with new data to assess whether changes in distribution or abundance have occurred since the earlier surveys were completed.

A recent, BOEM-funded investigation of the seasonal migration of the bowhead whales using satellite-tracked animal tags revealed that they are resident in the Bering Sea during the winter and return to the Beaufort Sea in the summer when opening spring leads allow for passage along the Alaskan and Canadian coasts. The bowheads leave the Beaufort in the fall and cross the Chukchi Sea before moving back into the Bering Sea for the winter.

Since 1979, aerial surveying of the fall migration of the bowheads has been conducted, initially by the Bureau of Land Management and subsequently by MMS, now BOEM. This is one of the longest-maintained monitoring of a biological phenomenon and has produced an invaluable baseline of the distribution and habitat use of the bowheads. The baseline can be used to observe changes in distribution and habitat use that may occur due to changing atmospheric and oceanic climates and to offshore oil and gas development activities. This investigation will continue the aerial observations of the fall migration for evidence of these changes

Since the beluga whales and other marine mammals seasonally or otherwise resident in the Beaufort and Chukchi are often sighted during the bowhead whale aerial surveys, their occurrence will also be part of the acquired data. This will be coincidental sightings, but of scientific value nonetheless.

Objectives: Obtain the necessary aircraft services (planes, fuel, maintenance, pilots, etc.) via Interagency Agreement between NBC-AMD and BOEM required by the study titled “Distribution and Relative Abundance of Marine Mammals in the Chukchi Sea and the Fall Migration of Bowhead Whales in the Beaufort Sea –Personnel Needs.”

Methods: The USDOJ National Business Center’s Acquisition Services Directorate will issue contracts to private companies to obtain the needed aircraft services.

Revised Date: September 2014

Environmental Studies Program: Alaska Annual Studies Plan FY 2015

Region: Alaska

Planning Area(s): Beaufort Sea, Chukchi Sea

Title: Satellite Tracking of Bowhead Whales: Habitat Use, Passive Acoustic and Environmental Monitoring (AK-12-02)

BOEM Information Need(s) to be Addressed: This project will extend ongoing research to provide more information on the locations and use of bowhead whale feeding areas, the variability of those locations from year to year, and the environmental factors that can be used to predict where bowhead whales will concentrate. This information is used for developing mitigation options for Beaufort and Chukchi Lease sales and exploration and development activities. Information on the vocal behavior of bowhead whales under various environmental conditions is needed to interpret the habitat use and call behavior being collected on many passive acoustic recorders currently in use. Information from this study will support ESA Section 7 consultations and NEPA documentation.

Total Cost: \$2,699,856

Period of Performance: FY 2012-2017

Conducting Organization: ADF&G

BOEM Contact: [Carol Fairfield](#)

Description:

Background: A previous BOEM study using satellite telemetry has greatly added to the knowledge of bowhead whale movements, concentration areas, and the timing of both. Multiple years of tracking during this study has begun to provide information regarding the inter-annual variability in movements and concentration areas. Continued tracking will provide a better understanding of this variability and will allow us to predict the timing and location of bowhead concentration areas making mitigation measures more directly applicable and useful.

Satellite-linked transmitters are a valuable tool for tracking bowhead whales and they have been effective at documenting movements of large and small whales of both sexes, and the timing and locations of concentration areas. Another tool, of increasing use, is the passive acoustic recorder deployed near areas of interest to record marine mammal vocalizations. Recorded bowhead vocalizations indicate that a bowhead was present at the time of vocalization, but an absence of calls could mean bowheads are present but not vocalizing. Bowhead whale vocalization rates related to various behaviors (e.g., feeding and travelling) or potential disturbances (e.g., boat traffic, seismic operations, and drilling) are needed to interpret the information being collected by passive acoustic recorders. Sensors for monitoring environmental conditions such as temperature and salinity have been developed and are in use on large whales, including bowheads in Greenland.

Objectives: To better understand interannual variation in bowhead whale feeding concentrations and to interpret call counts and calling rates collected by passive acoustic recorders.

Methods: This study will track the movements and document the behavior of bowhead whales using satellite telemetry to compare among years emphasizing new tagging locations such as St. Lawrence, Island, Pt. Hope and Canada. Bowhead whale vocalization rates and ambient noise levels will be documented using an acoustic tag to develop analysis of call rates relative to behavior and disturbance. Tags equipped with environmental sensors will be deployed to monitor, summarize, and transmit ambient oceanographic conditions as bowheads migrate. Limited numbers of individuals of other species of large whales (Gray, Humpback, Fin) may be tagged and tracked as opportunities arise as a pilot study for future work.

This study also will continue collaborations between whaling captains, AEWC, NSB, ADF&G, NMFS, BOEM, DFO-Canada, and Natural Resources Greenland and develop additional collaborations with oil companies and consultants collecting acoustic data to accomplish this project. Satellite transmitters with environmental and passive acoustic monitoring capabilities will be deployed on bowhead whales near Native villages in the Beaufort, Chukchi, and Bering seas. Plots of whale tracks will be made available weekly and location data compared among years to determine inter-annual variability of movements and concentrations. Acoustic data will be analyzed to determine individual whale calling rates relative to whale behavior and disturbance factors. This study will be coordinated with AEWC and local whaling captains' associations to prevent any interference with subsistence whaling and hunting. All necessary research and access permits will be obtained by the PI.

Revised Date: September 2014

Environmental Studies Program: Alaska Annual Studies Plan FY 2015

Region: Alaska

Planning Area(s): Beaufort Sea, Chukchi Sea, Northern Bering Sea

Title: Ice Seal Movements and Foraging: Village-based Satellite Tracking of Ringed and Bearded Seals (AK-12-05)

BOEM Information Need(s) to be Addressed: More information is needed on seal movements and feeding areas relative to areas of interest for oil and gas leasing, exploration and development. Additional information would be particularly useful to evaluate potential interaction between industrial development and anticipated effects of diminished summer sea ice in much of their habitat. Data can be used to design monitoring and mitigation measures and will support NEPA environmental analyses. Since ice seals have been petitioned for listing under the ESA, information from this study may be useful for future ESA Section 7 consultations.

Total Cost: \$1,174,994

Period of Performance: FY 2013-2017

Conducting Organization: ADF&G

BOEM Contact: [Dr. Dan Holiday](#)

Description:

Background: Considerable effort has been expended since the 1980s to document the distribution, abundance and behavior of ice seals in the Beaufort and Chukchi seas. However, most of that effort involved aircraft surveys and analysis of prey from stomachs collected by biologists or in subsistence harvests. Some satellite telemetry studies of ringed, bearded, and spotted seals movements have been conducted (funded by MMS and others) showing large scale movements by all species and age classes. One highly successful project was conducted from 2004-2010 near Kotzebue in which local hunters were trained for capture and tagging. Seals tagged near Kotzebue ranged farther north than Barrow and south to Bristol Bay. Overall, because of the proximity to the tagging most of the locations are in the southern Chukchi Sea near Kotzebue. Additional tagging locations are needed to better understand the range of movements and use patterns. Tagging near Pt. Lay, Wainwright, and Barrow may show a greater use of the Lease Sale 193 area and the Beaufort Sea than use by seals tagged near Kotzebue. On the other hand, if seals tagged near Kotzebue go to the Yukon-Kuskokwim area and Bristol Bay, seals tagged in the Bering Sea may also use the Chukchi and Beaufort seas.

Adult ringed seals are the most ice adapted and are known to use the heaviest ice concentrations throughout winter and spring, and it was assumed that juveniles occupied similar habitats in winter. Movements of adult and juvenile ringed seals tagged near Kotzebue, however, showed juveniles travelling to and wintering near the ice edge in the Bering Sea while adults wintered in heavy ice in the northern Bering and Chukchi seas. It is likely that other similar patterns of use by species or sex/age classes will be documented during this tagging study.

Objectives: To better understand movements and habitat use of ice seals in the Beaufort, Chukchi, and northern Bering seas.

Methods: Using the tagging project conducted in Kotzebue Sound by the Native Village of Kotzebue as a model, develop similar collaborations between local Village Councils, seal hunters, the Ice Seal Committee, NSB, ADF&G, NMFS, BOEM, to establish seal tagging projects near several Native villages selected for their importance in provided missing seal movement information. Biologists will train hunters in seal capture and tag deployment and provide weekly maps of seal tracks to the hunters and their communities. Movement data will be analyzed relative to ice edge, ice concentration, bathymetry, and residence times.

Revised Date: September 2014

Environmental Studies Program: Alaska Annual Studies Plan FY 2015

Region: Alaska

Planning Area(s): Beaufort Sea, Chukchi Sea

Title: Arctic Whale Ecology Study (ARCWEST): Use of the Chukchi Sea by Endangered Baleen and Other Whales (AK-12-07)

BOEM Information Need(s) to be Addressed: Whale species listed as threatened and/or endangered are known to, or potentially could, occur in areas that may be affected by oil and gas activities within the Chukchi Sea planning areas. These include, but are not limited to the humpback (*Megaptera novaeangliae*), the fin (*Balaenoptera physalus*), and the bowhead (*Balaena mysticetus*), all of which are listed as endangered. Recent sightings of both humpback and fin whales in the Chukchi and/or Beaufort seas, indicate a range expansion by one or both species. Gray (*Eschrichtius robustus*) and beluga (*Delphinapterus leucas*) whales also use these waters in large numbers. Under NEPA and the ESA, BOEM will be required to evaluate if and how Federal actions associated with oil and gas development may affect these whales. The occurrence, distribution and habitat use of these species in the areas concerned may play an important role in determining where and when exploration or access to petroleum reserves may be conducted.

Total Cost: \$4,502,000
plus Joint Funding

Period of Performance: FY 2012-2017

Conducting Organization: NOAA-NMML

BOEM Contact: [Carol Fairfield](#)

Description:

Background: Research underway on the Bowhead Whale Feeding Ecology Study (BOWFEST) indicates that large concentrations of bowhead whales feeding in the Barrow arch (Wainwright to Smith Bay) are attracted by prey and nutrients transported from the Bering Sea through Barrow Canyon and upwelled onto the Beaufort shelf near Barrow. Other large concentrations of whales, pinnipeds and water birds are found in the area and may be attracted by elements of the same mechanism. However, it is not clear exactly how this transport mechanism operates as these resources could be transported through the Chukchi Sea on the Alaska Coastal Current or by other sources of Bering Sea waters. This study will undertake to determine relationships between dominant currents passing through the Chukchi Sea and resources delivered to the Barrow Arch area and will provide information about the dynamic nature of those relationships relative to whale distribution and habitat utilization in the eastern-Chukchi and extreme western-Beaufort seas.

The relationships between Chukchi Sea currents and the transport of nutrients and prey may be more dynamic than formerly appreciated and may be changing as a result of the warming of the surface waters and increasing retreat of summer sea ice in the Chukchi.

Recent observations of humpback and fin whales in the Chukchi are likely a climate change-related range expansion that will continue in future years. Even as the range of these cetaceans appears to be expanding, with the exception of the bowhead whale, little is known about the population identities of any of the whales observed there. In the case of the humpback whales, it is possible that they are part of the relatively small western North Pacific stock. Virtually nothing is known about the extent to which the region is important for humpback or fin whales. Gray whales make extensive use of the Chukchi for feeding and at least some gray whales have been documented in the area during every calendar month. Gray whales potentially could belong to stocks associated with either North America or Asia; the latter is considered to be critically endangered, with fewer than 150 animals remaining. Although gray whales have been documented in the Chukchi Sea by surveys over the past three decades, the ecology of the species has not been studied in the area. Over 10% of the Eastern Pacific Stock may use the Chukchi for summer feeding. They are known to make extensive summer use of waters near the Burger Prospect and Peard Bay, areas of significant interest for industrial development. Beluga whales are frequent visitors to lagoons and coastal waters along the eastern Chukchi Sea coast. They are prized as a traditional species taken for subsistence and ceremonial purposes by Natives resident along that coastline. Beluga stock associations are not well known but belugas in the region are probably from a mixture of several stocks inhabiting the Chukchi Sea and Arctic Ocean.

Since all five species winter in, or south of, the Bering Sea, large numbers must pass through the Bering Strait during seasonal migrations to feeding grounds further north. Beginning at the Bering Strait, this research will investigate the currents and nutrient/prey transport process using methods and equipment developed for physical and biological oceanography. Additional work on the distribution, stock identity, and ecological relationships is needed for all five whale species and this all will be accomplished in a cooperative, highly-integrated study involving scientists supported by BOEM, the NSB DWM, and the NSF.

Objectives:

- Assess spatial and temporal patterns of use of the Chukchi Sea by endangered bowhead, fin and humpback whales, and beluga and gray whales.
- Assess population structure and origin of animals.
- Evaluate ecological relationships for the species, including physical and biological oceanography.
- Extend existing studies of bowhead whale foraging ecology into the Chukchi Sea to further understand the sources, transport and advection of krill from the Bering Strait.

Methods: This study requires technologies including satellite tracking, passive acoustic monitoring, genetic analyses, and oceanographic and biological methodologies and technologies.

Northern Bering Sea. Satellite tags will be attached to humpback and fin whales, and their movements through the Chukchi Sea will be monitored through the Argos system. No fin whales have been satellite tagged in this region. Up to 20 tags per species would be deployed in each of 4 years. Population structure and origin will be assessed by genetic analysis of biopsy samples. Areas where aggregations of whales occur will be targeted to increase the probability of successful tagging. For example, an aggregation of humpback whales tends to occur in the northern Bering Seas southwest of St. Lawrence island (around the M8 oceanographic mooring). Sonobuoys will be used to target fin whales which use a triplet call that occurs in both the Bering and Chukchi seas. An array of listening devices will be deployed through the Bering Sea to monitor occurrence and movement of large whales transiting through the area to facilitate tagging efforts and target whales that move into the Chukchi Sea.

Chukchi Sea/Bering Strait. In the Chukchi, arrays of listening devices will be deployed in the Bering Strait and near Wainwright, Alaska, with the intention of monitoring the occurrence and movements of large whales transiting through the area. The study proposed here will also permit a full visual and acoustic survey to be conducted between Dutch Harbor and the Bering Strait/Wainwright. In addition, photo-id, biopsy sampling and satellite tagging will be attempted if humpback, fin and gray whales are found en route. Humpback, fin, and gray whales will be tagged in the region as practical. Cruises will be organized to extend similar research activities to those areas during years 3-4 of the study. Whales will be tagged in the region as practical. Oceanographic surveys, including prey sampling, will be conducted in association with cruises, and will include studies of foraging ecology of bowheads using similar methods to those employed in the Beaufort Sea. Instrumented moorings may be deployed for year-around monitoring of oceanography and sound. The study will be integrated with other ongoing studies in the regions including aerial surveys, passive acoustic monitoring and oceanography. Analysis of acoustic data from new and existing recording packages will investigate the occurrence of gray, humpback, fin and bowhead whales on a year-round basis.

Revised Date: September 2014

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Environmental Studies Program: Alaska Annual Studies Plan FY 2015

Region: Alaska

Planning Area(s): Chukchi Sea, Bering Sea

Title: Abundance Estimates of Ice-Associated Seals: Bering Sea Populations that Inhabit the Chukchi Sea – Logistics Support (AK-12-x10b)

BOEM Information Need(s) to be Addressed: BOEM needs reliable abundance estimates of ice-associated seal species for NEPA analysis and the future development of sound plans for management, conservation, and mitigation of potential environmental impacts from oil and gas activities and climate change. Improved monitoring of ice-associated seals is also fundamental for ensuring compliance with Federal management and regulatory mandates for stock assessments under the Marine Mammal Protection Act (MMPA) and establishing extinction risk assessments under the Endangered Species Act (ESA). Study findings will support pre-lease analyses and documentation for potential future Chukchi Sea lease sales, as well as post-sale NEPA analysis, review of EPs, DPPs and other reviews for post-sale and post-exploration BOEM decision making and mitigation.

Total Cost: \$240,000
plus Joint Funding

Period of Performance: FY 2012-2014

Conducting Organization: NMFS-NMML

BOEM Contact: [Dr. Dan Holiday](#)

Description:

Background: Bearded, spotted, ribbon, and ringed seals, collectively referred to as ice seals, are key components of Arctic marine ecosystems and are important subsistence resources for northern coastal Alaska Native communities. These seals are protected under the MMPA and bearded seals are under consideration for listing through the ESA. More comprehensive abundance estimates for these ice-associated seals are needed to establish extinction risk assessments under the ESA and to ensure compliance with Federal management and regulatory mandates for marine mammals under the MMPA. Obtaining reliable abundance estimates for ice seals is also a key requirement for developing sound plans for response to potential environmental impacts of oil and gas activities and the impacts to ice seal populations due to climate change. The seals' geographic distributions are broad and patchy, and the extent, locations, and conditions of their sea ice habitats change rapidly.

Scientists at NOAA's National Marine Mammal Laboratory (NMML) have been collaborating with Russian colleagues to conduct synoptic aerial surveys of ice-associated seals in the Bering and Okhotsk Seas. This procurement provides logistics support for travel of NMFS staff conducting aerial surveys for ice seals (bearded, spotted, and ribbon seals) over the Outer Continental Shelf (OCS) areas of the Bering

and southern Chukchi seas. In addition, the project allows for BOEM financial support toward contracting temporary staff to compliment the NMFS-NMML team and facilitate image processing and data analysis of high-resolution digital imagery and thermal output photography. A large volume of images and data are anticipated from the surveys; annually these data files will be approximately 20 terabytes, including more than 1 million high-resolution photos.

Objectives:

- Conduct aerial surveys to collect high-resolution digital and thermal imagery of ice seals over OCS areas of the Bering and southern Chukchi seas.
- Effectively retrieve, manage, and process sensor imagery for analyses to facilitate calculation of abundance estimates for bearded, spotted, and ribbon seals in the Bering and Chukchi Seas.

Methods: 1) U.S. surveys will begin April 1, 2012, out of Anchorage. A total of 17,000 – 22,000 km of survey transects at an altitude between 800 -1000 ft. will be conducted during an estimated 6 week time period. 2) Surveys will be conducted using two aircraft: a NOAA Twin Otter aircraft and a chartered long range aircraft. The charter aircraft efforts will be focused on the central Bering Sea, an important concentration and breeding area for bearded, spotted, and ribbon seals that is inaccessible to the Twin Otter. 3) New instrument-based methods rather than traditional observer-based methods will be utilized. Multiple high-resolution digital cameras (Canon Mark III 1Ds) will allow surveys to be flown at altitudes too high for on-board observers to identify species. The increase in altitude will reduce disturbance to ice seals being surveyed while providing areal coverage equivalent to surveys flown at lower altitudes during observer-based surveys. 3) Temperature data from a thermal camera (FLIR SC645) paired with each Canon digital camera image will be used to identify when seals are present in the survey area. Utilizing these data will be a thermal automated count and camera-trigger system (Snowflake), a new system that will be tested during this study. This new system allows for images to be collected at regular intervals to monitor sea ice habitat throughout the survey in addition to collecting images when seals are present in the thermal signal. The purpose of this fully automated image collection system is to greatly reduce the number of images collected, thus reducing time for analysis and reducing computer storage space of raw imagery data. 4) After each survey, the digital images, thermal data, and GPS records will be downloaded, duplicated, and stored with appropriate metadata for later analysis. 5) Abundance estimations will be achieved using hierarchical models for seal abundance developed at NMML.

Revised Date: September 2014

Environmental Studies Program: Alaska Annual Studies Plan FY 2015

Region: Alaska

Planning Area(s): Beaufort Sea, Chukchi Sea

Title: Chukchi Acoustic, Oceanography and Zooplankton Study:
Hanna Shoal (Extension of CHAOZ) (AK-13-02)

BOEM Information Need(s) to be Addressed: Information from this study will document the physical and biological dynamics in the Hanna Shoal region, including the temporal and spatial distribution of marine mammals. Findings may be used for evaluating potential deferral areas and other potential limitations on offshore leasing, exploration, and development. This study will provide useful information to support NEPA analysis and documentation for Beaufort and Chukchi Sea Lease Sales, exploration plans, development and production plans, consultations under the ESA and MMPA, and monitoring protocols for adaptive management.

Total Cost: \$3,933,671
plus Joint Funding

Period of Performance: FY 2013-2017

Conducting Organization: NOAA-NMML

BOEM Contact: [Dr. Heather Crowley](#)

Description:

Background: The western Arctic physical climate is rapidly changing. The summer minimum sea ice extent in 2007, 2008 and 2011 covered an area which was 37% less than the areal coverage of two decades ago and 20% less than the previous minimum coverage in 2005. The reduction in sea ice coverage also opens up vast new regions of the Arctic Ocean to increased absorption of sunlight and storage of heat. The rapidity of these changes was unexpected, as the consensus of the climate research community just a few years ago was that such changes would not be seen for another 30 years. The observed northward retreat of the minimum extent of summer sea ice has the potential to expand oil and gas-related exploration and development into previously closed seasons and localities in the Alaskan Arctic.

Baleen whales (bowheads [*Balaena mysticetus*], gray whales [*Eschrichtius robustus*], fin whales [*Balaenoptera physalus*], humpbacks [*Megaptera novaeangliae*], and minke [*Balaenoptera acutorostrata*]) are subject to changes in environmental variables such as oceanographic currents, sea temperature, sea ice cover, prey availability, and anthropogenic impacts. Furthermore, extreme ice-retreat and climate warming in the western Arctic over the last decade are expected to lead to changes in species composition and distribution, evidenced already through local knowledge and opportunistic observations.

Hanna Shoal in the northeast Chukchi Sea is an area of special biological concern bordering the boundary between Chukchi and Arctic Ocean waters. The reason for this,

however, is poorly understood. The shallower waters of the shoal have long been known as traps for grounding of sea ice, and a reoccurring polynya is created down current of the grounded ice. In most recent years, floating pack ice in summer persists in this area longer than elsewhere in the Chukchi, often surrounded by open water even to the north. Biological “hot spots” in the Chukchi Sea are thought to be related to coupled pelagic and benthic productivity. The importance of the Hanna Shoal region to bowhead, gray and other whales, as well as walruses and ice seals, is not well known.

The study “COMIDA: Factors Affecting the Distribution and Relative Abundance of Endangered Whales” combines passive acoustic detection and tracking of whales, active acoustic detection of zooplankton, and biophysical measurements from long-term moorings on the Chukchi Shelf to examine relationships between primary production, zooplankton biovolume and the presence/absence of whales. Passive acoustic detection and tracking is a proven tool for assessment of large whales in Alaskan seas. Specifically, acoustic detection has proven a key addition to the census of bowhead whales (*Balaena mysticetus*) during their spring migration past Barrow, and in relation to oil and gas development activities offshore Prudhoe Bay. The proposed study will refocus this monitoring to the region of Hanna Shoal. These measurements will complement the biological, oceanographic and contaminant data collected by the “Hanna Shoal Ecosystem Study.”

Objectives: This study will to refocus the acoustic and biophysical monitoring begun under the study “COMIDA: Factors Affecting the Distribution and Relative Abundance of Endangered Whales” to the region of Hanna Shoal. Specific objectives include:

- Assess the spatial and temporal distribution of marine mammals near Hanna Shoal.
- Implement a tonal detector/classifier for all marine mammal species of interest to BOEM in the Arctic.
- Describe patterns of current flow, hydrography, ice thickness, light penetration, and concentrations of nutrients, chlorophyll and large crustacean zooplankton.
- Evaluate the extent to which variability in environmental conditions such as sea ice, oceanic currents, water temperature and salinity, and prey abundance influence whale distribution and relative abundance.
- Develop a quantitative description of the Chukchi Sea’s noise budget, as contributed by biotic and abiotic sound sources, and continuous, time-varying metrics of acoustic habitat loss for a suite of arctic marine mammal species.

Methods: This study will deploy long-term passive acoustic recorder moorings in the vicinity of Hanna Shoal to provide information on marine mammal distribution. Researchers will also opportunistically deploy sonobuoys to monitor vocalizing marine mammals while the ship is underway. Annual data will be analyzed for whale calls to estimate: seasonal occurrence by species, inter-annual differences in occurrence by species, variation in occurrence due to changes in ice extent, and types and strengths of anthropogenic noise in the study area. Biophysical moorings and active acoustic moorings for zooplankton deployed on the flanks of Hanna Shoal will collect

information on currents, hydrography, ice, nutrient and chlorophyll concentrations, etc. These instruments will be refurbished and redeployed annually.

The study will also use autonomous and real-time passive acoustic recording systems to monitor the Chukchi acoustic ecosystem and quantify changes in its acoustic habitat as a function of natural and man-made noise contributors. The systems will automatically collect, detect and report via satellite species-specific sounds from a broad suite of marine mammals in the Chukchi Sea, including: beluga, bowhead, fin, humpback and killer whales; bearded, ribbon and ringed seals; walrus; and fishes. These data will populate models of the acoustic environment that are currently under development.

Revised Date: September 2014

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Environmental Studies Program: Alaska Annual Studies Plan FY 2015

Region: Alaska

Planning Area(s): Chukchi Sea

Title: Walrus Seasonal Distribution and Habitat Use in the Eastern Chukchi Sea (AK-13-06)

BOEM Information Need(s) to be Addressed: Data on the seasonal distribution, abundance, and habitat use of Pacific walrus (*Odobenus rosmarus*) are an integral part of assessing and managing anthropogenic risks from Chukchi Sea OCS development. Information on these ecological parameters in the Chukchi Sea are coming to light from current USGS walrus studies, but require further research and monitoring, especially in light of the loss of sea ice habitat and ongoing ecological changes. This study will provide information for NEPA analyses of proposed OCS oil and gas activities, MMPA authorizations, and ESA conferences. This study will contribute information useful for developing mitigation strategies to reduce impacts to walrus from proposed oil and gas development activities. In addition, walrus in the Chukchi Sea are an important subsistence resource to Russian and Alaska Natives.

Total Cost: \$1,750,000
plus Joint Funding

Period of Performance: FY 2013-2018

Conducting Organization: USGS

BOEM Contact: [Catherine Coon](#)

Description:

Background: Joint US-Russia aerial surveys to estimate total walrus abundance were conducted in the Chukchi Sea in the fall of 1975, 1980, 1985, 1990, and 1995. Another joint US - Russia walrus abundance aerial survey was conducted in spring of 2006 in the Bering Sea. Recent declines in summer/fall sea ice in the Chukchi Sea have resulted in walrus hauling out at coastal sites in Alaska in fall when sea ice completely disappears over the eastern continental shelf. This situation may provide an opportunity to estimate walrus abundance in the eastern Chukchi Sea in fall by using an aerial survey along the coast of Alaska. The BOEM-funded COMIDA program has conducted opportunistic surveys of the coast to enumerate walrus over the past few years.

The USGS initiated a study in 2007, and expanded the study in subsequent years, to determine the seasonal distribution and habitat use of walrus in the Chukchi Sea. A report on walrus utilization areas in 2008-2011 was published in 2012. However, patterns of utilization are still being established by walrus in response to continued reductions in sea ice habitats in the Chukchi Sea.

Preliminary exploration drilling activities in the Chukchi Sea began in 2012 and could continue in the future. Therefore, walrus monitoring needs to continue without interruption through at least the next five years to provide pre-development information

and describe changes in walrus distribution and abundance associated with changing sea ice habitats. Information regarding the seasonal distribution, abundance, habitat use, and diet of walruses across the planning area will assist in assessing potential impacts and mitigating disturbances associated with proposed exploration and development scenarios. The monitoring activities described in this study profile follow recommendations of the national Ocean Research Priorities Plan (ORPP).

Objectives: The overarching objective of the study is to obtain information on the seasonal abundance, distribution, and habitat use of walruses in the Chukchi Sea. Specific objectives of this study include:

- Determine seasonal distribution and movements of walruses in the Chukchi Sea lease sale area.
- Identify habitats of importance to walruses (e.g., feeding and resting).
- Determine whether prey selection and/or foraging areas are changing over time with increased use of nearshore habitats.
- Assess the feasibility of approaches for estimating the abundance of walruses in the eastern Chukchi Sea in late summer/fall.

Methods:

1. Deploy radio-tag instruments on a sufficient sample of walruses.
2. Use GIS and spatial analysis methods to define important habitats, identify migration pathways, walrus foraging behaviors and activity budgets.
3. Collect appropriate walrus tissue, fecal and/or biopsy samples and perform molecular analysis to identify prey taxa and trends in dietary taxa composition over time.
4. An estimate of walrus abundance in the eastern Chukchi Sea in summer/fall will likely require a combination of coastal aerial surveys to count walruses on land and deployment of satellite radio-tags on walruses to provide data to estimate the availability of walruses for sighting during the survey. Method development will be assessed after the first survey attempt and revised as needed.

Revised Date: September 2014

Environmental Studies Program: Alaska Annual Studies Plan FY 2015

Region: Alaska

Planning Area(s): Beaufort Sea, Chukchi Sea

Title: A Year in the Life of a Bowhead Whale: An Animated Film
(AK-08-12-10)

BOEM Information Need(s) to be Addressed: The project is for public outreach. It serves to promote an aware and informed public, and in so doing, strengthens public voices in crafting policy.

Total Cost: \$87,587.00
plus Joint Funding

Period of Performance: FY 2012-2014

Conducting Organization: CMI, UAF; University of Alaska Museum of the North

BOEM Contact: [Carol Fairfield](#)

Description:

Background: Science and technology increasingly play important roles in the development of public policies relating to a wide range of societal issues. Science outreach serves to promote an aware and informed public and, in so doing, strengthens public voices in crafting policy. Research has been underway on bowhead whale ecology, movements and distribution for decades, and significant body of knowledge regarding annual migrations, seasonal ranges, movements and bowhead feeding concentrations in the Barrow arch attracted by prey and nutrients transported from the Bering Sea through Barrow Canyon and upwelled onto the Beaufort shelf near Barrow. Other large concentrations of whales, pinnipeds and water birds are found in the area and may be attracted by elements of the same mechanism.

This project will undertake to produce an animated film for outreach purposes that will visualize processes relating how bowhead whales feed on zooplankton (krill and copepods) and how winds, ocean currents, and bathymetry interact to create favorable feeding opportunities for bowhead whales and animate the year-long cycle of bowhead seasonal movement and areas of habitat use. An animated film was chosen as the outreach medium because the aforementioned processes are best visualized through a medium that conveys motion. The narrative script will be translated from English to Iñupiaq by a native speaker and the Iñupiaq language track will be narrated by a native speaker.

Objectives:

- To produce an animated film to improve public understanding of the arctic marine ecosystem (a BOEM framework issue), with emphasis on those components associated with the bowhead whale and its zooplankton prey.

- To synthesize of some recent and ongoing MMS/BOEM-funded (directly or indirectly) research projects (whale tagging, aerial surveys, oceanography) conducted in the Chukchi and Beaufort Seas.

Methods: The organizing framework for the proposed animated film will be the annual migration of the bowhead whale encompassing the wintering grounds in the Bering Sea, northward and eastward migration through the Chukchi and Beaufort Seas during spring to the summer feeding grounds in the Canadian Beaufort Sea, westward and southward migration during fall, and return to their wintering grounds in the Bering Sea.

Production of the animated film is broken into three overlapping phases. Pre-production includes intensive scripting by museum writers/editors, museum educators and researchers; storyboarding; and initial work on existing data collection and processing, and production graphic and sound design. The pre-production phase sets production parameters and style, and determines level of detail for all following project components. The production phase of the project will entail computer-graphic modeling, rigging, determined environment layouts, animation, lighting, textures, and effects. The post-production phase includes shot editing, sound editing, output to DVD media, printing, promotion, and distribution.

Revised Date: September 2014

Environmental Studies Program: Alaska Annual Studies Plan FY 2015

Region: Alaska

Planning Area(s): Beaufort Sea, Chukchi Sea

Title: Social Indicators in Coastal Alaska: Arctic Communities
(AK-11-09)

BOEM Information Need(s) to be Addressed: This study will update key socio-cultural and economic baseline data for analysis of potential local and regional impacts from offshore exploration and development activities that may occur in federal waters off the North Slope of Alaska. Information from this study will support Outer Continental Shelf Lands Act (OCSLA) and National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) analyses, for documentation, and may serve as the basis for long-term monitoring for Chukchi and Beaufort oil and gas exploration and development in the region.

Total Cost: \$669,659

Period of Performance: FY 2011-2014

Conducting Organization: Stephen R. Braund and Associates

BOEM Contact: [Chris Campbell](#)

Description:

Background: The goal of this study is to update baseline data measuring the pace, direction, and magnitude of regional socio-economic changes, as well as the sense of well-being as expressed by residents in select Arctic coastal communities. These data will assist in NEPA evaluation of the effects of exploration and possible development of offshore energy resources in the Chukchi and Beaufort Seas on local populations through the formulation of social indicators nested within sets of key social domains. This study will facilitate evaluation of current conditions and trends in: economic prosperity; the status of health and safety; cultural continuity and well-being; changes in the status of indigenous rights and local control; quality of the physical environment; and education. Likely communities for sampling will include: Pt. Lay, Wainwright, Barrow, Nuiqsut, and Kaktovik.

Objectives:

- Formulate a set of key social indicators nested within domains that will facilitate the monitoring of changes in human well-being in coastal communities of the Alaskan Arctic most proximate to proposed oil and gas exploration and development.
- Obtain an OMB control number for a longitudinal survey instrument that can be repeated to identify long term trends, periodic changes, and fluctuations in the rate of change throughout coastal Alaska.

- Provide useful information on regional socioeconomic conditions and regional aspirations from which government officials and stakeholders can monitor and evaluate potential changes in well-being resulting from oil and gas exploration and development.

Methods: Establish formal contact with potential host communities and develop a written protocol to facilitate community participation and meaningful collaboration in the performance of this research. Conduct a literature search on previous northern social indicator studies. Utilize existing identified arctic social indicators or develop alternative relevant social indicators in conjunction with BOEM. Prepare a strategic survey instrument, pre-test it, and obtain the necessary approvals for use from relevant BOEM review offices and the Office of Management and Budget, and administer it. Organize data into a workable database and analyze with appropriate multivariate statistical techniques. Conduct a comprehensive analysis of the results of all prior tasks and prepare a draft report of the study findings. Circulate the draft report to the BOEM and host community leaders to facilitate parallel reviews by peer scientists and interested stakeholders; respond to review comments and prepare a final report, incorporating reviewer edits and comments where appropriate; report the study results to participating communities through public meetings or workshops.

Revised Date: September 2014

Environmental Studies Program: Alaska Annual Studies Plan FY 2015

Region: National

Planning Area(s): Beaufort Sea, Chukchi Sea

Title: WALRUS - Walrus Adaptability and Long-term Responses; Using multi-proxy data to project Sustainability (ArcSEES; NT-13-x11)

BOEM Information Need(s) to be Addressed: BOEM needs reliable estimation of long-term trends in walrus feeding ecology, foraging location, and population demographics. NSF's Arctic Science, Engineering and Education for Sustainability (ArcSEES) program is a multi-year, interdisciplinary program, supported by an international partnership among BOEM, NSF, USGS, USFWS, EPA, and a consortium of French agencies, that seeks to evaluate the sustainability of the Arctic's human-environmental system and to provide community-relevant sustainability pathways and engineering solutions. BOEM's participation in the ArcSEES program will facilitate a better understanding the complex feedbacks that control the overall evolution of the Arctic system for timescales ranging from a few days to several years. Findings from this and other ArcSEES projects will support NEPA analyses for potential future lease sales, review of EPs, DPPs and other reviews for post-sale and post-exploration BOEM decision-making and mitigation.

BOEM Contribution: \$200,000
plus Joint Funding

Period of Performance: FY 2013-2018

Conducting Organization: NSF, ArcSEES

BOEM Contact: [John Primo](#)

Description:

Background: In the last seven years there has been a rapid decline in spatial extent of summer sea-ice in the Arctic Ocean. At the same time, striking changes in Pacific walrus (*Odobenus rosmarus divergens*) foraging and haul-out locations have been observed. Marine mammals are considered sentinels of climate change in the Arctic as they are long-lived, occupy higher trophic levels, and many depend on sea-ice habitat. Walruses are also a significant component of the Eskimo subsistence lifestyle, so information exchange based on traditional ecological knowledge (TEK) and scientific findings is pivotal to communities relying on these iconic animals. A substantial threat to walruses is the current warming and associated loss of sea-ice during the summer months, which can result in increased mortality due to decreases in prey within range of coastal haulouts and an increase in disturbance events. Despite impressive data from in-depth studies of Pacific walruses over the last 40-50 years, that timeframe is too short to capture adaptation to large-scale warming and change, making sustainability projections difficult. Management decisions are currently based on numerical population assessments, which can be somewhat unreliable, and instead advocated for decision-making processes based on ecological needs and observed ecological change.

Objectives: The goal of this study is to correlate changes in genetic diversity and effective population size (DNA), foraging locations (element analyses) and accessibility (TEK), and changes in overall diet (stable isotope analysis) and health (steroid hormones) of walrus populations in Alaska with known periods of climate change and differing anthropogenic pressures (TEK, published records).

Methods: This study will track changes in walrus trophic position, foraging location, and genetic structure and diversity over the past 2500 years using multi-proxy datasets. The researchers will test correlations between these changes and large-scale climate and anthropogenic forces and will develop projections about how walruses would respond to or perceive varied stresses. The project will involve students from high school to graduate levels to promote sustainability education within affected communities. The results will be compiled and disseminated to assist communities currently planning for a sustainable walrus subsistence harvest within the parameters of a rapidly changing Arctic.

Revised Date: September 2014

Environmental Studies Program: Alaska Annual Studies Plan FY 2015

Region: National

Planning Area(s): Beaufort Sea

Title: Cumulative Effects of Arctic Oil Development – Planning and Designing for Sustainability (ArcSEES; NT-13-x11)

BOEM Information Need(s) to be Addressed: BOEM needs information on the effects of oil and gas infrastructure and climate change to support future planning and decision-making. NSF's Arctic Science, Engineering and Education for Sustainability (ArcSEES) program is a multi-year, interdisciplinary program, supported by an international partnership among BOEM, NSF, USGS, USFWS, EPA, and a consortium of French agencies, that seeks to evaluate the sustainability of the Arctic's human-environmental system and to provide community-relevant sustainability pathways and engineering solutions. BOEM's participation in the ArcSEES program will facilitate a better understanding the complex feedbacks that control the overall evolution of the Arctic system for timescales ranging from a few days to several years. Findings from this and other ArcSEES projects will support NEPA analyses for potential future lease sales, review of EPs, DPPs and other reviews for post-sale and post-exploration BOEM decision-making and mitigation.

BOEM Contribution: \$300,000 plus Joint Funding

Period of Performance: FY 2013-2017

Conducting Organization: NSF, ArcSEES

BOEM Contact: [John Primo](#)

Description:

Background: Further development of oil and gas resources and associated infrastructure in the Arctic is possible, and the Bureau, other agencies and the private sector need more information on the infrastructural effects of such activity, and particularly on the thawing of permafrost. This vital component of the arctic ecosystem plays a substantial role in supporting system processes; including subsistence activities in the region.

Additional information is needed so that current international initiatives related to the Arctic may better address cumulative effects of extensive networks of infrastructure needed for resource development. This is important as local people are directly impacted by the effects of oil and gas development and associated infrastructure. The opening of arctic lands and seas to transportation and development is occurring against a backdrop of sea-ice loss, dwindling resources elsewhere in the world, and competing geopolitical interests. It is inevitable that considerably more infrastructure than presently exists will be required to develop these areas.

Objectives: The overarching goal of this study is to better understand the cumulative environmental and social effects of developing oil and gas resources in the Arctic, and to

support the creation of a comprehensive adaptive planning approach toward infrastructural development. In doing so, the study aims to meet the following objectives:

- An enhanced understanding of the infrastructure-related permafrost/landform/vegetation succession in terrain undergoing thermokarst formation
- The creation of an arctic infrastructure action group to develop adaptive management strategies that address the unique issues related to networks of infrastructure in arctic permafrost environments
- The development of future arctic scientists with an understanding of the effects of industrial development and the potential for adaptive management

Methods: This study will include an examination of infrastructure and landscape change at multiple scales, an evaluation of adaptive management planning for infrastructure in northern Alaska and cumulative effects studies associated with the Iñupiat village of Nuiqsut. The study will also support several workshops bringing a diversity of scientists and local people together to develop adaptive management strategies that address issues related to the effects of infrastructure development in arctic permafrost environments. Lastly, training for students on arctic systems and on issues related to industrial development and adaptive management will be administered through a college course.

Revised Date: September 2014

Environmental Studies Program: Alaska Annual Studies Plan FY 2015

Region: Alaska

Planning Area(s): All Alaska Planning Areas

Title: Alaska Marine Science Symposium (AK-10-03)

BOEM Information Need(s) to be Addressed: This Symposium provides technical analysts and Principal Investigators for BOEM Alaska OCS Region studies a unique forum to share their research findings on the Alaska marine environment and to network with other scientists from around Alaska, the Pacific Northwest, and the nation. Since it is impossible for any single agency or group to conduct all of the needed research within the Alaska OCS Region, this forum provides marine scientists with the opportunity to gather information on other areas of similar research and foster important future collaborative efforts.

Total Cost: \$100,000
plus Joint Funding

Period of Performance: FY 2010-2015

Conducting Organization: North Pacific Research Board; Alaska SeaLife Center

BOEM Contact: [Warren Horowitz](#)

Description:

Background: The Alaska Marine Science Symposium (AMSS) is the largest and most comprehensive annual marine science conference within the State of Alaska (<http://www.alaskamarinescience.org/>). The AMSS is unique since it brings together government and non-government sponsored marine scientists within the State of Alaska, from around the nation, and from other nations in a forum to discuss their common interests in the dynamic and ever changing Alaska marine ecosystem. The Symposium is organized into three large marine ecosystems of Alaska which includes the Arctic (Alaska Beaufort and Chukchi seas), the Bering Sea, and the Gulf of Alaska. The presentations, poster sessions, and workshops showcase the ocean research within these areas. Daily sessions are focused on the main components of the marine ecosystem including climate and oceanography, lower trophic level productivity, fish and fish habitat, seabirds, marine mammals, and human dimensions.

Over 1100 people attended the most recent Symposium, and many organizations pitched in to make it a success. The BOEM project investigators attended the Symposium and provided important information on the Arctic and the Bering Sea from information collected under the Environmental Studies Program. The BOEM staff and sponsored scientists connected with other scientists that were conducting concurrent research in the Arctic and the Bering Sea regions.

Last year, in addition to daily presentations, there were evening sessions on bowhead whale feeding ecology, panel discussions on the beluga whale, and workshops on community involvement. In addition, there were other workshops on shipboard

observation systems, Alaska Ocean Observing System (AOOS), on communicating ocean science, and metadata standards. The Symposium also encourages presentations on the Alaska marine environment from graduate students from local universities and from universities within the lower 48. The Symposium presents awards to the best student poster and oral presentation at the meeting.

Objectives:

- Produce a successful Alaska Marine Science Symposium, which provides a forum for marine scientists and local communities to present their information on the changing marine environment in Alaska.
- Provide a venue for BOEM Alaska OCS Region environmental studies research for the Arctic and Bering Sea
- Provide a forum for Alaska OCS Region scientists and Principal Investigators to come together with other researchers that are conducting similar scientific studies within the Alaska OCS or adjoining areas of the Alaska marine ecosystem.

Methods: As a member of the AMSS organizing committee with other scientists and officials from Federal and State agencies, assist in producing a forum for BOEM staff and marine and coastal scientists, and local communities to present their findings on the changing marine environment in Alaska. Provide monetary support for scientists from within the State of Alaska and from around the nation to present their findings at the meeting. Provide abstracts and workshop discussions from the Symposium to the general public for distribution.

Revised Date: September 2014

Environmental Studies Program: Alaska Annual Studies Plan FY 2015

Region: Alaska

Planning Area(s): Beaufort Sea, Chukchi Sea

Title: ShoreZone–Shoreline Mapping of the North Slope of Alaska (AK-11-07)

BOEM Information Need(s) to be Addressed: ShoreZone mapping is a technique that will provide BOEM with the most comprehensive biological, physical, and geomorphologic data of the Beaufort and Chukchi coastal areas. The BOEM analysts and decision makers will use shoreline mapping information for identifying high priority fish and wildlife habitats in NEPA and ESA (Endangered Species Act) analyses and documentation for Lease Sales, EPPs and DPPs and in post-sale and post-exploration decision making. The data will also provide an improved level of detail for coastal contingency planning, oil-spill response activities, and habitat recovery efforts in the context of future offshore oil, gas and mineral development activities upland of Beaufort and Chukchi Seas; and a value added benefit from more accurately append the current Environmental Sensitivity Indices (ESI).

Total Cost: \$561,621

Period of Performance: FY 2011-2015

Conducting Organization: Nuka Research and Planning Group

BOEM Contact: [Catherine Coon](#)

Description:

Background: The ShoreZone program is a partnership of scientists, GIS specialists, web specialists, nonprofit organizations, and governmental agencies. The multi-agency program offers the opportunity to build a contiguous, integrated coastal resource database that extends from the mouth of the Columbia River through BC, the Gulf of Alaska, Bristol Bay, and now northward to the Arctic Coast (on the order of 100,000 km).

ShoreZone is a powerful coastal habitat classification, mapping, and inventory system that relies on the collection and interpretation of aerial imagery of the intertidal zone, nearshore, and estuarine environments. Aerial video and high resolution still photos are collected by geologists and biologists at extreme low tides. This imagery is georeferenced and then mapped, providing a recording of the physical and biological features of the intertidal zone, nearshore, and estuarine environments, including archaeological resources and manmade features. The digital imagery and associated data are made accessible to the public through the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) National Marine Fisheries website as a collaborative partnership with BOEM.

Coastal video imagery of the North Slope from Barrow to Harrison Bay (1,090 km) and from Flaxman Island to the Canadian border (890 km) was collected in 2001 under an

MMS contract (Polaris Applied Sciences Inc. and Environmental Mapping Ltd) for the purpose of Environmental Sensitivity Indices (ESI). This aerial video exists in the form of 11 DVDs and may be suitable for ShoreZone mapping. The USGS has also collected topographical imagery (LIDAR) in the Arctic in 2009-2010 for shoreline change that can be applied to morphological changes of the tundra. These imagery sets will be described, cataloged, and summarized for historical perspective for BOEM use. This project will provide an additional imagery necessary, combined with a ground verification component through a series of shore stations, to describe the shoreline and the physical and biological features of the intertidal zone, nearshore, and estuarine environments.

Objectives:

- Summarize existing historic coastal video imagery.
- Assess the use of USGS topographic LIDAR for research on shoreline change and how it can apply to coastal inundation of slopes for spill scenarios and shoreline position change of the barrier islands.
- Conduct new video imagery along the Arctic Coast of Alaska.
- Groundtruth imagery with shore stations to verify geomorphic features. Map video imagery using the ShoreZone methodology.
- Create a new ShoreZone protocols that includes habitats common in the Arctic
- Develop the completed imagery and mapping package available to BOEM and the public via the NOAA ShoreZone website (<http://www.fakr.noaa.gov/maps/szintro.htm>).

Methods: The Alaska *ShoreZone Coastal Habitat Mapping Protocol* will be used to map the imagery collected in the North Slope, Alaska. (<http://alaskafisheries.noaa.gov/shorezone/chmprotocol0114.pdf>). This new protocol for Coastal Alaska has been completed as part of this project.

Groundtruthing will occur with a series of shore stations over many separate habitat types (i.e. inside lagoons, lagoon passes, barrier islands) along the Arctic coast. Across-shore profiles will be measured to describe the geomorphic features at each shore station. Data will provide site-specific details of slope, substrate, and widths on the ground, and help with confirming assumptions made in mapping features observed from the air.

The completed ShoreZone Mapping will provide a comprehensive region-wide database of nearshore habitat and physical attributes and will also be linked to the existing web interface hosted by NOAA 'Nearshore Fish Atlas of Alaska' (<http://www.fakr.noaa.gov/habitat/fishatlas/>).

Revised Date: September 2014

Environmental Studies Program: Alaska Annual Studies Plan FY 2015

Region: Alaska

Planning Area(s): All Alaska Planning Areas

Title: Conference Management and Reports on BOEM Results
(AK-12-01)

BOEM Information Need(s) to be Addressed: Conference management supports formal information transfer meetings (ITMs) and workshops to disseminate study results and to resolve environmental and technical issues for BOEM program managers. These conferences increase public confidence in the data used by the OCS program. Workshops may be coordinated with future lease sales and for NEPA analyses and documentation focusing primarily on the Beaufort Sea and Chukchi Sea.

Total Cost: \$499,500

Period of Performance: FY 2012-2015

Conducting Organization: BGES, Inc.

BOEM Contact: [Rick Raymond](#)

Description:

Background: The transfer of scientific information is continuous and the Alaska Environmental Studies Program (ESP) needs to constantly organize and conduct ITMs and workshops. Conference participants have the opportunity to exchange environmental studies information with experts and interested parties on selected topics oriented to formulating concepts for new research projects and/or to address study needs. During the past decade the Alaska ESP has held information status meetings and planning workshops for the exchange of studies information among scientists, stakeholders and the general public.

To improve the accessibility, use and exchange of study results, the Alaska OCS Regional office conducts public meetings with a variety of formats. Generally, ITMs are 3-day events and workshops of shorter duration (1 to 2 days in length) that may focus on a single discipline or topic. ITM conferences make clear the scope and detail of information-gathering activities relating to the Alaska OCS. They give interested parties an opportunity to participate in discussions of important topics dealing with oil and gas leasing, exploration, and development in the Arctic region. They also serve as opportunities for regional staff to learn about the information that has been gathered and, therefore, help ESP to formulate study plans for future years.

Objectives: The objective of this procurement is to provide the logistical support for small meetings and workshops to highlight the work of the Environmental Studies Program in Alaska and foster sharing of information among researchers and interested parties through small meetings, workshops and publications on OCS environmental studies information.

Methods: The primary method is to manage meetings and workshops and assist with preparation, coordination, logistics, program agenda, and invitation of speakers and participants.

Revised Date: September 2014

Environmental Studies Program: Alaska Annual Studies Plan FY 2015

Region: Alaska

Planning Area(s): All Alaska Planning Areas

Title: Coastal Marine Institute (AK-13-03)

BOEM Information Need(s) to be Addressed: This cooperative agreement supports improved leasing decisions and NEPA analyses pertinent to lease sales in the Beaufort Sea, Cook Inlet and Chukchi Sea. Final reports will be available for lease sales and post-sale decisions; interim data products and inputs will be used to address information needs. Topical areas to be addressed under the Coastal Marine Institute have been identified through this Annual Study Plan, previous Alaska Region study plans, and the Framework Issues. The study also will develop information that addresses public concerns raised during outreach efforts.

Total Cost: \$477,431
plus Joint Funding

Period of Performance: FY 2013-2018

Conducting Organization: CMI, UAF

BOEM Contact: [Dr. Heather Crowley](#)

Description:

Background: This study provides management of a large ongoing program of scientific research into framework issues related to potential future lease sales in the Alaska OCS Region. It is a cooperative program between BOEM and the University of Alaska, with State of Alaska participation. The Coastal Marine Institute (CMI) is expected to leverage additional scientific results and logistics capability at levels comparable to the BOEM contribution of \$1,000,000 per year. The Coastal Marine Institute will update and expand our understanding of OCS environmental information and address future needs related to the offshore oil and gas program in Alaska.

Objectives: The purpose of the CMI is to support BOEM's commitment to environmental stewardship and generate scientific information for BOEM and State of Alaska decision makers that is consistent with the needs outlined by the Framework Issues. The Framework Issues are:

- Scientific studies for better understanding marine, coastal or human environments affected or potentially affected by offshore oil and gas or other mineral exploration and extraction on the OCS.
- Modeling studies of environmental, social, economic, or cultural processes related to OCS gas and oil activities in order to improve scientific predictive capabilities.
- Experimental studies for better understanding of environmental processes, or the causes and effects of OCS activities.

- Projects which design or establish mechanisms or protocols for sharing data or scientific information regarding marine or coastal resources or human activities in order to support prudent management of oil, gas and marine mineral resources.
- Synthesis studies of scientific environmental or socioeconomic background information relevant to the OCS gas and oil program.

Methods: A proposal process is initiated each year with a request for letters of intent to address one or more of the Framework Issues. The proposals are requested from university researchers and other scientific researchers in State agencies. A Technical Steering Committee, made up of scientific representatives of the cooperators, reviews letters of intent and proposals to be evaluated for possible funding. External peer reviews may be requested for new projects. Principal investigators give presentations at ITMs, scientific conferences and various public meetings.

Revised Date: September 2014

Environmental Studies Program: Alaska Annual Studies Plan FY 2015

Region: Alaska

Planning Area(s): All Alaska Planning Areas

Title: Operation and Maintenance of BOEM Research Vessel
Launch 1273 (AK-14-04a)

BOEM Information Need(s) to be Addressed: Without funding of this program-support element, it would not be possible to maintain or deploy the 36-foot Launch 1273 that provides a mobile, cost-effective, and specialized research vessel for a variety of biological and oceanographic studies throughout the coastal waters of Alaska. Costs for certain studies would increase significantly if more expensive marine-support alternatives were chartered. Additionally, it would not be possible to maintain an equipment warehouse that allows us to re-use and share equipment effectively among projects and agencies. This is a fundamental program-support element related to studies that support all current leases.

Total Cost: \$200,000/year

Period of Performance: FY 2014-2016

Conducting Organization: Kinnetic Laboratories Inc.

BOEM Contact: [Catherine Coon](#)

Description:

Background: BOEM utilizes a contract to provide “Management and Logistics of Oceanographic Equipment – Launch 1273” our research vessel in support of ongoing BOEM research efforts in the near-shore waters of coastal Alaska. The contract supports an experienced Captain, necessary crew, routine maintenance and repairs, fueling, and mobilization (with assembly and transport) and demobilization (with cleaning, transport, and disassembly), and offseason storage. The location of operation is between Prudhoe Bay and the approximate area of Barrow, Alaska between July and September. BOEM will be responsible for the research itinerary through contact with principal investigators and general scheduling of the Captain’s duties during each field season based upon the most current environmental study information priorities. Supported efforts include the ANIMIDA III: Boulder Patch Kelp Monitoring (AK-14-14a) Contaminants, Sources, and Bioaccumulation (AK-14-14b) and (AK-12-06) ‘Distribution and Habitat Use of Fish in the Nearshore Ecosystem of the Beaufort and Chukchi Seas.’

Objectives: The purpose of this program-support element is to efficiently manage and store oceanographic equipment and provide other support to ESP needs.

Methods: Launch 1273 was commissioned in 1983. The BOEM contractors use it for a number of oceanographic studies in the Arctic.

Revised Date: September 2014

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Environmental Studies Program: Alaska Annual Studies Plan FY 2015

Region: National

Planning Area(s): All Planning Areas

Title: Enhancement of the Environmental Studies Program Information System and the Multipurpose Marine Cadastre to Provide Environmental Studies Program Data (NT-12-01)

BOEM Information Need(s) to be Addressed: The offshore energy extraction process requires physical, biological, oceanographic and social science information at all stages from leasing through exploration and production, to decommissioning. Regulatory agencies and prospective lease holders rely on scientific studies and other data mining exercises to build their knowledge base from past and ongoing work conducted in the Alaska OCS Region. A web-based visual display of completed and ongoing study efforts will assist BOEM in (1) planning new research, (2) promoting collaboration with other agencies on similar projects, (3) evaluating exploration and development plans, and (4) improving BOEM decision making to safeguard activities on the OCS.

Total Cost: \$1,700,000

Period of Performance: FY 2012-2015

Conducting Organization: NOAA-Coastal Services Center

BOEM Contact: [Rick Raymond](#)

Description:

Background: BOEM places digital copies of final study reports online. However, it remains challenging to process some report information efficiently, such as study boundaries, data collection efforts, or conclusions from multiple study efforts. It is also a challenge for internal BOEM staff to remain current with all research due to the volume of activities conducted within the OCS Planning areas. BOEM as well as other agencies and academia have identified a statewide need for a centralized database of past, present and future projects with associated observations.

This study will design, develop, document, and implement a BOEM Internet Geospatial Web Portal utilizing the online Environmental Studies Program Information System (ESPIS) database Browser and the Marine Cadastre spatial data tool for BOEM completed and ongoing environmental studies that can be queried and displayed by internal BOEM staff and other agencies. The project is national in scope and will include a subcontract dedicated to service information needs for the Alaska OCS Region.

Objectives:

- Develop a BOEM Environmental Studies project database that can be fully utilized to query, graphically display, and extract project specific information.

- Develop programming tools that would allow BOEM staff and others to query, display, and extract available spatial data sets collected from each study.
- Automate the updating of new studies project information through development of programming tools that can seamlessly import BOEM Environmental Studies project information from newly completed or existing studies into ESPIS and the Marine Cadastre.
- Develop programming tools that can automatically search, retrieve, upload and merge project specific information and data from other State and Federal agencies, and industry, into the BOEM project database and data directories.
- Develop a BOEM Geospatial Website User Interface and Graphical Display whereby users can query, display, and extract project specific information, and display and extract BOEM Environmental Studies data sets covering the Alaska OCS.
- Provide complete documentation on the database and user interface application.
- Provide a user manual and train internal staff on the use of the BOEM Geospatial Web Portal.
- Provide online documentation for external users.

Methods: Under this study, NOAA-Coastal Services Center and BOEM internal staff will gather environmental studies project information and available data in a concerted effort to make information readily available to BOEM staff and other agencies. This effort will centralize functions to collect, catalogue, and distribute BOEM Environmental Studies project information and associated project studies data gathered since 2000. A BOEM web link will interface with ESPIS and the Marine Cadastre displaying maps of project boundaries, link to project specific information, data, metadata, and reports.

Revised Date: September 2014

Environmental Studies Program: Alaska Annual Studies Plan FY 2015

Region: National

Planning Area(s): All Planning Areas

Title: Developing BOEM's Access to Protected Species Occurrence Data for Impact Analyses and Rule-making (NT-14-02)

BOEM Information Need(s) to be Addressed: The Bureau of Ocean Energy Management needs ready access to information on marine protected species distribution for marine spatial planning, environmental impact assessments, rulemaking, adaptive management decisions, and day-to-day oversight of offshore operations to avoid or mitigate adverse impacts to protected species and other marine animals. A registry of protected species datasets is needed to provide BOEM analysts and decision makers with basic support in the discovery and use of information resources.

Total Cost: \$201,096

Period of Performance: FY 2014-2016

Conducting Organization: USGS, OBIS-USA

BOEM Contact: [Jonathan N. Blythe](#)

Description:

Background: Observations of protected species come from many and various monitoring programs and scientific research projects. Biogeographic databases are integrative tools for combining the scientific knowledge on species distribution. These databases focus on common elements of species observational effort, such as the record of a species occurrence. These data have many applications beyond the initial program or project, and in many cases, there are many routine aspects of these observational efforts that could be automated for more timely delivery of the information.

Typically, processing of observations into an archival format depends on program or project-level timelines for delivering the observation data, which may cause months or longer delays between collection of such observations and availability of information to the public. By the time data are made available using this method of data development, interest in the data or applicability to topical resource management issues, such as the navigation or siting of a drilling operation, can be greatly reduced. Federal agencies in collaboration under the Subcommittee on Ocean Science and Technology have been building a federal architecture to capture, store, make available and archive federal marine biological data. This data system provides the basic infrastructure for synthesizing disparate data from multiple research projects using many different methods of observations and platforms from which to make the observations.

The Ocean Biogeographic Information System of the United States of America (OBIS-USA) is the U. S. federal node for the international OBIS system, and it resides within the U.S. Geological Survey. OBIS-USA is evolving to fulfill the data needs of partnering

organizations, and has served BOEM's needs by developing an archive for protected species observations. OBIS is a distributed data system that has been pivotal in performing this service for federal biogeographic data needs. OBIS-USA plays an important coordination role, interfacing with other federal entities, such as the U. S. Integrated Ocean Observing System (IOOS) and the National Oceanic Atmospheric Administration's National Oceanographic Data Center (NODC), and international entities such as the International OBIS and the Global Biodiversity Information Facility (GBIF). Of particular relevance, OBIS-USA leverages its relationship with OBIS-SEAMAP to provide for federal needs for protected species data. Ongoing efforts include CetMap/ NOAA marine mammal modeling project, development of passive acoustic monitoring data and an online portal for Navy data and models, and the near-real-time delivery of sea turtle tracks.

Objectives:

- Improve timeliness and quality of data availability to BOEM personnel
- Use existing federal resources for data management, including NODC and IOOS
- Engage in data sharing arrangements with interagency partners such as NOAA and the US Navy while maintaining a secure venue to conduct operations
- Implement automation of routine tasks such as enrollment, dissemination, modeling, and mapping for recently collected protected species data

Methods: This study will be conducted by the OBIS-USA/OBIS-SEAMAP partnership, which is uniquely qualified to produce the desired products. OBIS will evaluate experimental tools from the biogeographic community, such as the GBIF Integrated Publishing Toolkit, to develop techniques to better interface with data producers. Additionally, OBIS will evaluate the benefits and dangers of early data sharing, and trade-offs that this may present in terms data quality and publication. Subjects of interest are 1) methods to develop the adequate context to understand recent marine mammal location observations for siting decisions, 2) modeling to detect patterns and trends in marine mammal distribution, 3) tools to identify outlier observations to target adaptive sampling capabilities, and 4) visualizations of protected species data that help identify information needs for future BOEM funding.

Revised Date: September 2014

2.2 Profiles of Studies Proposed for FY 2015 NSL

Table 2. BOEM Alaska OCS Region Studies Proposed for the FY 2015 NSL

Page Number	Discipline	Ranking	Study Title
173	HE	1	Initiating an Arctic Marine Biodiversity Observing Network (AMBON) for Ecosystem Monitoring
175	PO	2	Enhanced Verification and Interpretation of Freeze-up Conditions for the Northeast Chukchi Shelf: Field Observations and Process Studies; Freeze-up Forecasts; and BOEM Sea Ice Database Enhancements
177	IM	3	Arctic Research Synthesis Conference
179	PO	4	Development of a Very High-resolution Regional Circulation Model of Beaufort Sea Nearshore Areas
181	IM	5	Coastal Habitat Maps: Closing Spatial Gaps in ShoreZone Imagery and Data for the Cook Inlet
183	PO / SE	6	Synthesis of Sub-Sea Physical Environmental Data for the Beaufort and Chukchi Seas
185	SE	7	Traditional Knowledge Implementation: Accessing Arctic Community Panels of Subject Matter Experts
187	MM	8	Estimation of Abundance and Demographic Rates of Pacific Walruses Using a Genetics-based Mark-Recapture Approach
189	MM	9	Field Evaluation of an Unmanned Aircraft System (UAS) for Studying Cetacean Distribution, Density, and Habitat Use in the Arctic
191	HE	10	Subtidal and Intertidal Habitats and Invertebrate Biota in Lower Cook Inlet, Alaska
193	MM	11	Cetacean Distribution, Abundance, and Ecology in Cook Inlet
Discipline Codes			
AQ = Air Quality		FE = Fates & Effects	
IM = Information Management		HE = Habitat & Ecology	
PO = Physical Oceanography		MM = Marine Mammals & Protected Species	
		SE = Social & Economic Sciences	

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Environmental Studies Program: Alaska Annual Studies Plan FY 2015

Region: Alaska

Planning Area(s): Chukchi Sea

Title: Initiating an Arctic Marine Biodiversity Observing Network (AMBON) for Ecosystem Monitoring

BOEM Information Need(s) to be Addressed: BOEM needs a more rigorous monitoring system to improve information about the health of biodiversity in the Chukchi Sea as a means to enhance environmental impact assessments and develop better metrics for cumulative impact analysis. Biodiversity measures for the marine environment need to be acquired through systematic and comprehensive methodology.

Approx. Cost: TBD

Period of Performance: FY 2015-2018

Description:

Background: Biological diversity is defined as the variety of life, encompassing variation at all levels of complexity – genetic, species, ecosystems, and biomes – and including functional diversity and diversity across ecosystems. A growing body of research demonstrates that: (1) the maintenance of marine biodiversity (including coastal biodiversity) is critical to sustained ecosystem and human health and to resilience in a globally changing environment; and (2) the condition of marine biodiversity offers a proxy for the status of ocean and coastal ecosystem health and the ability to provide ecosystem services. Thus, managing our marine resources in a way that conserves existing marine biodiversity would help address other ocean management objectives. For example, it would provide information to enhance management against threats such as invasive species and infectious agents, enable predictive modeling, better inform decision making, and allow for adaptive monitoring and Ecosystem-Based Management.

As stated in the final recommendations of the Interagency Ocean Policy Task Force, it is the policy of the United States to protect, maintain, and restore the health and biological diversity of ocean, coastal, and Great Lakes ecosystems and resources (http://www.whitehouse.gov/files/documents/OPTF_FinalRecs.pdf). The Census of Marine Life, which concluded in 2010, greatly enhanced our understanding of the status of marine biodiversity. It also made clear the importance of systematic and sustainable approaches to observing and monitoring biodiversity across different levels and at a national scale. In May 2013, a paper published in BioScience (<http://dx.doi.org/10.1525/bio.2013.63.5.8>) described the feasibility of establishing a Marine Biodiversity Observing Network (BON) to help meet these information needs.

Through the National Oceanographic Partnership Program (NOPP), multiple agencies including NOAA, NASA, BOEM, and the USGS sent-out a request for proposals to initiate an integrated Marine BON demonstration project. The bureaus have requested proposals for one or more broadly coordinated demonstration projects in U.S. coastal waters that demonstrate how an end-to-end marine BON can be developed. “End-to-end” refers to integration of observations and historical data across multiple scales of

diversity (genetic to ecosystem, microbes to whales), time (instants to centuries), and space (in situ to satellite remote sensing). Special consideration will be given to proposals that demonstrate potential for establishing long-term, sustainable monitoring through partnerships.

The assessment of possible adverse risk from offshore energy development hinges critically on being able to differentiate human-induced effects from natural variability. Given the complexity of marine ecosystems and the possible effects of global climate change, this often requires making observations over large ocean areas, seasonally, and over multiple years and even decades to acquire reasonable statistical confidence.

Objectives: The objective of this study for the Alaska Region is to build on emerging distributed biological observatories (DBOs) by developing a prototype ecosystem-based marine biodiversity network over offshore oil and gas lease areas in the Chukchi Sea, monitoring multiple trophic levels and species, and informed by historical data and past modeling efforts. Such a network will: expand upon planned and recently-launched observing sites, systems, and programs; employ innovative techniques for data discovery and methods that dynamically interrelate data sets and add value to existing monitoring data; collaborate with the U. S. Integrated Ocean Observing System (U.S. IOOS) participants and funding agencies to optimize data management and modeling capabilities.

Methods: Through the National Oceanographic Partnership Program (NOPP), requests for proposals have been broadly distributed. In response, research proposals have been submitted and will be evaluated by a panel of scientists with relevant research experience. BOEM and other co-funding agencies will be able to select which of the better-evaluated proposed projects they want to fund based upon their value to the agencies' missions.

Revised Date: September 2014

Environmental Studies Program: Alaska Annual Studies Plan FY 2015

Region: Alaska

Planning Area(s): Chukchi Sea

Title: Enhanced Verification and Interpretation of Freeze-up Conditions for the Northeast Chukchi Shelf: Field Observations and Process Studies; Freeze-up Forecasts; and BOEM Sea Ice Database Enhancements (AK-13-04)

BOEM Information Need(s) to be Addressed: BOEM analysts and managers seek more detailed spatio-temporal information pertaining to seasonal freeze-up conditions at specific planned drilling locations on the Alaska OCS. More reliable and extensive information is particularly needed during the late open-water season when storm activity is anticipated, and during the seasonal freeze-up period when frazil ice formation and pack ice intrusions create environmental concern for safe operations. Additional information pertinent to understanding the physics of freeze-up and associated forces that greatly impact Arctic offshore operations is also needed. Study products will support NEPA analyses, including EISs and EAs, and related decision-making. This research will also support current and future information needs of BSEE to further enhance knowledge of ice, ocean, and atmospheric conditions pertaining to operational capabilities when working in the Northeast Chukchi Sea, and during BSEE regulatory review of applications for permit to drill (APD; 30 CFR §250.417).

Approx. Cost: TBD

Period of Performance: FY 2015-2019

Description:

Background: Real-time information on ice, ocean and weather conditions, along with improved ice forecasts for the Chukchi Sea, are important considerations for maritime traffic and vessel safety, as well as for evaluating potential storm impacts on the coast. In addition, accurate forecasts of freeze-up conditions are especially valuable for the remote coastal communities in northern Alaska where fuel, durable goods and food are primarily resupplied by barge, and decisions are required 10-12 days in advance for delivery from west coast ports.

Operational capabilities during potentially hazardous ice and freezing spray conditions within the Chukchi Sea are also a major concern for BSEE and BOEM. Recently, BOEM developed a restriction on certain late season drilling operations within the Chukchi Sea to allow a greater opportunity for oil-spill cleanup and response time in ice-free conditions. This mitigation measure, implemented with respect to a Chukchi Sea exploration plan, was established “in consideration of the distance to limited support infrastructure on the Chukchi coast, as well as limited drilling experience in the Chukchi Sea, and in keeping with the Secretary of Interior’s desire to proceed cautiously with oil and gas development in the Chukchi Sea.” The mitigation measure states that “No exploratory drilling will be allowed below the last casing point set prior to penetrating a zone capable of flowing liquid hydrocarbons in measurable quantities into the well within 38 days of a ‘trigger date’ established each year by BOEM, based upon the date of

first ice encroachment over the drill site within any of the last five years.” For exploratory drilling activities in 2012, BOEM calculated a “trigger date” based on 2007-2011 interpreted sea ice data from the National Ice Center (NIC). The trigger date provides a conservative assessment of when the first new ice or pack ice could first encroach upon the proposed drill site during the end of the exploratory drilling (open water) season for the Northeast Chukchi Sea.

Objectives: The study objectives are the following:

- Document the atmospheric and oceanographic conditions that initiated freeze-up conditions on the northeast Chukchi shelf between 2006 and 2014.
- Provide atmospheric, oceanographic, and sea ice data to the BOEM Sea Ice Database at the required scales that will produce more accurate assessments of freeze-up conditions between 2006 and 2014 and beyond.
- Obtain a comprehensive understanding of the processes and feedback mechanisms that drive the ice-ocean-wave-atmosphere system by documenting the physical ice, ocean, and atmospheric processes controlling freeze-up within active lease areas.
- Provide real-time ice, ocean, and atmospheric data from this study to BOEM for incorporation into the BOEM Sea Ice Database for the purpose of improving BOEM’s internal forecasting capability.
- Provide standardized real-time data to the National Weather Service (NWS) Forecasters, National Ice Center (NIC) Ice Analysts, and to NOAA modelers to improve late season modeled forecasts of freeze-up conditions.
- Coordinate with BOEM, BSEE, the National Weather Service forecasters, National Ice Center ice analysts and NOAA modelers to produce improved “weather scale” forecasts of freeze-up conditions.

Methods: Researchers will collect and analyze historical ocean, ice, wave and atmospheric field data (2006-2014) that best explains the dynamic environment processes that govern the seasonal freeze-up of sea ice. They will design and implement a comprehensive field program that will provide real-time data to forecast the timing of new ice formation during the fall freeze-up period. Instrumentation may include: High frequency Radars (HFR), drifters, gliders (AUVs) and the design and development of new sensors. Real-time data will be provided to NOAA for use by modelers, ice analysts and National Weather Service forecasters. Researchers will develop a project web portal which can provide near-real-time information on the ocean, atmosphere, and sea ice conditions and display graphical hindcasts and forecasts of freeze-up conditions. BOEM will collaborate with the State of Alaska (University of Alaska Fairbanks and other State entities) in assessing ice conditions during the freeze-up period to ensure that there is sufficient time to track and work towards cleaning up a potential offshore spill from OCS activities

Revised Date: September 2014

Environmental Studies Program: Alaska Annual Studies Plan FY 2015

Region: Alaska

Planning Area(s): All Alaska Planning Areas

Title: Arctic Research Synthesis Conference (AK-12-01-03)

BOEM Information Need(s) to be Addressed: This Conference will provide a unique and timely forum for Principal Investigators from more than 25 different BOEM-funded projects to disseminate substantial new information about recently completed arctic research and discuss findings and the implications for ecosystem process among members of the scientific community, industry, and the public.

Approx. Cost: TBD

Period of Performance: FY 2015

Description:

Background: The Environmental Studies Program of BOEM regularly co-sponsors the Alaska Marine Science Symposium (AMSS) every January to allow Principal Investigators to debrief the scientific community about results from ongoing Arctic research. The AMSS has provided a successful format to disseminate useful information about Arctic research, but the recurring magnitude and scale of current research is now so large that a single day dedicated to arctic research does not always allow sufficient time to cover the breadth of information necessary for scientists and analysts to comprehend the data flow in an integrated manner. The Arctic Research Synthesis Conference is intended to provide an opportunistic forum to supplement the AMSS proceedings whenever the volume of new research exceeds the capacity of regional scientists and analysts to maintain awareness and digest the flow of incoming data. This ad hoc forum provides a useful mechanism to promote national goals of Integrated Arctic Management and the Interagency Arctic Research Policy Commission (IARPC) initiatives to implement the National Strategy of Arctic Research. The conference will be conducted as a showcase of multilateral collaboration just as the US assumes chairmanship of the Arctic Council.

During the conference, BOEM-funded Principal Investigators will explain the results of their research and lead a discussion of their implications for understanding ecosystem process in the Arctic. The four-day meeting will focus on the main components of the marine ecosystem including climate and oceanography, ice dynamics, lower trophic productivity, fish and seabirds, marine mammals, habitat status, and human dimensions. Three days of presentation will allow for hour-long presentations followed by half-hour discussions, so that all participants can get well acquainted with project findings and implications and attain a level of comprehension only rarely achieved in a conventional conference setting. Day four will feature a unique opportunity to conduct a multi-disciplinary facilitated group discussion and scientific dialogue by focusing on observations and comments initiated by NEPA analysts across many Federal agencies.

Objectives: The objective is to provide the logistical support for a unique conference event that will focus on the recent work of the Environmental Studies Program in Alaska to foster information dissemination and synthesized integration of current knowledge among researchers and interested stakeholders. The conference will highlight new study reports and data products related to specific ongoing studies.

Methods: BOEM staff and external contractors will work together to create a conference of lasting memory. The agenda will feature presentations from multi-million dollar projects that BOEM has funded in partnership with other scientific institutions, including NOAA, USGS, ADF&G, and universities such as UAF, University of Maryland, and UT-Austin. The Conference will provide opportunities for collaborative discussions among scientific experts in novel ways that may model new approaches to multilateral research planning.

Revised Date: September 2014

Environmental Studies Program: Alaska Annual Studies Plan FY 2015

Region: Alaska

Planning Area(s): Beaufort Sea

Title: Development of a Very High-resolution Regional Circulation Model of Beaufort Sea Nearshore Areas

BOEM Information Need(s) to be Addressed: BOEM uses coupled ice-ocean circulation model results as input to oil-spill trajectory analysis. Results with higher spatial resolution are needed to more fully represent nearshore circulation processes, particularly those near rivers, barrier islands and coastal lagoons within the nearshore Beaufort Sea. Development and application of state-of-the-art circulation models are essential to future OSRA-based EIS analyses for Development and Production Plans within Stefansson Sound and the nearshore Beaufort Sea.

Approx. Cost: TBD

Period of Performance: FY 2015-2017

Description:

Background: Offshore barrier islands, coastal features, and freshwater river outflow are known to affect the fine-scale ocean circulation in nearshore areas. Previous oil spill trajectory analyses, conducted by BOEM, in Stefansson Sound used both nearshore 2-D circulation and offshore 3-D coupled ice-ocean circulation model results. The spatial resolution of the current Arctic Circulation Model study is too coarse to adequately resolve the barrier islands within Stefansson Sound and the lagoons and other coastal features along the Beaufort Sea coast and produce high-quality simulations of the associated fine-scale circulation processes.

Objectives:

- Adapt and maximize the utility of an existing regional 3-D coupled ice-ocean circulation hindcast model to obtain high-resolution model fields that represent fine-scale processes associated with barrier islands and coastal features in the Beaufort Sea nearshore areas.
- Provide BOEM with ten to twenty years of relevant modeled fields, such as gridded wind, surface water and ice velocity, ice cover, and limited other modeled fields as agreed to between the contractor and BOEM.
- Evaluate the modeled under-ice currents in consideration of information derived from the study Idealized Process Model Studies of Circulation in the Landfast Ice Zone of the Alaskan Beaufort Sea (OCS Study BOEMRE 2011-056).

Methods: A coupled ice-ocean model will be modified to maximize utility in the Beaufort Sea nearshore areas. The model will possess sufficient spatial resolution to accurately represent circulation processes associated with barrier islands and coastal features. Conduct the standard suite of sensitivity testing and validation of the model and results.

Revised Date: September 2014

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Environmental Studies Program: Alaska Annual Studies Plan FY 2015

Region: Alaska

Planning Area(s): Cook Inlet

Title: Coastal Habitat Maps: Closing Spatial Gaps in ShoreZone Imagery and Data for the Cook Inlet Area

BOEM Information Need(s) to be Addressed: The BOEM *Proposed Final Outer Continental Shelf Oil & Gas Leasing Program 2012-2017* includes a lease sale in the Cook Inlet Planning Area in 2016 and recent expansions of on-shore and off-shore exploration efforts in state lands and waters in the region demonstrate increased industry interest in Cook Inlet oil and gas development. ShoreZone mapping is a technique that will provide BOEM with the most comprehensive biological, physical, and geomorphologic data of the Alaska coastal areas. The BOEM analysts and decision makers will use shoreline mapping information for identifying high priority fish and wildlife habitats in NEPA and ESA analyses and documentation for lease sales, EPPs and DPPs, and in post-sale and post-exploration decision making.

Approx. Cost: TBD

Period of Performance: FY 2015-2016

Description:

Background: The spatial distribution of nearshore habitats is important information for resource managers and coastal decision-makers, and numerous shoreline classification methods have been applied to our coasts. Recent efforts, however, have focused on a partnership of numerous scientists, GIS and web specialists, non-government organizations, and local, state, and federal agencies. This partnership is applying ShoreZone protocols to build a contiguous, integrated dataset of coastal habitats and imagery for Alaska's coast.

In 2001, the Cook Inlet Regional Citizens' Advisory Council (RCAC) began a program to apply the ShoreZone mapping protocols to Cook Inlet and led the development of the first web-based access to the data and imagery. This program was later expanded to include the outer Kenai Peninsula coast, Kodiak Island, and the Alaska Peninsula. Cook Inlet RCAC also initiated an Alaska ground-station program that has now expanded to include hundreds of stations throughout the Gulf of Alaska and North Slope. By 2005, NOAA's National Marine Fisheries Service stepped forward to provide web-site and data support and currently provides the necessary personnel to manage, update, and serve the data to the public and has also led efforts to map southeast Alaska and develop a larger statewide partnership. By 2012, the program had expanded to the Alaskan Arctic with BOEM-sponsored aerial and on-the-ground surveys.

Despite the successful expansion of the ShoreZone program to include much of Alaska's coast, there are still several significant spatial gaps, including portions of the coastline within or adjacent to the Cook Inlet Planning Area. These areas include the Alaska Peninsula coastline from the Katmai National Park boundary to the Cold Bay area. Also, the Barren Islands were not attempted during earlier surveys in the Cook Inlet area and

are an obvious spatial gap to the contiguous, continuous habitat data and imagery for the Gulf of Alaska. A survey along these coastlines would also provide the opportunity to re-survey sections of the Katmai National Park coastline to conduct a project for assessing ShoreZone's applicability for detecting large-scale changes to some biological or geomorphic classifications. Recent studies by the NPS along this coast have shown large-scale loss of mussel bed habitats along portions of the coast. Since ShoreZone maps mussel beds as an along-shore and across-shore bioband, it would be an opportunity to assess whether ShoreZone data (and imagery) can provide a baseline for detecting or illustrating significant changes between periodic surveys in areas determined to be of high interest or sensitivity.

These proposed surveys would close a spatial gap in the Gulf of Alaska ShoreZone data and imagery that has precluded queries of coastal habitat data in areas downstream of existing and potential future oil exploration, development, and production activities.

Objectives:

- Map the along-shore and across-shore geomorphic and biological habitat features using the aerial survey imagery and narration by a biologist and a geomorphologist utilizing the most recent ShoreZone protocols.
- Ground-truth aerial survey results through shore-station surveys along this coast to verify geomorphic features and to describe invertebrate and seaweed assemblages.
- Publicly disseminate all data and imagery via the ShoreZone website, and Cook Inlet Response Tool.
- Assess whether ShoreZone imagery and mapped data can capture some of the larger-scale changes that have been observed in some areas along the Katmai National Park shoreline since the original ShoreZone surveys were conducted in the area in 2003.

Methods: Conduct ShoreZone aerial surveys of the Barren Islands and along the Alaska Peninsula coastline from the northern border of the Katmai National Park coastline to the Cold Bay area where the 2011 Alaska Peninsula surveys ended. The aerial surveys and mapping would take place according to the ShoreZone Coastal Habitat Mapping Protocol for Alaska. Shore-stations surveys should take place at a series of stations over a range of habitat types known to occur along these shorelines (e.g. exposed rocky, rock platforms, exposed boulder beaches, semi-exposed and semi-protected cobble beaches, salt marshes, eelgrass beds). The compiled data and imagery will be posted to the existing ShoreZone website and shore-station data would be collected and disseminated in the same manner as for other locations in Alaska. Data would be also archived at NODC.

Revised Date: September 2014

Environmental Studies Program: Alaska Annual Studies Plan FY 2015

Region: Alaska

Planning Area(s): Beaufort Sea, Chukchi Sea

Title: Synthesis of Sub-Seabed Physical Environmental Data for the Beaufort and Chukchi Seas

BOEM Information Need(s) to be Addressed: Industrial oil and gas exploration is occurring in specific prospects and potential pipeline routes are under consideration in the Beaufort and Chukchi seas. Regional information for integrative marine spatial planning is needed for evaluation of any proposed Development and Production Plans (DPPs) and for development of mitigation and monitoring strategies to avoid irreparable impacts on nonrenewable resources and costly pipeline construction errors. This project would update the results of the previous study, incorporating additional data from a variety of sources and expanding coverage to the Chukchi Sea to support analyses under NEPA and the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA).

Approx. Cost: TBD

Period of Performance: FY 2015-2017

Description:

Background: Shallow geological and geophysical (G&G) data on the shelves of the Beaufort and Chukchi seas are used to map and interpret current geological processes (sedimentation, ice gouging, strudel scour, faulting, gas, etc.), soil engineering properties (permafrost and methane hydrate distribution, oil seeps) and the Cenozoic geologic history. These data also provide information about the potential for finding submerged and buried landforms that may contain cultural resources or shipwrecks. To use these data effectively, there is a need to consolidate the various data holdings of BOEM and BSEE, including Chukchi Sea data, into an accessible interactive database that will allow user-friendly interactions and user input of new data sources as they become available.

This project would build upon the study *Evaluation of Sub-Sea Physical Environmental Data for the Beaufort Sea Alaska OCS and Incorporation into a Geographic Information System (GIS) Database* (OCS Study MMS 2002-017). This study has provided valuable information on the shallow geology, potential geologic hazards, recent geologic history, soil engineering properties, paleo-sea levels, and seafloor environmental conditions in the Beaufort Sea.

There is very limited information currently available in the Chukchi Sea regarding potential submerged cultural resources in areas of potential future industry activity, even though there is high potential that archaeological sites exist in these locations. Alaska has unique importance in the study of prehistoric archaeology since it has long been believed that a Pleistocene land bridge linking Alaska with Siberia served as a major corridor for human entry into the New World. Beringia extended as far east as the Beaufort Sea, and drowned features were identified in the study *Review of Geological/Geophysical Data and Core Analysis to Determine Archeological Potential*

of Buried Landforms, Beaufort Sea Shelf, Alaska (OCS Study MMS 2007-004). These landforms date between 1600 and 8600 years old, and may have been occupied by humans. There is also the potential for shipwrecks associated with commercial whaling during the nineteenth century. This proposed study will include identification of sub-bottom landforms that might contain prehistoric sites. Historic shipwrecks site locations will not be made available to the public. The study will add to our understanding of potential geologic hazards and regional soil engineering conditions and has aided the Bureau's assessment of potential archaeological resources required under the NHPA.

Objectives:

- Compile BOEM and BSEE holdings of industry permit surveys and other data sources, including public data from USGS and academia, and add the data to the BOEM Geohazard Database.
- Update the database and underlying metadata to link to scanned records and provide search capability for shallow G&G information on various subjects, including: sediment thickness and distribution, stratigraphy, seafloor anomalies, buried or drowned landforms, shallow geologic hazards, core cryology, geochemistry, lithology, etc.
- Examine the updated data to assess whether evidence of archaeological potential can be seen, particularly in areas of active and potential industry activity in the Beaufort and Chukchi seas.
- Synthesize existing geologic, paleoenvironmental, archaeological and historical data to support assessments of the relationship of prehistoric human populations to the prehistoric landscape for the Chukchi and Beaufort seas.
- Ensure that results are reported in conformance federal historic preservation laws.

Methods: The existing database would be upgraded with new code and data loading capabilities. The researchers will evaluate existing BOEM and BSEE holdings, as well as public sources containing shallow G&G data, and merge or integrate these into the upgraded database. The researchers will develop an interface to allow viewing and downloading of digital images of seismic and core data and to allow updating and adding as new data become available.

The researchers will interpret the compiled information and provide a written assessment of the shallow stratigraphy and archaeological and shipwreck potential, faulting, shallow gas occurrence, ice gouging, and other seabed and shallow sub-seabed features. The report will include a list of geomorphological features tagged as potential areas of interest that may be considered for future assessments.

Revised Date: September 2014

Environmental Studies Program: Alaska Annual Studies Plan FY 2015

Region: Alaska

Planning Area(s): Beaufort Sea, Chukchi Sea

Title: Traditional Knowledge Implementation: Accessing Arctic Community Panels of Subject Matter Experts

BOEM Information Need(s) to be Addressed: This project aims to identify and organize Local and Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TK) subject matter experts from Arctic communities into recognized panels of paid consultants so they may become more widely accessible to function with authority on TK domains. By facilitating the creation of these institutional arrangements, this project will actively advance prospects for TK integration into scientific research sponsored by BOEM and other federal agencies. The full range of BOEM-funded studies, including physical oceanography, biology, and social systems would benefit from more direct consultation and collaboration with local TK subject matter experts.

Approx. Cost: TBD

Period of Performance: FY 2015-2020

Description:

Background: Government dialogue about TK is often preoccupied with integration of TK data rather than with integration of TK experts into a meaningful resource management process. This study will identify key individuals in North Slope communities who are locally recognized for subject matter expertise on specific resources and available to serve on one or more “community of practice” TK panels. The TK panels would be consulted by external scientists working on BOEM-funded projects and would be pre-authorized locally to speak with authority on specific resource management topics of interest including: (1) ocean currents; (2) ice movement and behavior; (3) subsistence harvest of marine mammals; (4) subsistence harvest of seabirds and waterfowl; (5) subsistence sea-run fish; and (6) subsistence terrestrial species and nearshore use. With the exception of some active commissions already in place, formalized local panels do not yet exist to serve in this capacity. TK interaction will meet mutual concerns of all involved parties.

Objectives: The successful integration of TK into decision-making processes requires intensive collaboration between scientists and local communities. This will be achieved by the following:

- Enhance TK authority and integration of TK with science by promoting its dissemination to external scientists through consistent methods and directly involving local subject matter experts.
- Provide a roster and orientation information for use by external scientists about how to access and integrate TK on a more systematic basis for projects undertaken on the North Slope. This information would be accessible to scientists of all disciplines, from physical oceanography to sociocultural studies,

and funded by a variety of sources, including federal and state agencies, National Science Foundation (NSF), and academia.

- Enhance dialogue about science through exchange of information between external scientists and the communities.
- Integrate the traditional Iñupiat model of linking youth with elders.
- Achieve more efficient research project timelines. Currently, studies may be delayed as long as a year so that a community can achieve review consensus.

Methods: All eight North Slope communities would be involved, and panels in each would augment local capacity building. Up to three TK panels may be created in each North Slope coastal community, depending upon the primary interests of each village. For example, the inland communities of Atqasuk and Anaktuvak would likely have no need for a panel on marine processes. Social network methods will be used to identify knowledgeable subject matter experts to participate on each panel through a reliable and credible process using referral techniques. Village tribal leaders will be asked to review the generated list of nominees to recommend finalists who might serve on each TK panel. It is possible that one individual could be a member of more than one TK panel, depending upon community referrals. Panel members will receive honoraria stipends in recognition of their service. Barrow will be the lead community to develop a charter that could serve as a template for other communities. The process will likely replicate social network methodology as described in *Variation in the Abundance of Arctic Cisco in the Colville River* (OCS Study MMS 2007-0042).

The study will develop protocols to facilitate engagement of pre-authorized TK panels and promote dissemination of TK to external scientists with consistent methods. Scientists would initiate dialogue through describing information about their project goals, methods, objectives and findings with the TK panel. Panel engagement and comprehension may lead to suggestions, guidance, and other forms of support, such as annual observations of ongoing environmental change. Scientists will be informed about the use of TK and panel involvement in decision-making to encourage a respectful dialogue between the local experts and external scientists. The study will also explore ways to engage the North Slope Borough School District or other appropriate entity to collaborate with youth involvement on TK panels as ex-officio delegates. Involvement of youth would facilitate cross-generational transfer of TK and promote local institutional capacity. BOEM will seek to establish partnerships in this work with other organizations and agencies, including NSF, the North Slope Borough Department of Wildlife Management, and NSSI.

Revised Date: September 2014

Environmental Studies Program: Alaska Annual Studies Plan FY 2015

Region: Alaska

Planning Area(s): Chukchi Sea

Title: Estimation of Abundance and Demographic Rates of Pacific Walruses Using a Genetics-based Mark-Recapture Approach

BOEM Information Need(s) to be Addressed: Large numbers of Pacific walruses (*Odobenus rosmarus divergens*) utilize areas of high oil and gas resource potential in OCS waters of the northeast Chukchi Sea. BOEM needs reliable estimates of abundance and demographic rates of Pacific walruses for use in sound planning, management, and mitigation of potential environmental impacts from oil and gas activities and climate change. Abundance and demographic rates of walruses are also important for NEPA analyses, stock assessments under the Marine Mammal Protection Act (MMPA) and for extinction risk assessment under the Endangered Species Act (ESA). Results from this study will be used for future Chukchi Sea lease sales as well as in post-sale and post-exploration BOEM decision making and mitigation.

Approx. Cost: TBD
plus joint funding

Period of Performance: FY 2015-2019

Description:

Background: Walruses are a protected species under the MMPA and are listed as warranted but precluded under the ESA. As part of a 2011 Multi-District Settlement Agreement (United States District Court Docket No. 2165), the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service must make a decision by September 2017 on whether to propose the walrus for listing under the Endangered Species Act or remove it as a candidate species. Information on abundance and demographic rates will be an important contribution to the relisting decision, which will impact how BOEM manages overlap between oil and gas exploration and development and walrus activity.

Furthermore, oil and gas activities in the OCS areas of the Chukchi Sea have increased dramatically in the last 5 years and this trend is expected to continue. Permitting of these activities relies on a small numbers determination and combining estimates of regional abundance. Current BOEM-funded walrus studies examine distribution and habitat patterns in the Chukchi Sea, as outlined in the studies “Walrus Seasonal Distribution and Habitat Use in the Eastern Chukchi Sea” (AK-13-06), and “Walrus Habitat Use in Drilling Area” (AK-09-01). The results from these studies, combined with a better population estimate of Pacific walrus, would allow managers at BOEM and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) to determine the proportion of the population that could potentially interact with these activities. Therefore, comprehensive estimates of global abundance and demographic rates for walruses are important for regulatory and mitigation activities associated with oil and gas development in the northeast Chukchi Sea.

Past efforts to estimate abundance of walrus were based on aerial surveys. The study “Development of Airborne Remote Sensing Methods for Surveys of Pacific Walrus” (OCS Study MMS 2006-003) identified a number of drawbacks to the use of this technique for measuring abundance with sufficient precision to monitor population trends. Therefore, the USFWS, in collaboration with the Alaska Department of Fish and Game, ChukotTINRO, the Association of Traditional Marine Mammal Hunters of Chukotka, and the Eskimo Walrus Commission, secured funds to initiate a genetics-based mark-recapture project for estimation of abundance and demographic rates of walrus in FY 2013.

Objectives: The objective of this study is to partner with USFWS to support the laboratory testing component of a project that uses a genetics-based mark-recapture approach to achieve the following goals:

- Estimate annual abundance of walrus for evaluation of population status and trends.
- Assess demographic rates of walrus including age and sex specific survival and fecundity for validation and parameterization of population models.
- Compare the estimates of abundance produced from this study with those produced from the BOEM study “Walrus Seasonal Distribution and Habitat Use in the Eastern Chukchi Sea” (AK-13-06) that estimates the abundance of walrus in the OCS areas of the northeast Chukchi Sea for assessment of the proportion of the population potentially exposed to oil and gas activities in the region.

Methods: Genetics testing will be conducted on up to 2000 walrus biopsy samples per year (different age/sex classes). In addition to existing samples, skin biopsy samples will be collected from live walrus hauled out on sea ice during their northward migration from 2015 through 2018. Researchers will utilize the expertise of subsistence hunting communities in both the U.S. and Russia for sample collection. Individual walrus will be identified using single-nucleotide polymorphism markers which are currently being developed by the USFWS. Interim results will be made available to the USFWS to help inform decisions regarding listing of walrus. Results of mark-recapture analyses will be used to estimate population size, population growth rate, age and sex specific survival rates, and recruitment of walrus starting in 2016 and continuing through 2018.

Revised Date: September 2014

Environmental Studies Program: Alaska Annual Studies Plan FY 2015

Region: Alaska

Planning Area(s): Beaufort Sea, Chukchi Sea

Title: Field Evaluation of an Unmanned Aircraft System (UAS) for Studying Cetacean Distribution, Density, and Habitat Use in the Arctic

BOEM Information Need(s) to be Addressed: Gray whale, bowhead whales, and belugas are seasonal residents of the northeastern Chukchi Sea and western Beaufort Sea, regions that provide important feeding grounds and migration pathways for all three species. While all three species are protected under the Marine Mammal Protection Act, the bowhead whale is given added protection as an endangered species under the Endangered Species Act (ESA), and bowhead whales and belugas are granted additional management consideration as the targets of subsistence hunts by Alaska Natives. Under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and the ESA, BOEM is required to evaluate if and how federal actions associated with oil and gas exploration and development may affect these species. Aerial surveys are one standard methodology for conducting studies of cetacean distribution required to understand the effects of oil and gas exploration. In recent years, there has been increasing interest in using Unmanned Aircraft Systems (UAS) to survey cetaceans in the Arctic to decrease risk to personnel, increase survey efficiency, reduce survey costs, and minimize disturbance of marine wildlife. The performance of UAS relative to human observers in manned aircraft is not well understood and must be more thoroughly investigated prior to accepting UAS as an alternative to manned aircraft for conducting these investigations.

Approx. Cost: TBD
plus joint funding

Period of Performance: FY 2015-2018

Description:

Background: Manned aircraft are a common platform for studying wildlife because they are relatively cost-effective for surveying large geographic areas and take advantage of humans' ability to quickly integrate sensory information on the biological and physical environment in order to detect, identify, and count species of interest. In recent years, there has been increasing interest in using UAS to study wildlife populations. In particular, UAS have been suggested as an alternate survey platform for studying the distribution and density of the Bering-Chukchi-Beaufort stock of bowhead whales in the western Arctic, which has been investigated using manned aircraft since 1979. The primary advantage of using UAS to survey marine wildlife in the Arctic is the elimination of the risks associated with sending humans far from shore on small aircraft in areas prone to extreme weather. Furthermore, UAS have the potential to be cheaper to operate than conventional aircraft and some have the advantage of prolonged flight times. Finally, field work conducted by NMML in the Arctic has shown that UAS are less likely to disturb pinnipeds than conventional aircraft.

The FAA's Reauthorization Act of 2012 designated airspace for UAS operations in the Arctic, making UAS a more viable platform for use in marine mammal monitoring by the oil and gas industry. For surveying cetaceans, the ability of UAS methodology to detect cetaceans, identify individuals to species, estimate group size, identify sensitive age classes, and estimate density must be understood relative to the proven capabilities of human observers in conventional aircraft. A small number of limited field tests have been conducted to assess the effectiveness of UAS for surveying cetaceans in the Arctic, the results of which warrant further investigation. Additional insight will be gained only through direct comparisons of UAS and human observers in the field, with cetaceans (bowhead whales, gray whales, and belugas) as the primary targets.

Objectives:

- Evaluate the ability of UAS methodology to detect cetaceans and compare encounter rates, identify individuals to species, estimate group size, identify calves, and estimate density in arctic waters relative to conventional aerial surveys.
- Describe improvements needed in UAS technology (e.g., payloads, cameras, environmental sensors) to operate in Arctic conditions for a large-scale survey program.
- Provide recommendations for the types of monitoring or mitigation requirements that can likely be met using UAS.

Methods: Joint-funding opportunities may be available for this project (e.g. ONR and NSB). Planning and permit application will occur during the first year. Fine-scale aerial line-transect surveys will occur in the second year in the northeastern Chukchi and western Beaufort seas during the open water season, when bowhead whales, gray whales, and belugas have reliably been found feeding in and migrating through the region. Marine mammal observers will conduct a line-transect survey from an aircraft flying between 1000-1500 ft. A ship-based or land-based UAS will operate concurrently in the same area, with a marine mammal observer on the UAS team, viewing digital video in real-time to detect, identify, and count cetaceans visible in the video feed. Because the effective strip width for the UAS will be narrower than that of human observers in the aircraft, UAS transects will be placed closer together than those for the conventional aircraft. Digital video footage and digital photographs from the UAS will be archived to enable post-flight analyses into UAS performance. Metrics that will be used to compare performance between platforms may include: 1) encounter rates made by each platform; 2) precision of the resulting density estimates; 3) relative efficiency of each platform, measured by length of trackline and duration of survey effort required to achieve a target precision in the density estimate; 4) cost to conduct the survey; and 5) fuel consumption. This study will be integrated with other ongoing BOEM studies in the region, including the "Distribution and Relative Abundance of Marine Mammals in the Chukchi Sea and the Fall Migration of Bowhead Whales in the Beaufort Sea" (AK-11-06, also known as "Aerial Surveys of Arctic Marine Mammals" or ASAMM) studying the distribution, density, and behavior of marine mammals.

Revised Date: September 2014

Environmental Studies Program: Alaska Annual Studies Plan FY 2015

Region: Alaska

Planning Area(s): Cook Inlet

Title: Subtidal and Intertidal Habitats and Invertebrate Biota in Lower Cook Inlet, Alaska

BOEM Information Need(s) to be Addressed: The BOEM *Proposed Final Outer Continental Shelf Oil & Gas Leasing Program 2012-2017* includes a lease sale in the Cook Inlet Planning Area in 2016. Updated and readily accessible subtidal habitat information is needed to conduct environmental analyses for offshore continental shelf development in Cook Inlet, as well as for ongoing spill response planning. The subtidal and intertidal areas are home to many grazing invertebrates which provide an important source of prey for marine and terrestrial mammals, birds, other invertebrates and humans and is particularly susceptible to oil spills. Updated information from this study will be important to understanding and assessing potential impacts of an oil spill in Cook Inlet.

Approx. Cost: TBD

Period of Performance: FY 2015-2019

Description:

Background: Benthic invertebrates and their habitats are susceptible to effects from industry exploration and development activities. The subtidal invertebrates and habitats adjacent to the OCS are particularly susceptible to oil spills and updated information is needed to assess impacts from a potential large oil spill in Cook Inlet. Previous research on intertidal and subtidal habitats in Cook Inlet includes the Outer Continental Shelf Environmental Assessment Program (OCSEAP) begun in 1975, as well as work done by the Cook Inlet Regional Citizens Advisory Council (CIRCAC) in 2000.

Subtidal and intertidal communities are also an important conduit of energy, nutrients, and pollutants between terrestrial and marine environments; provide resources for subsistence, sport, and commercial harvests; and are important for recreational activities such as wildlife viewing and fishing. Changes in the structure of the intertidal community serve as valuable indicators of disturbance, both natural and human induced. Further, changes in overall and relative abundance of intertidal species may have serious consequences for the bird and mammal species that forage in nearshore areas.

Marine bivalves (clams, mussels, and chitons [badarkis]) in particular are subsistence species for Alaska residents. Native communities in Port Graham and Nanwalek have noted a substantial decline in shellfish populations and have expressed concern over the potential loss or contamination of subsistence resources. Bivalves are ubiquitous and critical components of the nearshore intertidal environment, and have been used widely as sentinels in monitoring programs. Community monitoring for bivalves for potential contaminants would be an important component to address concerns about release of contaminants, most notably polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAH), into the

environment. It is important to improve our understanding of the following: the extent and details of benthic habitat that support subsistence resources, hydrocarbon loads in these resources, as well as the sources and extent of local contamination, particularly those where subsistence harvest continues.

This study would be conducted with a collaborative approach between communities and Federal agencies and will provide a better understanding of invertebrate biota including distribution, habitat, densities, productivity and larval transport of marine bivalves. A subset of the species will be used as sentinel species to assess the vulnerability of marine ecosystems to the effects of oil contamination. Hydrocarbon work would also leverage previous surveys by CIRCAC and NOAA-NOS. Potential cooperators would include NPS, USGS, CIRCAC, NOAA, USFWS, Gulf Watch Alaska, Kenai Peninsula Watershed Forum, and the Port Graham Tribe and Chugach Regional Resources.

Objectives:

- Examine variability in habitat and invertebrate abundance of invertebrate communities using existing ShoreZone imagery, and previous sampling programs to view, assess, and quantify various habitat strata in lower Cook Inlet.
- Develop and facilitate a monitoring program with local communities for hydrocarbon sampling near Port Graham and Nanwalek in Kachemak Bay with bivalves as a sentinel species (i.e. mussels, chitons (badarkis), and clams).
- Evaluate the current status of hydrocarbon presence in nearshore areas and archive hydrocarbon analyses in an Alaska hydrocarbon dataset for the public.
- Conduct subtidal sampling covering habitat strata the intertidal, rock ramps, and reefs for vegetation and invertebrate biota including areas: Tuxedni, Chinitna Kamishak Bays, Nordyk Island, Tignagvik Pt. and St. Augustine
- Incorporate the existing spatial habitat data with the new information from biological monitoring to create digital and web based synoptic maps to better portray ecological information to support resource management decisions.

Methods: This study will identify and collate important historical and ongoing temporal and geospatial habitat and benthic data. The data will quantify various habitat strata for monitoring and sampling. Areas for community monitoring of PAH with accessible marine bivalves will be selected near two communities in Kachemak Bay. Researchers will conduct targeted sub tidal benthic surveys across an area of habitat types and areas using existing protocols from the BOEM-MARINE, Census of Marine Life/NaGISA (Natural Geography In-Shore Areas), Exxon Valdez Oil Spill Trustee Council-Gulf Watch Alaska and National Park Service Inventory programs will be utilized for subtidal sampling. Researchers will apply an analytical approach to utilize existing habitat data with collected biological data to better document ecological processes in nearshore areas by producing derived geographical datasets and maps to help inform resource managers, stakeholders, and decision makers.

Revised Date: September 2014

Environmental Studies Program: Alaska Annual Studies Plan FY 2015

Region: Alaska

Planning Area(s): Cook Inlet

Title: Cetacean Distribution, Abundance, and Ecology in Cook Inlet

BOEM Information Need(s) to be Addressed: Information gained from this study is needed to establish spatial and temporal distribution and abundance of several species of whales, including multiple endangered species, that may be potentially affected by pre- and post-lease oil and gas activities, potential response to oil spills or other anthropogenic impacts of oil/gas production and transportation in the Proposed 2016 Lease Sale 244 area and the lower Cook Inlet/northeast entrance of Shelikof Strait areas. This study will provide documentation of temporal and spatial distribution, relative abundance, and functional areas for cetaceans to support evaluations of the potential effects of activities on whales, including listed species and designated critical habitat required under NEPA, Endangered Species Act (ESA), and Marine Mammal Protection Act (MMPA). Increased understanding of the seasonal distribution and habitat use of the cetacean species will assist BOEM in pre- and post-lease NEPA assessment, design of temporal and spatial mitigation, monitoring of effects of activities, estimating take (under the MMPA and ESA), and long-term efforts to apply the best available science to adaptively manage potential effects of oil and gas on cetaceans to reduce impacts to the lowest practicable level. Results will support future Section 7 ESA consultations and preparation of future Biological Evaluations and Biological Opinions.

Approx. Cost: TBD

Period of Performance: FY 2015-2018

Description:

Background: There are numerous species of whales that occur within or near the proposed Lease Sale 244 and Lower Cook Inlet/entrance of Shelikof Strait areas. Research directed at the population dynamics, habitat use and foraging ecology of humpback, fin and killer whales has occurred near Kodiak Island and in Prince William Sound. Fin and humpback whales, which are endangered species, are known to be present in significant numbers year-round and seasonally feed intensively within and downstream of this area. Humpback whales are known to feed seasonally in the area near the Barren Islands, and occur seasonally in southern Cook Inlet and Shelikof Strait. The sufficiency of currently available data to describe abundance, seasonal use patterns or feeding habits of cetaceans in these areas must be assessed. Ongoing monitoring efforts are aimed at beluga whales in upper Cook Inlet and sea otters in the mid-portion of the Inlet. Recent detection of two other species of concern, belugas and North Pacific right whales, in the bays of western Kodiak demonstrate their presence and potential for interactions with oil and gas development in the Cook Inlet area. The presence of several other cetacean species in the area, including sei, blue, gray, killer, and minke whales, as well as harbor and Dall's porpoise, is known but their seasonal distribution, relative abundance, and feeding hotspots are poorly documented. The spring and fall

migration routes for most of the Eastern North Pacific gray whale stock are not well-defined at present, but likely occur fairly near to the planned sale area.

The pattern of use by individual whales and populations in or near Cook Inlet is not well-defined. Endangered sei whales have been rarely sighted in Shelikof Strait, though current studies are inadequate to define their use of these areas. The Eastern Pacific stock of the North Pacific right whales, the most endangered large cetacean population in the world, has been sighted in the Gulf of Alaska, outside of the Kenai Peninsula and off of Kodiak Island. Critical habitat has been designated in this area for this species. Previous studies are inadequate to determine if North Pacific right whales occur in lower Cook Inlet, Shelikof Strait, or near the Barren Islands. However, on the outer coast of Kodiak Island, this species has been sighted in areas in which humpback whales also feed. Blue whales are resident in the deeper waters of the Gulf of Alaska and may occasionally pass through the deeper portions of lower Cook Inlet and Shelikof Strait.

Some species of cetaceans may be adversely affected by routine and accidental operations associated with OCS oil and gas activities. For example, the acoustic environment used by many species of whales is notably altered by industry activities, including seismic surveys, shipping, drilling, construction, etc. There are potential effects on their ability to use sound to communicate, detect predators, find prey, and navigate. Data indicate that underwater noise associated with high energy seismic exploration may cause some whale species or stock segments to avoid areas where seismic exploration is occurring. For example, it is known that female humpbacks with calves are, in some situations, sensitive to noise from seismic exploration. Other types of activity associated with oil and gas development may disturb and modify the behavior of whales or put them at risk from boat strikes.

Objectives:

- Document the relative abundance, spatial, temporal, and functional use patterns of individuals and populations of cetacean species from the Forelands in the central Inlet south to the Barren Islands and Shuyak Island and the northern portion of Shelikof Strait.
- Investigate the ecological factors responsible for the distribution of whales in the study area with emphasis on the relationships between whale occurrence, distribution of potential prey, and oceanographic conditions, to assess the foraging habits and trophic roles of key whale species within the planned sale area and adjacent waters.
- Estimate the degree of overlap and exchange between the Cook Inlet Planning Area and other known feeding areas within Alaska (i.e. Kodiak Island, Shumagin Islands, Prince William Sound, and Southeast Alaska) for humpback whales.

Methods: This study will provide documentation on temporal, spatial and functional use patterns of cetaceans in Cook Inlet. Prey and habitat relationships related to whale habitat usage will also be examined. The base project will involve extensive literature reviews combined with synthesis of existing observational data, potentially supplemented by surveys from vessels of opportunity. The procurement will include

options for conducting dedicated field surveys to fulfill additional information needs that may be identified in the base project.

Field survey options may include periodic aircraft and vessel-based surveys, as well as deployment of continuous passive acoustic vertical recorder arrays with tracking capabilities (bearing and distance) to detect seasonal presence of marine mammals in the waters of lower Cook Inlet, the entrance to Shelikof Strait, and nearby and downstream areas of the Gulf of Alaska. Autonomous acoustic recorders have been deployed in upper Cook Inlet, which also features heavy fishing activity and strong currents. Local knowledge from the fishing fleet would be used to deploy and recover long-term passive acoustic vertical arrays in areas of known marine mammal diversity and abundance, and to ensure recovery of the arrays from this challenging environment. The array would detect a frequency range that is sufficient for all known vocalizations for marine mammals which occur in the Cook Inlet area. Aerial, shipboard, tagging and acoustic data would be integrated and presence of pinnipeds and sea otters recorded when observed. Sonobuoys would be used to assist aircraft and vessels in locating individual whales for detailed study and tagging. Satellite-linked transmitters may be deployed on individuals of select species for year-round monitoring of movements and short-term recoverable archival tags would be used to explore fine-scale movements and feeding behavior in relation to the acoustic environment.

Biopsy samples of individual whales may be collected to investigate trophic relationships. Biochemical analyses (stable isotope ratios and fatty acids) would improve our understanding of the foraging habits and trophic roles of these whales. Finally, analysis of mitochondrial DNA haplotypes would provide needed information on the genetic structure of these whales as it relates to the populations as a whole. Results from these surveys would provide information on the seasonal and inter-annual distribution of whales within these regions, as well as document interchange between these regions and other foraging areas throughout Alaska.

Revised Date: September 2014

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2.3 Profiles of Studies Proposed for FY 2016 NSL

Table 3. BOEM Alaska OCS Region Studies Proposed for the FY 2016 NSL

Page Number	Discipline	Study Title
199	IM	Collaboration with North Pacific Research Board (NPRB) Arctic Marine Research Program
201	PO	Assessment of Multiple Ocean Circulation Models to Support Ensemble OSRA Experiments
203	BIO	Monitoring Fish in Chukchi and Beaufort Sea Lagoons and Nearshore Zones
205	HE	Temporal and Spatial Variation in Arctic Cod Habitat Use of the Nearshore Beaufort Sea in Summer
207	HE	Status of Marine and Coastal Birds in Lower Cook Inlet
209	MM	Analysis of Historical Acoustic to Quantify Bowhead Acoustic Occurrence, Bioacoustic Ecology and Ambient Noise Across the Chukchi and Beaufort Seas
211	SE	The Beluga Hunts in Point Lay and Wainwright, Alaska
Discipline Codes		
AQ = Air Quality FE = Fates & Effects HE = Habitat & Ecology IM = Information Management MM = Marine Mammals & Protected Species PO = Physical Oceanography SE = Social & Economic Sciences		

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Environmental Studies Program: Alaska Annual Studies Plan FY 2015

Region: Alaska

Planning Area(s): Beaufort Sea, Chukchi Sea

Title: Collaboration with North Pacific Research Board (NPRB)
Arctic Marine Research Program

BOEM Information Need(s) to be Addressed: The National Science Foundation and the North Pacific Research Board have worked together programmatically and scientifically through the Bering Sea Project (<http://bsierp.nprb.org>) since 2007. Based on this successful collaboration, BOEM and NPRB are intending to partner on new collaborative research in the Arctic, leveraging expertise across several partners and funding sources, including BOEM, NSF, NPRB, NOAA, AOOS, USGS, ONR, NASA, NSB, NWA, industry and others, specifically in the Chukchi and Beaufort Seas, on mutually identified information needs.

Approx. Cost: TBD

Period of Performance: FY 2016-2021

Description:

Background: The Alaska OCS Region has a long history of supporting multidisciplinary research, beginning with the “Outer Continental Shelf Environmental Assessment Program” (OCSEAP) surveys conducted between the 1970s and early 1990s and the “Beaufort Sea Monitoring Program” (BSMP) in the 1980s. The “Arctic Nearshore Impact Monitoring in Development Area” (ANIMIDA) program and its continuation (cANIMIDA) started in 1999 to provide baseline data and monitoring results for chemical contamination, turbidity, and subsistence whaling in the vicinity of Northstar and Liberty development sites. This work continues today with the studies “ANIMIDA III: Boulder Patch and Other Kelp Communities in the Development Area,” begun in 2012, and the recently awarded “ANIMIDA III: Contaminants, Sources, and Bioaccumulation,” which has been expanded to include Camden Bay.

Since 2007, the Alaska OCS Region has also developed a new suite of studies in the Chukchi Sea, leveraging more than \$65 million (through FY 2013) to conduct interim baseline research and monitoring in all the following fields of interest: meteorology, ice dynamics and basic oceanography, benthic fauna and sedimentation, marine mammals (including whales, walrus, seals, and polar bear), fish, birds, and social systems. Most of the projects exhibit complex, multilateral collaborations, with explicit inter-disciplinary linkages between the physical and biological sciences, and many of them also provide a role for active participation by Alaska Native residents and input from sources of traditional knowledge. Most of them pursue multi-year data collection efforts on a regional scale, with careful attention to inter-annual variability and ecosystem processes.

Objectives: BOEM would build upon existing working relationships with NPRB, NOAA, USGS, AOOS, industry and others by establishing financial cooperation, coordinated Request for Proposals, data sharing agreements, and logistical support agreements. The

foundation for such partnerships remains based on our Annual Studies Planning Process. The new collaboration will involve established funding partners and existing research implementation strategies (e.g. IARPC, Arctic Council, Distributed Biological Observatories) to form interdependent but linked studies to examine physical, biological and social processes.

Methods: BOEM, NPRB and other funding partners will build upon newly available synthesis projects (such as Synthesis of Arctic Research [SOAR] and Pacific Marine Arctic Regional Synthesis [PacMARS]) to examine areas where collaborative studies could help enhance informed decision-making on the sustainable use of resources. This study will be guided by an oversight committee formed of senior scientists and accomplished through an annual RFP process. Recommendations for select studies would be based on program development goals. After BOEM review and approval, subgroups of interdisciplinary scientists will work together with NPRB and NSF to select specific task orders for funding. There will be a specific implementation plan developed to prepare data for integration and conduct appropriate statistical analyses or modeling to identify interdisciplinary relationships and/or test hypotheses previously identified. Topics for studies include, but are not limited to, inter- and intra-relationships of oceanographic circulation, sea ice, hydrography, fisheries and lower-trophic abundance and distribution, and marine mammal and seabird distributions and behavior. Deliverables from this study will include multiple workshop proceedings and summary recommendation reports, as well as multiple peer-review journal publications.

Revised Date: September 2014

Environmental Studies Program: Alaska Annual Studies Plan FY 2015

Region: Alaska

Planning Area(s): Beaufort Sea, Chukchi Sea, Cook Inlet

Title: Assessment of Multiple Ocean Circulation Models to Support Ensemble OSRA Experiments

BOEM Information Need(s) to be Addressed: Oil-Spill-Risk Analysis (OSRA) is a cornerstone foundation for evaluating alternatives in OCS oil and gas leasing NEPA analyses and oil spill response plans. This study would support continuing improvement of the BOEM oil-spill trajectory model and its application in the Arctic and provide additional baseline information for NEPA analyses. Oil-spill issues constitute a significant portion of public comments submitted on NEPA documents related to proposed lease sales, EPs, and DPPs in the Alaska OCS Region.

Approx. Cost: TBD

Period of Performance: FY 2016-2018

Description:

Background: To assess potential changes in the marine and coastal environment associated with offshore oil and gas development activity, it is important to understand how key environmental variables (e.g., surface winds, oceanography, and sea ice) fluctuated in the past and are predicted to act in the future in association with climate variations. To maintain its state-of-the-art in oil-spill-trajectory analysis, BOEM seeks to take advantage through time of the increasing skill of circulation models supported by more and better data. Over the past decades, BOEM and other federal and state agencies have invested a significant amount of resources to measure and model the circulation and variability in the Alaska coastal waters. It has been an ongoing challenge to converge on a well-validated and finer-scale ocean circulation model. Modeling the coastal circulation around Alaska is particularly challenging given its complex coastline, rapidly changing weather conditions and the relative large freshwater input from river discharge and melting ice. As a result, any single model hindcast likely has large uncertainties, and a systematic effort is required to validate these hindcast model simulations against available measurements. A multi-model ensemble is the ultimate approach to providing retrospective analyses and estimating model uncertainties for surface wind, ocean currents and waves, and sea ice in Alaska coastal waters.

Objectives:

- Assess the performance and estimate the uncertainty of simulations of ocean currents and sea ice in Alaska coastal waters from multiple ocean circulation models.
- Apply short-term surface fields from multiple ocean circulation models for the Arctic to identify the physical processes most important to oil-spill trajectory analysis and evaluate sensitivities of the various models to relevant parameters.

Methods: This study will assemble model simulations for ocean currents and sea ice from multiple ocean circulation models to support ensemble and intercomparison OSRA experiments. Observational data sets will be assembled and aggregated from a variety of sources to facilitate data-model comparisons. Local observations include flow measurements from acoustic Doppler current profilers and drifters and water mass data from conductivity-temperature-depth (CTD) profilers. Deliverables would include a report outlining the strengths and weaknesses of each model in relation to processes relevant to oil-spill trajectory analysis, as well as short-term (five years) surface circulation fields from the suite of models.

Revised Date: September 2014

Environmental Studies Program: Alaska Annual Studies Plan FY 2015

Region: Alaska

Planning Area(s): Beaufort Sea, Chukchi Sea

Title: Monitoring Fish in Chukchi and Beaufort Sea Lagoons and Nearshore Zones

BOEM Information Need(s) to be Addressed: This project will monitor fish in lagoons of the northeast Chukchi and western Beaufort seas that are vital resources to residents of the North Slope and important prey to other animals including some sea birds, beluga whales and seals. BOEM analysts and decision makers will use this information in NEPA analysis and documentation for Lease Sales, EPs and DPPs. This project will facilitate a more in depth analysis of Chukchi Sea fish ecology because it ties directly to other projects in the adjacent nearshore and offshore areas within the Chukchi Sea Lease Area.

Approx. Cost: TBD

Period of Performance: FY 2016-2019

Description:

Background: This study would tie in with efforts made by the North Slope Borough's Department of Wildlife Management (NSB-DWM) and NPRB's Alaska Coastal Ecosystem Survey (ACES), which is conducted in collaboration with BOEM's "Distribution and Habitat Use of Fish in the Nearshore Ecosystem of the Beaufort and Chukchi Seas" (AK-12-06). This study will provide a more robust examination of fisheries ecology in the Chukchi Sea from the lagoon systems and nearshore areas to the offshore areas sampled in the study "Distribution of Fish, Crab and Lower Trophic Communities in the Chukchi Sea Lease Area" (AK-11-08a/b, also known as "Arctic Ecosystem Integrated Survey" or Arctic EIS). In 1996 and 2008-present, the NSB-DWM has used a Fyke net in Elson Lagoon and North Salt Lagoon, near Barrow, to monitor fish presence and abundance. Monitoring of subsistence gill net catches also occurred. The use of the Fyke net has been invaluable to understanding the importance of the lagoon systems which contain approximately 15 species of fish ranging from salmonids and whitefishes to cod and herring and has also revealed that both small (early age classes-adults) as well as large adult fish routinely utilize the nearshore-lagoon systems. Since 2008, the NSB-DWM has also collected genetic samples from subsistence fishers for the Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G). Genetic samples continue to be collected by ADF&G for their project entitled "Salmon Resources for the Northern Area." This study will continue to collect genetic samples for that program.

In 2012 and 2013, NSB-DWM assisted with the ACES project in performing surveys of nearshore habitats along the Chukchi and Beaufort Seas and lagoons near Barrow, Alaska. A beach seine was employed for this project, and in the first year report it was noted that salmon smolt were collected. These smolt are the furthest northern salmon smolt collected in Alaska. In 2013, salmon smolts again were collected but in North Salt Lagoon. These examples represent opportunistic collection of data. Finally, and most

recently, the NSB-DWM has teamed up with Battelle Memorial Institute to develop and verify molecular methods such as environmental DNA (eDNA) by evaluating seasonal presence and absence of fish in Elson Lagoon (Barrow, Alaska) in conjunction with local subsistence fishermen catch records.

Objectives:

- Enumerate species, quantify numbers of individuals, record timing of fish entering and exiting lagoons on the North Slope, and samples for genetic analyses of selected stocks.
- Identify areas to be considered for long term monitoring.

Methods: Fish sampling using Fyke nets and beach seines will be conducted during open water periods in Elson Lagoon, near Barrow, and Kuuk Lagoons, near Wainwright. Basic fish data will be collected including relative abundance by species, age/weight, age structure, and age at maturity data for non-salmon species encountered in large enough numbers to produce reliable data. All data will be collected using easily repeatable methods such that all metrics are easily comparable to future data collection. Basic water chemistry data will be collected at each fish sampling site during each net check (water temperature, conductivity/salinity). This project would be conducted in collaboration with ACES and BOEM's "Distribution and Habitat Use of Fish in the Nearshore Ecosystem of the Beaufort and Chukchi Seas" (AK-12-06) and would utilize the existing data standards.

Relevant data from this study and a wide range of projects conducted by BOEM, NOAA, NPRB and NSB-DWM will be coordinated through a data management plan. Project data for nearshore fish in lagoons (NSB-DWM), ecology of nearshore forage fish (NSB/NOAA), ACES (BOEM/NOAA/NPRB/NSB), "Shelf Habitat and Ecology of Fish and Zooplankton" (SHELFZ) (NSB/NOAA) and Arctic EIS (AK-11-08a/b) will be initially deposited on a password-protected site hosted by AOOS (Ocean Workspace) to allow easy data sharing among all investigators for a synoptic examination of Chukchi Sea fish ecology from the lagoons systems and nearshore areas to the offshore. Metadata will be submitted to OBIS-USA according to the most current protocols and will be linked to all other project data at NODC. In addition, all data and metadata will be deposited at AOOS and will eventually be made available to the public and decision makers via the AOOS Arctic Portal, a set of coastal and marine planning visualization tools for Alaska and the U.S. Arctic.

Revised Date: September 2014

Environmental Studies Program: Alaska Annual Studies Plan FY 2015

Region: Alaska

Planning Area(s): Beaufort Sea, Chukchi Sea

Title: Temporal and Spatial Variation in Arctic Cod Habitat Use of the Nearshore Beaufort Sea in Summer

BOEM Information Need(s) to be Addressed: Arctic Cod (*Boreogadus saida*) is the primary forage fish in BOEM's Beaufort and Chukchi Sea Planning Areas and the majority of the Arctic Basin and it is the principal avenue by which lower level trophic production is transferred to upper trophic level marine birds and mammals. Additional information on the species distribution, habitat use and basic natural history is needed for post-sale NEPA analysis, review of EPs, DPPs and other reviews for post-sale and post-exploration BOEM decision making and mitigation. Since Arctic Cod is a keystone species in arctic marine food webs, knowledge of seasonal and annual variation in its abundance, availability and habitat use is essential for accurate assessments of temporal variation in the large and diverse populations of upper trophic level marine predators dependent on Arctic Cod such as birds, seals, polar bears, beluga whales, and humans. Evaluation of the factors causing changes in Arctic Cod distribution and availability is needed to distinguish between changes due to anthropogenic and natural effects in all the marine species that utilize Arctic Cod as their primary food source.

In addition, the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act, requires that Essential Fish Habitat (EFH) be identified and described and agencies must act to encourage conservation and enhancement of EFH. Knowledge of the seasonal use of under-ice, water column and benthic habitats by Arctic Cod in the Beaufort Sea is needed to assess the species' seasonal dependencies and vulnerabilities.

Approx. Cost: TBD

Period of Performance: FY 2016-2018

Description:

Background: Arctic cod are considered a sentinel and keystone species in arctic marine ecosystems but their close association with sea ice combined with the logistical obstacles associated with sampling in remote ice-covered waters has limited our knowledge of the species. The relatively short summer season when Alaska's arctic waters are navigable further limits the utility of traditional biological oceanographic methods for sampling and studying Arctic Cod. This paucity of knowledge for the primary forage fish in arctic marine food webs will hinder predevelopment assessments of ecosystem vulnerability as well as post-development assessments of natural and anthropogenic factors affecting Arctic Cod and all the upper trophic levels dependent on Arctic Cod.

The information available on Arctic Cod in Alaska's nearshore waters in summer was primarily gathered before the recent major summer ice retreats that have caused a regime shift in the nearshore marine ecosystem. Our proposed determination of the depth, habitats and water temperatures occupied by Arctic Cod over an extended summer period would be a major contribution to our understanding of this little-known

species during the period of ice retreat. Observations at the proposed study site in the last decade have documented the seasonal disappearance of Arctic Cod from the Black Guillemot's diet with increasing SST. The data provided through the proposed work would facilitate assessment of the potential effects of predicted increases in sea ice retreat and SST in future years.

The information provided by the proposed work would assist with two ongoing BOEM projects: "Beaufort Sea Marine Fish Monitoring Survey in the Central Beaufort Sea" (AK-10-06) and "Distribution and Habitat Use of Fish in the Nearshore Ecosystem of the Beaufort and Chukchi Seas" (AK-12-06), and the planned "Genomics of Arctic Cod: A Sentinel Species in a Changing Environment" (AK-14-03). Arctic Cod obtained at Cooper Island in past years have been provided to BOEM projects needing fish for analysis. This project will complement this work by expanding forage fish collections across a broader season. Preliminary results from indicates that a seasonal approach for sampling is important for quantifying the variability in abundance of forage species in the nearshore habitats.

Objectives:

- Document the habitat use of Arctic Cod in the nearshore Beaufort Sea during the period of sea ice decomposition and retreat (early June to early September) with analysis of seasonal and annual variation in depth, sea surface temperature and habitat (under-ice, water column and benthic). This will include identifying the oceanographic conditions that lead to an upper trophic level predator undergoing a seasonal shift from Arctic Cod to lower quality demersal fish species.
- Evaluate temporal variation by age class (adult and first-year) in Arctic Cod utilization of the nearshore habitats during the late summer period of sea ice retreat through observations of and images of guillemot parents provisioning young with prey.
- Obtain a seasonal time-series (from July-September) of Arctic Cod specimens of different age-classes to be provided to other BOEM investigators examining the stable isotope signatures, caloric value, and genomics of Arctic Cod.

Methods: This study will utilize an upper trophic level marine predator, the Black Guillemot, which specializes in Arctic Cod. Temperature/depth recorders (TDRs) will be attached to the tarsi of guillemots breeding on Cooper Island (35 km east of Point Barrow) and collect continuous data on dive depth, dive profiles (under-ice, water column or benthic), and water temperature. During the period when guillemots provision nestlings (late July through early September) the dive information will be supplemented by observations and images of prey using motion-sensitive cameras at nest sites with birds outfitted with TDRs. This allows individual prey items (taken to species, age-class and size) to be associated with specific dives and dive bouts. Preliminary work with TDR deployment and concurrent fish image acquisition was conducted on Cooper Island in 2012 and 2013 and the dive logs obtained are currently being analyzed with a dive analysis program.

Revised Date: September 2014

Environmental Studies Program: Alaska Annual Studies Plan FY 2015

Region: Alaska

Planning Area(s): Cook Inlet

Title: Status of Marine and Coastal Birds in Lower Cook Inlet

BOEM Information Need(s) to be Addressed: The BOEM Proposed Final Outer Continental Shelf Oil & Gas Leasing Program 2012-2017 includes a lease sale in the Cook Inlet Planning Area in 2016 and recent expansions of on-shore and off-shore exploration efforts in state lands and waters in the region demonstrate increased industry interest in Cook Inlet oil and gas development. Information on the distribution and timing of use by marine birds, including ESA-protected species (Steller's eiders, Kittlitz's murrelets, Yellow-billed loons), is necessary to assess potential impacts of oil and gas exploration and development in the Lower Cook Inlet Planning Area. Data on the distribution and abundance of marine birds is needed for ESA Section 7 consultations and NEPA analyses. The information obtained from these surveys will assist in development of mitigation measures and strategies to reduce potential impacts on marine and coastal bird populations in the Cook Inlet Planning Area.

Approx. Cost: TBD

Period of Performance: FY 2016-2019

Description:

Background: The waters, shorelines, and wetlands of lower Cook Inlet support abundant marine bird populations throughout the year. Recent efforts to estimate the abundance of these species was conducted in 1996-1999 and largely focused on the northwestern and southeastern side of the inlet, with little or no coverage of the central and western portions. The 1996-1999 surveys were only conducted during summer, but earlier USFWS 1992/1993 surveys showed quite different marine bird communities between summer and winter in lower Cook Inlet, with seabirds (including Steller's eiders) using the area in winter. The US Fish and Wildlife Service conducted limited marine bird surveys in Kachemak Bay during summers of 2005-2007 and 2010. Updating and expanding the dataset regarding marine and coastal birds will provide valuable information for NEPA analysis and Section 7 consultation.

Additionally, pursuant to Section 388 of the Energy Policy Act of 2005, BOEM has discretionary authority on leasing, easements or rights-of-way on the Outer Continental Shelf (OCS) for alternative energy projects, such as wind, wave, or ocean current facilities. The Cook Inlet Planning Area holds promising alternative energy resources, thus understanding marine bird distribution and abundance will be necessary for environmental analyses in the Cook Inlet Planning Area.

Objectives: The overall purpose of this study is to obtain seasonal abundance and distribution data on marine and coastal birds in the lower Cook Inlet Planning Area with aerial surveys. The primary objectives are to:

- Document the seasonal distribution and abundance species composition for marine and coastal birds in the Cook Inlet Planning Area. Aerial Surveys would occur off of marine, nearshore, inland and coastal wetland habitats.
- Evaluate utilizing small Unmanned Aerial Systems (UAS), such as the Aeryon Scout equipped with imagery systems to expand spatial coverage
- Process the data (GIS based maps and attribute tables) for entry into the North Pacific Pelagic Seabird Database for future accessibility and to facilitate new information for Oil-Spill-Risk-Analysis.
- Identify seasonal concentration locations to provide information for environmental assessments.
- Identify environmental drivers with high priority locations from the GulfWatch program (bathymetry, currents, temperature, salinity).

Methods: We propose a minimum of two complete spring, summer, fall, and winter aerial surveys of the lower CIPA during 2015 and 2016 to enable a better understanding of all marine and coastal bird use in the planning area. The basic study design for summer (June-July) will follow that used in 1996-1999, with the exception that the east-west systematically spaced transects will be extended to include the entire lower Cook Inlet region. Kachemak Bay will have more intensive coverage, using north-south systematically spaced transects that duplicate USFWS surveys in the bay between 2005 and 2010. The fall and winter surveys (March, October) will cover a reduced area to account for ice cover and accessibility. Information gathered from a small UAS will be assembled and analyzed through available software such as MosaicMill, EnsoMOSAIC, Icaros, or Photomodeler. Data will be entered into the North Pacific Pelagic Seabird Database (NPPSD) and made available for further NEPA and ESA analyses.

Revised Date: September 2014

Environmental Studies Program: Alaska Annual Studies Plan FY 2015

Region: Alaska

Planning Area(s): Beaufort Sea, Chukchi Sea

Title: Analysis of Historical Acoustic to Quantify Bowhead Acoustic Occurrence, Bioacoustic Ecology and Ambient Noise Across the Chukchi and Beaufort Seas

BOEM Information Need(s) to be Addressed: As climatic conditions in the Arctic change and shipping and offshore energy activities increase, present environmental management plans designed to mitigate potential impacts on protected species and the environment may need to be modified for expected levels of future activities. An understanding of how bowhead whale occurrence and ambient noise conditions are changing, and the relationship to variations in environmental, biotic and anthropogenic conditions (*e.g.* ice melt primary productivity, ship traffic) can provide a basis for more effective and efficient management practices. This study will provide the data needed to address cumulative effects of noise from anthropogenic activities and environmental conditions and to assess the relative impact of oil and gas activities on bowhead whales in the Arctic. This information will enable informed regulatory decisions and policies regarding this endangered species as required under the Marine Mammal Protection Act and the Endangered Species Act. A quantitative analysis of the Arctic's acoustic environment can provide not only important and previously unavailable information on bowhead habitat use patterns, but also insights into arctic ecosystem dynamics. This information will be useful in pre- and post-lease NEPA assessments and in mitigation and monitoring effects of activities to potentially reduce impacts on the species, as well as on subsistence harvesting to the lowest level practical.

Approx. Cost: TBD

Period of Performance: FY 2016-2018

Description:

Background: From the late 1970s to the present, acoustic recordings have been collected in areas inhabited by the Bering-Chukchi-Beaufort bowhead population to better understand this specie's distribution and trends. Recording efforts have broadened in recent years to include a diverse taxonomic suite of marine vertebrates, sampled throughout the year over a broad range from the Bering Sea to the Canadian Beaufort Sea. A review of all available acoustic recordings since 1978 by the ongoing study "Synthesis of Arctic Research (SOAR): Physics to Marine Mammals in the Pacific Arctic" (AK-11-05) indicates approximately 125 years of acoustic data have been collected in the Bering-Chukchi-Beaufort region. For the period summer 2009 through summer 2010 alone, a total of 69 autonomous seafloor recorders sampled the ocean acoustic environment over a 2,300 km transect from the Bering Sea (62.2°N, -174.6°W) to the Canadian Beaufort Sea (70.8°N, -136.4°W). An initial look at this data by the SOAR acoustic group indicates that holders of this data are amenable to its integration, and insights into relationships between wind, ice, ambient noise and bowhead whale acoustic activity can be obtained, demonstrating the ability to quantify the Arctic's acoustic environment, bowhead whale occurrence patterns, and changing ecosystem dynamics.

The historical Arctic acoustic data sets have already been collected, but are distributed in multiple institutions, exist in different formats on different machines, and remain difficult to combine, though they are of sufficient quality and quantity to do so. Integration of these acoustic data with the broad range of Arctic data collected throughout the same region and years would provide insights into the seasonal and geographic patterns of bowhead, and potentially other marine mammal, occurrence, as well as the dynamics and patterns of ambient noise throughout the region over recent decades. Timely access to these acoustic data has been dramatically improved and efficient analyses of very large acoustic data are now readily possible as a result of today's technologies, so that the full value of these extensive data sets can be used to maximum benefit.

This study will improve understanding of historical bowhead whale occurrence patterns to quantify and explain the multiple factors influencing the dynamics of the Alaskan arctic acoustic ecosystem.

Objectives: The objectives of this study are to:

- Quantify the seasonal acoustic occurrence of bowhead whales (and bearded seals, beluga whales and walrus as available) along with spatio-temporal variability in the acoustic environment; and
- Test the hypothesis that the dynamics of certain factors (*e.g.* percent ice cover and ocean temperature) directly correlate with changes in bowhead whale occurrence patterns and features of the acoustic environment.

Methods: This study will develop a single database assembled from all available acoustic data and associated metadata collected from the Bering Sea to the Canadian Beaufort Sea regions from 1978 to the present. This will entail converting the acoustic data into a standardized digital format and establishing their metadata in a user-accessible (online), professionally managed database system. Advanced analytic and data visualization techniques will be used to quantify the seasonal acoustic occurrences of bowhead whales (and potentially other marine mammal species, such as bearded seals, beluga whales, walrus) and determine the spatio-temporal variability in the acoustic environment. A suite of advanced, user-friendly analytical and visualization tools will be developed to facilitate data access. Analyses may focus on the last decade initially, as it holds the greatest level of spatial and temporal acoustic sampling, and abuts the present conditions. Collaboration with experts in very large data systems and advanced data analytics is encouraged to develop capacity for open access to the data, analyses and visualization tools. This dataset will then be analyzed to assess whether there is a correlation between environmental (and if available anthropogenic) factors with bowhead whale (and if available other marine mammal species) acoustic occurrence, and to describe the spatial and temporal extent of existing patterns.

Revised Date: September 2014

Environmental Studies Program: Alaska Annual Studies Plan FY 2015

Region: Alaska

Planning Area(s): Chukchi Sea

Title: The Beluga Hunts in Point Lay and Wainwright, Alaska

BOEM Information Need(s) to be Addressed: Point Lay and Wainwright are proximate to OCS oil and gas exploration in the Chukchi Sea. This study seeks to document the annual beluga whale hunts at Point Lay and Wainwright and explore the reasons why the Iñupiat select beluga as a traditional food source. This information will provide important baseline information for NEPA documentation, planning, and policy.

Approx. Cost: TBD

Period of Performance: FY 2016-2018

Description:

Background: Currently, little information exists about the annual Point Lay and Wainwright beluga hunts, other than they occurs every year and involve hunters herding the mammals. At Point Lay, the smallest of the Iñupiat communities on the North Slope coast, the belugas are herded into Kasegluk Lagoon to be dispatched near the village. The herding of beluga at Wainwright has not been described and is not understood. Studies of Traditional Knowledge (TK) have been oriented toward learning what the Iñupiat know about beluga whale behavior rather than Iñupiat behavior and practice toward beluga subsistence hunting. A review of the literature indicates that beluga oil and meat require a number of steps to process and preserve, and that while the *maktaaq* is considered desirable; the black meat (dried beluga meat) was used as dog food. Sled dog teams have been replaced by snowmachines, and the question that comes to mind is why the people go to such lengths annually to herd and harvest beluga whales.

There is a need to document this poorly understood marine mammal subsistence use that endures among the Iñupiat and reaches an apogee at Point Lay. The objectives of this study are to address the following hypothesis:

H1 The annual Point Lay beluga hunt endures because beluga is considered to be a delicacy among the Iñupiat.

The study will answer questions such as these:

- Document the hunt – how is the hunt organized? Are there differences between the Point Lay and Wainwright beluga hunts? Are there formal boat crews? Is the captain an *umeliak* (head of a corporate group)? How fluid are the whaling crews? What is the crew demography? How do hunters communicate within and between crews? How do hunters communicate with the village? What sized boat and what type of boat is used? How do hunters know when the beluga whales are migrating in the vicinity of the outer banks of Kasegluk Lagoon? How do they know how to select the number of whales to herd into Kasegluk Lagoon? How do

they herd the belugas? What weapons are used to harvest belugas? Where are the whales harvested?

- How many beluga are considered enough? What constitutes a “share?” How is the beluga shared within and outside of the community? Are specific methods used to prepare the meat? Is the blubber rendered? Are produced shares (rendered oil; dried meat) or raw shares distributed within the community? What about distributions outside of the community? To whom is an exchange made and in return for what?
- How is the beluga carcass managed? Is it burned, buried, or disposed of in the sea? Are any body parts saved? If so, what, and why?
- What is the body of Traditional Knowledge about the belugas?? What are the specific nutritive qualities of beluga? Is this a species that people use on-ice because it provides extra warmth? Does it impart any special health properties? Why do people eat the beluga? Is beluga meat, oil, and/or *maktaa* desirable and if so, why? Are specific persons associated with exemplary preparation techniques? What specific skills and talents do they bring to the job? Is there a feast to celebrate a successful hunt? Are there taboos associated with beluga whale hunting, food preparation, or consumption?

Methods: The Principal Investigator will obtain community and regional support and provide documentation to this effect to BOEM. The study will include discussions with active hunters through the use of conventional ethnographic participant-observation and snowball sampling techniques. Capacity building within the community will be encouraged through the hiring and training of local people to provide assistance. Determine the type of honoraria that would be most suitable for the project and the participants. Dialogue in advance of the hunt with the people of Point Lay about which questions are valid, what other questions or documentation they would like included for the benefit of future generations, potential key informants to initiate the snowball technique and the like. The researcher(s) will have established or will need to establish a trusting enough relationship with the citizens of Point Lay to obtain key elements for the study. Over two seasons, the study will provide key informants in each boat crew with GPS equipped with cameras to document sightings, strikes, and harvest waypoints and photographs of interest. Researchers will be present at Point Lay to document through notes, interviews, photographs, and videos the hunt, including butchering, secondary processing, TK, and distribution of beluga. Both men and women will be interviewed. Findings, maps, photographs, and geospatial data will be incorporated in a report.

Revised Date: September 2014

SECTION 3.0 TOPICAL AREAS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

This section presents a general forecast of significant topical issues and concerns to be addressed by studies for FY 2017 and beyond. In general, these topics conform with the research themes of the ESP. Due to the great differences existing between Alaskan environments and other OCS areas, the uniqueness of issues in Alaska has dictated the need to anticipate new topical areas for implementation. These projects will focus on BOEM mission needs within the context of increasing offshore exploration and development and production, as well as potential trends in a changing climate.

Many of the studies proposed for FY 2015 and FY 2016 address the topical areas described below. These will be re-assessed as part of the FY 2016 planning process.

As noted in Section 1.2 of this document, the *Proposed Final Outer Continental Shelf Oil & Gas Leasing Program 2012-2017* (USDOJ, BOEM, 2012) pointed to a need for further development of scientific information prior to additional leasing. Particular topics include the sensitive habitats, unique conditions, and distinctive subsistence hunting and fishing activities in the Arctic, as well as the oil and gas resource potential. Development of additional information for the Cook Inlet Planning Area is also needed to support updated analysis of the potential effects of OCS activities on its environment and uses in anticipation of proposed Lease Sale 244.

3.1 Climate Change

Climate change is accelerating in the Arctic, leading to a rare but true baseline environmental change. In recent years, the extent of summer ice cover is decreasing more rapidly than was predicted by most global change models. The extent, duration, and thickness of summer ice cover in the Arctic region have decreased to record historical lows. The loss of ice cover is causing changes to both physical oceanography and ecosystem productivity and has significant ramifications for marine mammals, bird and fish species that live on, below, or near the ice.

Climate change will also lead to altered water chemistry. In particular, the average pH of the surface ocean is projected to decrease by as much as 0.5 pH units by 2100 in the Arctic due to the uptake of excess carbon dioxide (Ciais et al., 2013), which will likely produce substantial habitat stresses for calcifying marine organisms. In addition, higher water temperatures can cause decreased oceanic dissolved oxygen levels, while at the same time leading to increased biological production and decomposition and potentially altering the current balance of the marine ecosystem.

Oceanic current patterns in the Arctic, especially in nearshore regions, are strongly influenced by climatological factors such as winds, river runoff and sea ice coverage. The rapid changes in each of these factors that are now occurring could lead to drastic alterations of the surface current fields. Oil-spill trajectory analyses performed by BOEM are based on surface current data derived from ocean circulation hindcast models. As climate change continues, oil-spill trajectory modeling may need to be updated on a more frequent basis.

Climate change also entrains many socio-economic issues. Some immediate concerns include: increased shoreline erosion and permafrost melt that threatens arctic villages and infrastructure; changes in distribution and availability of hunted subsistence species; and potential changes in commercial and subsistence fisheries as commercial species such as salmon move north. In consideration of such basic transition, scientists are challenged to project how climate change effects will interact with OCS activities in the Arctic over the next 25-50 years.

3.2 Air Quality

In December 2011, Congress transferred jurisdiction and authority for the control of air emissions on the OCS in the Beaufort and Chukchi seas from the EPA to BOEM. While implementing this authority, BOEM will need air quality monitoring information to assess the cumulative air quality impact of off-shore Arctic oil and gas activity and to support compliance with the OCSLA and environmental justice initiatives.

3.3 Physical Oceanography

An ongoing challenge in the Alaska OCS Region is the need for better, finer scale circulation and oil-spill models and higher resolution data. This need is underscored by the rapidly changing conditions in the Arctic. Continued development and application of state-of-the-art circulation models is important for future OSRA-based EIS analyses.

Improvements are also needed in sea ice aspects of the modeling. The resolution of ice models and ice data needs to be increased to address the propagation of fine scale non-random interactions across hundreds of miles of pack ice in the case of ice leads, as evidenced by recent improvements in satellite oceanography.

A better understanding of the first order physics controlling regional circulation and ice conditions within the U.S. Beaufort and Chukchi seas, as well as interactions with the Arctic basin and Canadian Beaufort, would inform and improve regional analyses for EISs, EAs, and oil-spill response planning documents. In particular, more information is needed to assess the impact of ice on the nature and amplitude of the upwelling/downwelling and to gain a better understanding of the dynamics associated with river outflow plumes, especially under ice.

3.4 Fate and Effects

The Alaska Region has been collecting baseline biological and chemical monitoring data in the Beaufort Sea since the 1980s, first under the BSMP and more recently through the suite of ANIMIDA studies. Similar monitoring work has been ongoing in the Chukchi Sea since 2008, through COMIDA-CAB and the Hanna Shoal Ecosystem Study. The need for additional monitoring will continue to be re-evaluated as oil and gas development in the Alaska Region OCS evolves.

Available information about input of hydrocarbon to the environment through natural oil seeps in the Beaufort and Chukchi seas is quite limited. Identification of the location and extent of these seeps, as well as information on the chemical composition and

weathering characteristics of these oils, would provide additional insight for analysis of potential effects from oil spills. The presence of natural oil seeps is indicative of organisms adapted to metabolize the hydrocarbons. More information is needed about hydrocarbon-consuming organisms resident in the Arctic.

3.5 Marine Mammals and Protected Species

Oil and gas-related activities, including production at the Northstar site and other potential sites, may lead to risks of oil spills from buried pipelines, other discharges, noise from various industrial and support activities, and increased human interaction with arctic offshore species. Species protected under the ESA, MMPA and the Migratory Bird Treaty Act are of particular concern if impacted by such factors. Study of the effects of oil and gas-related activities on protected mammals and the need for monitoring of endangered species are expected to continue. Related to this is the need for assessment of how any changes in the bowhead whale migration's distance from shore could relate to subsistence success (see below). Future bowhead whale studies are expected to continue to explore use of satellite tagging for information on bowhead whale residence times in development areas. BOEM anticipates pursuit of new opportunities to obtain and update information on bowhead behavior in response to industrial noise through the use of appropriate research partnerships.

Effects of construction activities on polar bears, especially on denning bears, and concerns about the adequacy of information about all age/sex categories of the bear population will need to be addressed by additional research. Several ongoing studies are expected to lead to recommendations for additional information regarding polar bears and continued study of the polar bear population's vulnerability to oil spills through improved models.

Other key subsistence species potentially exposed to short-term or cumulative impact factors for which behavioral or monitoring studies may be needed include beluga whales, walrus, ringed seals, ribbon seals and bearded seals.

3.6 Marine Fish Migrations, Recruitment and Essential Fish Habitat

BOEM needs information to assess and manage the potential environmental effects of offshore development on marine fish. More detailed information about the biology and ecology of many marine fish species inhabiting the existing and future Alaska leased areas would be especially useful. The highest priority BOEM information needs include species presence, distribution, abundance and potential effects of oil spills, particularly during periods when ice is present. As offshore oil development interest expands to deeper and more widespread areas, additional fisheries information is required.

As a result of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act, effects on Essential Fish Habitat must be evaluated. In the Bering and Chukchi Seas, more information is needed to evaluate Essential Fish Habitats in the Chukchi Sea as commercial fish species move northward from the Bering Sea. Beaufort Sea waters are also considered Essential Fish Habitat for salmon, and future research on salmonid

reproduction in Beaufort Sea drainages is indicated to clarify environmental assessment and mitigation needs.

Seismic exploration and its effects on fish is a high-priority issue for Arctic residents. More information regarding the effects of seismic exploration on the health, behavior, distribution, and migration of the numerous important fish species of the Beaufort and Chukchi seas would be valuable for NEPA analyses.

Alaska Natives are concerned that OCS activities will affect subsistence fish populations and reduce availability for subsistence harvest. Consequently, additional research on arctic fisheries and recruitment to nearshore feeding populations are an important consideration. Several fish species used for subsistence migrate through, or are found in, the Northstar and Liberty areas of the Beaufort Sea, including arctic and least cisco, Dolly Varden, arctic char, and humpback and broad whitefish. Intermittent occurrences of pink and chum salmon also take place in Beaufort coastal waters.

A need for more information on the forage fish resources and their relation to apex predators in the Bering, Chukchi and Beaufort seas is also indicated. A good understanding of the seasonal distribution, abundance and habitat use of forage fish, including key spawning and migration events that quickly transfer large amounts of energy to upper trophic levels, is fundamentally important to monitoring the potential environmental impacts associated with offshore development.

3.7 Subsistence

Residents of the North Slope coastal communities frequently express concern about cumulative impacts of offshore and onshore developments on their subsistence way of life. Some of the concerns of the Iñupiat include diminished access to hunting and fishing areas around oil industry infrastructure, reduced harvests, increased hunter efforts, increased hunter cost and general food security. How, and to what degree, subsistence activities have been affected by industry infrastructure and industry activity is a concern that will continue to be further addressed by additional research. Consideration of cumulative impacts is an important issue for BOEM in preparing NEPA documents.

Aggregate effects research also encompasses a broader set of issues concerning how the Iñupiat society has been potentially affected. Relevant issues include a wide range of topics, such as the changing relationship between the cash economy and household subsistence activities, changing sources of anxiety and stress at multiple levels of organization, potential changes in sharing of subsistence resources and in the recruitment of youth into subsistence activities. Social indicators should be maintained to serve as a basis for estimating long-term aggregate impacts.

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APPENDIX: U.S. ARCTIC RESEARCH PLAN: Intersection with BOEM Environmental Studies

This table is organized to display recent BOEM-directed research as it supports the national Arctic Research Plan FY2013-2017, issued by the Executive Office of the President, National Science and Technology Council, February 2013. The Arctic Research Plan was produced by the Interagency Arctic Research Policy Committee (IARPC) in recognition of responsibilities described in the Arctic Research Policy Act of 1984. IARPC activities are chaired by the National Science Foundation and serve to coordinate science and technology policy across diverse Federal institutions. Chapter 3 of the Arctic Research Plan (ARP) discusses each numbered item identified in the table below, and can be accessed from the White House web portal here. The Arctic Research Plan directly supports the Implementation Plan for the National Strategy for the Arctic Region, issued in January 2014.

ARP Item	Research Topic	BOEM Partner	BOEM Funding	Study Duration	Key Words
3.1	Understand Sea-ice Processes, Ecosystem Processes, Ecosystem Services, and Climate Feedbacks In The Beaufort and Chukchi Seas And The Contiguous Arctic Ocean				
3.1.1	Develop a framework of observations and modeling to support forecasting of sea-ice extent on seasonal to annual scales for operational and research needs				
	Characterization of the Circulation on the continental Shelf Areas of the Northeast Chukchi and Western Beaufort Seas	UAF	\$5,056,252	2012 - 2016	high frequency radar, ocean currents, gliders, drifters, Barrow Canyon
	Ecosystem Observations in the Chukchi Sea: Biophysical Mooring and Climate Modeling	NOAA	\$2,068,928	2010 - 2015	ice coverage, forecast
	Enhanced Verification and Interpretation of Freeze-up Conditions for the Northeast Chukchi Shelf: Field Observations and Process Studies; Freeze-up Forecasts	UAF	\$1,995,000	2014 - 2019	sea ice forecasting, sea ice hind cast, freeze-up, Burger drill site
	Application of High Frequency Radar to Potential Hydrocarbon Development Areas in the Northeast Chukchi Sea	UAF	\$1,056,322	2009-2014	surface currents, Barrow Canyon, circulation
	Mapping and Characterization of Recurring Polynyas and Landfast Ice in the Chukchi Sea	UAF	\$461,404	2009 - 2012	ice leads, landfast ice, breakouts
	Satellite-Tracked Drifter Measurements in the Northeast Chukchi Sea	UAF	\$459,892	2011- 2015	ocean currents, current velocities
	Development and Testing of a Low-Cost Satellite Tracked Ice Drifter for Arctic Alaska	UAF-CMI	\$433,409	2014 - 2017	ice velocities, model validation
	Development of an accurate model of the Beaufort and Chukchi Ice Drift and Dispersion for Forecasting Spill Trajectories and Providing Decision Support for Spill Response	UAF-CMI	\$359,078	2013 -2016	spill response, ice velocities, ice deformation, convergence zone
	Adaptation of Arctic Circulation Model	Rutgers	\$349,999	2010 - 2012	ocean currents, ice coverage, hind cast
3.1.2	Identify study sites in the Beaufort and Chukchi Seas and the contiguous Arctic Ocean where climate feedbacks are active				
	Bowhead Whale feeding Variability in the Western Alaskan Beaufort Sea: Oceanography and Feeding (BOWFEST)	NOAA/ Others	\$8,095,000	2006 - 2013	feeding, variability, behavior, Cross Island, Barrow , aircraft, tagging
	Hanna Shoal Ecosystem Study	UT-Austin	\$5,665,144	2011 - 2016	food web, ocean currents, species distribution, diversity
	Characterization of the Circulation on the	UAF	\$5,056,252	2012 - 2016	high frequency radar,

ARP Item	Research Topic	BOEM Partner	BOEM Funding	Study Duration	Key Words
	Continental Shelf Areas of the Northeast Chukchi and Western Beaufort Seas				ocean currents, gliders, drifters, Barrow Canyon
	Arctic Whale Ecology Study: Use of the Chukchi Sea by Endangered Baleen and other Whales (ARCWEST)	NOAA	\$4,502,000	2012 - 2017	Smith Bay, Barrow Canyon, whale distribution, habitat, Barrow arch, nutrients
	Chukchi Acoustic, Oceanography and Zooplankton Study: Hanna Shoal (Extension of CHAOZ)	NOAA	\$3,933,671	2014 - 2017	passive acoustic, zooplankton detection, TAPS-6
	ANIMIDA III: Contaminants, Sources, and Bioaccumulation	Olgoonik/ Fairweather	\$2,700,000	2013 - 2017	monitoring, sediment, bivalves, amphipods, hydrocarbons
	Ecosystem Observations in the Chukchi Sea: Biophysical Mooring and Climate Modeling	NOAA	\$2,068,928	2010 - 2015	ice coverage, forecast
	Application of High Frequency Radar to Potential Hydrocarbon Development Areas in the Northeast Chukchi Sea	UAF	\$1,056,322	2009-2014	surface currents, Barrow Canyon, ocean currents
	Biogeochemical Assessment of the OCS Arctic Waters: Current Status and Vulnerability to Climate Change	UAF-CMI	\$756,704	2008 - 2014	north Aleutian Basin, hydrographic, climate, net ecosystem production
	Toward a Predictive Model of Arctic Coastal Retreat in a Warming Climate, Beaufort Sea, Alaska	NOPP	\$577,586	2006-2010	coastal erosion, bluff retreat, wave modeling, thermal modeling
	Mapping and Characterization of Recurring Polynyas and Landfast Ice in the Chukchi Sea	UAF	\$461,404	2009 - 2012	ice leads, landfast ice, breakouts
	Wading Shorebirds Habitats, Food Resources, Associated Infauna, Sediment Characteristics and Bioremediation Potential of Resident Microbiota of Deltaic Mudflats	UAF	\$365,236	2011 - 2015	population structure, chemical footprint, Jago River, Okpilak River, Canning River
	ANIMIDA III: Arctic Kelp Communities in the Beaufort Sea: Sentinels of Long-Term Change	UT-Austin	\$128,774	2014 - 2017	cANIMIDA, Camden Bay, chemical footprint, biota, sediments
	Sea Level Measurements along the Alaskan Chukchi and Beaufort Coasts	UAF-CMI	\$72,178	2014 - 2017	ocean currents, storm surges
3.1.3	Complete deployment of a Distributed Biological Observatory in the Arctic Ocean to create long-term data sets on biological, physical, and chemical variability, change, and ecosystem response				
	Hanna Shoal Ecosystem Study	UT-Austin	\$5,665,144	2011 - 2016	food web, ocean currents, species distribution, diversity
	Passive Acoustic Detection and Monitoring of Endangered Whales in the Arctic (CHAOZ)	NOAA	\$4,304,300	2010 - 2015	tracking, cetaceans, climate modeling, hydrophone array, biophysical moorings
	Chukchi Acoustic, Oceanography and Zooplankton Study: Hanna Shoal (Extension of CHAOZ)	NOAA	\$3,933,671	2014 - 2017	passive acoustic, zooplankton detection, TAPS-6
	Chukchi Sea Offshore Monitoring in Drilling Area: Chemistry and Benthos	UT-Austin	\$2,887,495	2008 - 2012	benthic biota, food web, sediment, contaminants
	ANIMIDA III: Contaminants, Sources, and Bioaccumulation	Olgoonik/ Fairweather	\$2,700,000	2013 - 2017	monitoring, sediment, bivalves, amphipods, hydrocarbons
	Arctic Marine Biodiversity Observing Network for Ecosystem Monitoring (Chukchi Sea)	Industry/ NOAA	\$1,500,000	2014 - 2019	microbes, plankton, meiofauna, epibenthic, fishes, birds, mammals, food web
3.1.4	Develop integrated ecosystem research in the Beaufort and Chukchi Seas				

ARP Item	Research Topic	BOEM Partner	BOEM Funding	Study Duration	Key Words
	Distribution and Relative Abundance of Marine Mammals in the Chukchi Sea and the Fall Migration of Bowhead Whales in the Beaufort Sea	NOAA	\$14,586,585	2011 - 2016	pinnipeds, cetaceans, migration, satellite-track, tags, aerial, abundance
	Hanna Shoal Ecosystem Study	UT-Austin	\$5,665,144	2011 - 2016	food web, ocean currents, species distribution, diversity
	Passive Acoustic Detection and Monitoring of Endangered Whales in the Arctic (CHAOZ)	NOAA	\$4,304,300	2010 - 2015	tracking, cetaceans, climate modeling, hydrophone array, biophysical moorings
	Chukchi Acoustic, Oceanography and Zooplankton Study: Hanna Shoal (Extension of CHAOZ)	NOAA	\$3,933,671	2014 - 2017	passive acoustic, zooplankton detection, TAPS-6
	Chukchi Sea Offshore Monitoring in Drilling Area: Chemistry and Benthos	UT-Austin	\$2,887,495	2008 - 2012	benthic biota, food web, sediment chemistry, contaminants
	ANIMIDA III: Contaminants, Sources, and Bioaccumulation	Olgoonik/Fairweather	\$2,700,000	2013 - 2017	monitoring, sediment, bivalves, amphipods, hydrocarbons
	ANIMIDA III: Arctic Kelp Communities in the Beaufort Sea: Sentinels of Long-Term Change	UT-Austin	\$623,661	2012 - 2017	boulder patch, Liberty Prospect, ambient light, Camden Bay
	Distribution of Fish, Crab and Lower Trophic Communities in the Chukchi Sea Lease Area (Arctic Ecosystem Integrated Survey)	UAF/NOAA	\$2,600,000	2012 - 2016	ecology, demersal, pelagic, invertebrate, food-web
	Trophic Links: Forage Fish, their Prey, and Ice Seals in the Northeast Chukchi Sea	UAF-CMI	\$532,173	2009 - 2013	food web, isotope, fish, seal, benthic, demersal, pelagic, arctic cod
	Genomics of Arctic Cod: A Sentinel Species in a Changing Environment	USGS	\$300,000	2014 - 2017	genetics, genomics, transcriptomics, arctic cod, boreogadus saida
	Distribution and Habitat Use of Fish in the Nearshore Ecosystem of the Beaufort and Chukchi Sea	NOAA	\$184,000	2012 - 2016	nearshore habitat diversity, diet, temperature, salinity, Peard Bay, baseline
	Epifaunal Communities in the Central Beaufort Sea	UAF-CMI	\$123,310	2008 - 2012	epibenthic, abundance, species, biomass, trawl, voucher specimens
	Population Connectivity and Larval dispersal in Bering, Chukchi and Beaufort Sea Snow Crab Populations: Estimating Spatial Scales of Disturbance Impacts	UAF-CMI	\$19,787	2009 -2011	population structure, genetic variation, microsatellite, mitochondrial, phylogenetic
3.2	Understand Terrestrial Ice Processes, Ecosystem Processes, Ecosystem Services, And Climate Feedbacks In The Arctic				
3.2.1	Perform glacial-process studies targeting specific dynamic regimes				
	Toward a Predictive Model of Arctic Coastal Retreat in a Warming Climate, Beaufort Sea, Alaska	NOPP	\$576,586	2006-2010	coastal erosion, bluff retreat, wave modeling, thermal modeling
	Mapping Sea Ice Overflood Using Remote Sensing from Smith Bay to Camden Bay	D.F. Dickins	\$478,017	2006 - 2009	strudel scour, strudel holes, North Slope
	Evaluating Chukchi Sea Trace Metals and Hydrocarbons Sourced from Nearby Coastal Rivers	UAF-CMI	\$232,760	2012 - 2014	polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons, bedload samples
3.2.2	Coordinate and integrate terrestrial ecosystem research efforts				
	Marine Mammal/Physical Oceanography Synthesis (SOAR - Synthesis of Arctic Research)	NOAA	\$1,798,459	2011 - 2016	riverine, traditional knowledge, oceanography, marine mammals
	Demography and Behavior of Polar Bears	USGS	\$1,480,767	2009 - 2014	coastline, habitat,

ARP Item	Research Topic	BOEM Partner	BOEM Funding	Study Duration	Key Words
	Summering on Shore in Alaska				Barter Island, Cross Island, demographic, behavior
	ShoreZone Mapping of the North Slope of Alaska	Nuka	\$554,121	2011 - 2015	imagery, groundtruthing, geomorphic, nearshore habitat, mapping
	Wading Shorebirds Habitats, Food Resources, Associated Infauna, Sediment Characteristics and Bioremediation	UAF	\$365,236	2011 - 2016	macrofauna assemblage, littoral zone, interstitial, invertebrates, shorebirds
	Shorebirds and Infaunal Abundance and Distribution on Delta Mudflats along the Beaufort Sea	USGS	\$237,169	2011 - 2015	invertebrate, foraging, shorebirds, sediment, chemical footprint
	Synthesis of Time-Interval Changes in Trace Metals and Hydrocarbons in Near shore Sediments of the Alaskan Beaufort Sea: A Statistical Analysis	UAF-CMI	\$82,184	2006 - 2007	hydrocarbons, contaminants, sediments, nearshore, mercury
	Biodegradation and Transport of Crude Oil in Sand and Gravel Beaches of Arctic Alaska	UAF-CMI	\$56,310	2013 - 2017	viscosity, sediments, soil profile, wave action, porosity, density
3.2.3	Identify and study key sites where climate feedbacks are active, including permafrost, snow, hydrates, and glaciers				
	Not Jurisdiction of BOEM				
3.2.4	Investigate the frequency and severity of wildland fires in the Arctic				
	Not Jurisdiction of BOEM				
3.2.5	Conduct socio-economic research to understand ecosystem services as increased warming changes the Arctic tundra				
	COMIDA: Impact Monitoring for Offshore Subsistence Hunting	Stephen Braund	\$999,805	2009 - 2013	marine mammal, fish, harvest, climate, sea ice
	The Study of Sharing Networks to Assess the Vulnerabilities of Local Communities to Oil and Gas Development Impacts in Arctic Alaska	UAF	\$785,000	2007 - 2013	subsistence, Wainwright, Kaktovik, Venetie, Iñupiat
	Social Indicators in Coastal Alaska: Arctic Communities	Stephen Braund	\$669,656	2011 - 2012	cultural, health, climate, subsistence
	MAG-PLAN Modification: New Data Collection, Testing and Streamlining of OCS Economic Impact Model for Alaska	Northern Economics	\$588,857	2011 - 2012	modeling review board, economic impact model, cost function
	Subsistence Mapping of Nuiqsut, Kaktovik and Barrow : Past and Present Comparison	Stephen Braund	\$399,994	2004 - 2007	Iñupiat, harvest, traditional knowledge
	Continuation of Impact Assessment for Cross Island Whaling Activities - Beaufort Sea	ASCR	\$328,507	2008 - 2013	Iñupiat, Nuiqsut, bowhead whale, subsistence, migration, hunting
	Subsistence Use and Knowledge of Salmon in Barrow and Nuiqsut	UAF-CMI	\$119,459	2009-2013	Inupiat, fishing, traditional knowledge
3.3	Understand Atmospheric Surface Heat, Energy, And Mass Balances				
3.3.1	Improve understanding of short-lived climate forcers (SLCFs); source regions, direct and indirect effects, and net impact on Arctic warming				
	Ecosystem Observations in the Chukchi Sea: Biophysical Mooring and Climate Modeling	NOAA	\$2,068,928	2010 - 2015	ice coverage, forecast
	Beaufort and Chukchi Seas Mesoscale Meteorology Model	UAF	\$1,784,735	2006 - 2012	forecasting model, winds, meteorological

ARP Item	Research Topic	BOEM Partner	BOEM Funding	Study Duration	Key Words
					stations, buoys
	Arctic Air Quality Impact Assessment Modeling	ERG	\$1,751,036	2013 - 2016	pollutants, air quality
	Biogeochemical Assessment of the OCS Arctic Waters: Current Status and Vulnerability to Climate Change	UAF-CMI	\$756,704	2008 - 2014	Bering Sea, hydrographic, climate, net ecosystem production
	Adaptation of Arctic Circulation Model	Rutgers	\$349,999	2010 - 2012	ocean currents, coupled air-sea-ice, 30-year hindcast
	Sea Level Measurements along the Alaskan Chukchi and Beaufort Coasts	UAF-CMI	\$72,178	2014 - 2017	ocean currents, storm surges
3.3.2	Improve understanding of processes that control the formation, longevity, and physical properties of Arctic clouds, including the effects of—and sensitivities to—aerosols				
	Beaufort and Chukchi Seas Mesoscale Meteorology Modeling	UAF	\$1,784,735	2006 - 2012	forecasting, model, winds, meteorological stations, buoys
	Arctic Air Quality Impact Assessment Modeling	ERG	\$1,751,036	2013 - 2016	pollutants, air quality
3.3.3	Develop an integrated understanding of Arctic atmospheric processes, their impact on the surface energy budget, and their linkages with oceanic, terrestrial, and cryospheric systems				
	Circulation, Cross-Shelf Exchange, Sea Ice, and Marine Mammal Habitats on the Alaskan Beaufort Sea Shelf	NOPP	\$2,948,000	2007-2009	Changing ice conditions, satellite observations, wind-forcing
	Enhanced Verification and Interpretation of Freeze-up Conditions for the Northeast Chukchi Shelf: Field Observations and Process Studies; Freeze-up Forecasts	UAF	\$1,995,000	2014 - 2019	sea ice, forecasting, hind cast, freeze-up, Burger
	Arctic Air Quality Impact Assessment Modeling	ERG	\$1,751,036	2013 - 2016	pollutants, air quality
	Biogeochemical Assessment of the OCS Arctic Waters: Current Status and Vulnerability to Climate Change	UAF-CMI	\$756,704	2008 - 2012	Bering Sea, hydrographic, climate, net ecosystem production
	Adaptation of Arctic Circulation Model	Rutgers	\$349,999	2010 - 2012	ocean currents, coupled air-sea-ice, 30-year hindcast
	Sea Level Measurements along the Alaskan Chukchi and Beaufort Coasts	UAF	\$72,178	2014 - 2017	ocean currents, storm surges
3.4	Integrate And Continue To Deploy A National Arctic Observing System And Promote International Cooperation To Create A Circumpolar Arctic Observing System				
3.4.1	Facilitate observing-system design for the Arctic				
	Distribution and Relative Abundance of Marine Mammals in the Chukchi Sea and the Fall Migration of Bowhead Whales in the Beaufort Sea	NOAA	\$14,586,585	2011 - 2016	pinnipeds, cetaceans, migration, satellite-track, tags, aerial, abundance
	Bowhead Whale feeding Variability in the Western Alaskan Beaufort Sea: Oceanography and Feeding (BOWFEST)	NOAA/ Others	\$8,095,000	2006 - 2013	feeding, variability, behavior, Cross Island, Barrow , aircraft, tagging
	U.S.-Canada Transboundary Fish and Lower Trophic Communities	UAF	\$5,191,125	2012 - 2016	food web, DBO, arctic cod, Canada
	Characterization of the Circulation on the Continental Shelf Areas of the Northeast Chukchi and Western Beaufort Seas	UAF	\$5,056,252	2012 - 2016	high frequency radar, ocean currents, gliders, drifters, Barrow Canyon
	Arctic Whale Ecology Study: Use of the Chukchi Sea by Endangered Baleen and other Whales (ARCWEST)	NOAA	\$4,502,000	2012 - 2017	Smith Bay, Barrow Canyon, distribution, habitat, Barrow Arch, nutrients

ARP Item	Research Topic	BOEM Partner	BOEM Funding	Study Duration	Key Words
	COMIDA: Factors Affecting the Distribution and Relative Abundance of Endangered Whales: Passive Acoustic Detection and Monitoring of Endangered Whales in the Arctic	NOAA	\$4,304,300	2010 - 2015	marine mammals, zooplankton, TAPS-6
	Chukchi Acoustic, Oceanography and Zooplankton Study: Hanna Shoal (Extension of CHAOZ)	NOAA	\$3,933,671	2014 - 2017	passive acoustic, zooplankton detection, TAPS-6
	ANIMIDA III: Contaminants, Sources, and Bioaccumulation	Olgoonik/ Fairweather	\$2,700,000	2013 - 2017	monitoring, sediment, bivalves, amphipods, hydrocarbons
	Distribution of Fish, Crab and Lower Trophic Communities in the Chukchi Sea Lease Area (Arctic Ecosystem Integrated Survey)	UAF/NOAA	\$2,600,000	2012 - 2016	ecology, demersal, pelagic, invertebrate, food-web
	Beaufort Sea Marine Fish Monitoring: Pilot Survey in the Central Beaufort Sea	UAF	\$1,764,252	2010 - 2015	food web, isotope, Barrow Canyon, arctic cod, benthic, pelagic, demersal
	Ice Seal Movements and Foraging: Village-based Satellite Tracking of Ringed and Bearded Seals	ADF&G	\$1,174,994	2013 - 2017	pinnipeds, tagging, Kotzebue, habitat, ice seal committee, bathymetry, ice edge
	Application of High-Frequency Radar to Potential Hydrocarbon Development Areas in the Northeast Chukchi Sea	UAF	\$1,056,322	2009 - 2014	surface currents, Barrow Canyon, Barrow, Wainwright, Point Lay, upwelling
	COMIDA: Impact Monitoring for Offshore Subsistence Hunting	Stephen Braund	\$999,805	2009 - 2013	Iñupiat, Point Lay, Wainwright, gps, sea ice, traditional knowledge
	Study of Sharing Networks to Assess the Vulnerabilities of Local Communities to O&G Development Impacts in Arctic Alaska	UAF	\$785,000	2007 - 2013	subsistence, Wainwright, Kaktovik, Venetie, Iñupiat
	Abundance Estimates of Ice Associated Seals: Bering Sea Populations that Inhabit the Chukchi Sea during Open-Water Period	NOAA	\$713,010	2012 - 2014	Russia, logistics support
3.4.2	Assess local-resident priorities for addressing change				
	Quantitative Description of Potential Impacts of OCS Activities on Bowhead Whale Hunting and Subsistence in the Beaufort Sea	EDAW	\$702,445	2001 - 2006	Iñupiat, Barrow, Kaktovik, Nuiqsut, Savoonga, household survey
	Social Indicators in Coastal Alaska: Arctic Communities	Stephen Braund	\$669,659	2011 - 2012	household survey, traditional knowledge, health, subsistence
	Trophic Links: Forage Fish, Their Prey, and Ice Seals in the northeast Chukchi Sea	UAF-CMI	\$532,173	2009 - 2014	food web, isotope, fish, seal, benthic, demersal, pelagic, arctic cod
	Subsistence Mapping of Nuiqsut, Kaktovik and Barrow : Past and Present Comparison	Stephen Braund	\$399,994	2004 - 2007	Iñupiat, harvest, traditional knowledge
	Aggregate Effects Research & Environmental Mitigation Monitoring of Oil Operations in the Vicinity of Nuiqsut	Stephen Braund	\$373,298	2009 - 2013	Iñupiat, Nuiqsut, oil, gas, subsistence, harvest, mitigation
	Continuation of Impact Assessment for Cross Island Whaling Activities - Beaufort Sea	ASCR	\$328,507	2008 - 2013	Iñupiat, Nuiqsut, bowhead, subsistence, gps, harvest, hunt
	Researching Technical Dialogue with Alaskan Coastal Communities: Analysis of the Social, Cultural, Linguistic, and Institutional Parameters of Public/Agency Communication Patterns	EDAW	\$299,878	2004 - 2009	NEPA analysis, linguistics, Iñupiat, development, focus groups
	Dispersal Patterns and Summer Ocean Distribution of Adult Dolly Varden from the Wulik River, Alaska, using Satellite Tags.	UAF-CMI	\$146,510	2012 - 2013	fish, distribution, migration, subsistence,

ARP Item	Research Topic	BOEM Partner	BOEM Funding	Study Duration	Key Words
	Subsistence Use and Knowledge of Beaufort Salmon Populations	UAF-CMI	\$119,459	2009 - 2012	Iñupiat, traditional knowledge, Barrow, Nuiqsut, whitefish
3.4.3	Combine in-situ and remotely sensed observations of sea ice with local community and traditional knowledge				
	Crude Oil Infiltration and Movement in First-year Sea Ice: Impacts on Ice-associated Biota and Physical Constraints	UAF-CMI	\$298,214	2014 - 2017	oil spill, temperature, salinity, brine channel network, sea ice
	Distribution and Abundance of Select Trace Metals in Chukchi and Beaufort Sea Ice	UAF-CMI	\$262,073	2013 - 2016	trace metals, sea ice, laboratory, seawater, Camden Bay
	Traditional Knowledge Implementation: Accessing Arctic Community Panels of Subject Matter Experts	Pending			
3.4.4	Conduct long-term monitoring of key outlet glaciers and tidewater glaciers				
	Not Jurisdiction of BOEM				
3.4.5	Monitor the biological and physical state of the Arctic marine environment				
	Distribution and Relative Abundance of Marine Mammals in the Chukchi Sea and the Fall Migration of Bowhead Whales in the Beaufort Sea	NOAA	\$14,586,585	2011 - 2016	pinnipeds, cetaceans, migration, satellite-track, tags, aerial, abundance
	Hanna Shoal Ecosystem Study	UT-Austin	\$5,665,144	2011 - 2016	oceanography, benthic biota, food web, sediment chemistry, contaminants
	COMIDA: Factors Affecting the Distribution and Relative Abundance of Endangered Whales: Passive Acoustic Detection and Monitoring of Endangered Whales in the Arctic	NOAA	\$4,304,300	2010 - 2015	marine mammals, zooplankton, biophysical conditions
	Chukchi Acoustic, Oceanography and Zooplankton Study: Hanna Shoal (Extension of CHAOZ)	NOAA	\$3,933,671	2014 - 2017	passive acoustic, zooplankton detection, TAPS-6
	Chukchi Sea Offshore Monitoring in Drilling Area: Chemistry and Benthos	UT-Austin	\$2,887,495	2008 - 2012	benthic biota, food web, sediment, contaminants
	ANIMIDA III: Contaminants, Sources, and Bioaccumulation	Olgoonik/Fairweather	\$2,700,000	2013 - 2017	monitoring, sediment, bivalves, amphipods, hydrocarbons
	Satellite Tracking of Bowhead Whales: Habitat Use, Passive Acoustic and Environmental Monitoring	ADF&G	\$2,699,857	2012 - 2015	tagging, Saint Lawrence, Point Hope, Canada, sensors, monitoring, ambient
	Distribution of Fish, Crab and Lower Trophic Communities in the Chukchi Sea Lease Area (Arctic Ecosystem Integrated Survey)	UAF/NOAA	\$2,600,000	2012 - 2016	ecology, demersal, pelagic, invertebrate, food-web
	Beaufort Sea Marine Fish Monitoring: Pilot Survey in the Central Beaufort Sea	UAF	\$1,764,252	2010 - 2014	food web, isotope, Barrow Canyon, arctic cod, benthic, pelagic, demersal
	Ice Seal Movements and Foraging: Village based Satellite Tracking and Acoustic Monitoring of Ringed, Bearded, and Spotted Seals	ADF&G	\$1,174,994	2013 - 2017	satellite, telemetry, habitat, mapping
	COMIDA: Impact Monitoring for Offshore Subsistence Hunting	Stephen Braund	\$999,805	2009 - 2013	Chukchi Sea, Iñupiat, harvest, Point Lay, Wainwright, boat tracks, traditional knowledge
	Biogeochemical Assessment of the OCS Arctic Waters: Current Status and Vulnerability to Climate Change	UAF-CMI	\$756,704	2008 - 2014	Bering Sea, hydrographic, climate, net ecosystem production
	ANIMIDA III: Arctic Kelp Communities in the Beaufort Sea: Sentinels of Long-Term Change	UT-Austin	\$623,661	2012 - 2017	boulder patch, Liberty Prospect, ambient light, Camden Bay

ARP Item	Research Topic	BOEM Partner	BOEM Funding	Study Duration	Key Words
	Trophic Links: Forage Fish, Their Prey, and Ice Seals in the northeast Chukchi Sea	UAF-CMI	\$532,173	2009 - 2014	food web, isotope, diet, fish, seal, benthic, demersal, pelagic, arctic cod,
	Genomics of Arctic Cod: A Sentinel Species in a Changing Environment	USGS	\$300,000	2014 - 2017	genetics, genomics, transcriptomics, arctic cod, Boreogadus saida
3.4.6	Assess the effects of clouds and atmospheric constituents on surface radiation balance				
	Not Jurisdiction of BOEM				
3.4.7	Assess the impact of terrestrial warming and permafrost thawing on the carbon cycle				
	Not Jurisdiction of BOEM				
3.4.8	Improve data access				
	Distribution of Fish, Crab and Lower Trophic Communities in the Chukchi Sea Lease Area (Arctic Ecosystem Integrated Survey)	UAF/NOAA	\$2,600,000	2012 - 2016	ecology, demersal, pelagic, invertebrate, food-web
	Marine Mammal/Physical Oceanography Synthesis (SOAR - Synthesis of Arctic Research)	NOAA	\$1,798,459	2011 - 2016	traditional knowledge, oceanography, marine mammals
	Enhancement of the Environmental Studies Program Information System and the Multipurpose Marine Cadastre to Provide Environmental Studies Program Data	NOAA	\$1,700,000	2012 - 2015	geospis, database, noaa-csc, geospatial web portal
	Synthesis of Information on the Socioeconomic Effects of Oil and Gas Activities in Alaska	Stephen Braund	\$349,249	2001 - 2006	sociocultural, subsistence, economy, Exxon Valdez
	Developing BOEM's Access to Protected Species Occurrence Data for Impact Analysis and Rulemaking	USGS, NOAA, Duke	\$180,000	2014-2016	bowhead whale, distribution, density, OBIS
	Alaska Marine Science Symposium (co-sponsor)	NPRB	\$100,000	2010 - 2014	workshop, environmental studies program
	Joint Funding Opportunities in Existing Marine Fish Studies: Beaufort Sea Fish and their Trophic Linkages--Literature Search and Synthesis	UAF	\$23,578	2012 - 2012	fish, prey, food web
	Arctic Research Synthesis Conference	BGES	Pending	2014 - 2015	workshop, information transfer
3.4.9	Engage indigenous observers and communities in monitoring environmental parameters				
	Social Indicators in Coastal Alaska: Arctic Communities	Stephen Braund	\$669,659	2011 - 2014	marine mammal, fish, subsistence, harvest,
	ShoreZone Mapping of the North Slope of Alaska	Nuka	\$554,121	2011 - 2015	imagery, groundtruthing, geomorphic, nearshore habitat, mapping
	Subsistence Mapping of Nuiqsut, Kaktovik and Barrow : Past and Present Comparison	Stephen Braund	\$399,994	2004 - 2007	Iñupiat, harvest, traditional knowledge
	Aggregate Effects Research & Environmental Mitigation Monitoring of Oil Operations in the Vicinity of Nuiqsut	Stephen Braund	\$393,490	2009 - 2013	Iñupiat, oil, gas, subsistence, harvest, mitigation
	Analysis of Variation in Abundance of Arctic Cisco in the Colville River	ABR	\$345,520	2004 - 2007	traditional knowledge, Iñupiat, Nuiqsut, fish
	Sea Level Measurements along the Alaskan Chukchi and Beaufort Coasts	UAF-CMI	\$72,178	2014 - 2017	ocean currents, storm surges
	Traditional Knowledge Implementation: Accessing Arctic Community Panels of Subject Matter Experts	Pending			
3.5	Integrate Arctic Regional Models				
3.5.1	Inventory Arctic modeling activities				
	Enhanced Verification and Interpretation of Freeze-up Conditions for the Northeast Chukchi Shelf: Field Observations and Process Studies; Freeze-up Forecasts	UAF	\$1,995,000	2014 - 2019	sea ice forecasting, sea ice hind cast, freeze-up, Burger

ARP Item	Research Topic	BOEM Partner	BOEM Funding	Study Duration	Key Words
	Development of an accurate model of the Beaufort and Chukchi Ice Drift and Dispersion for Forecasting Spill Trajectories and Providing Decision Support for Spill Response	UAF-CMI	\$359,078	2013 -2016	spill response, oil trajectories, ice velocities, ice deformation, convergence zone
	Loss of Well Control Occurrence and Size Estimators for Alaska OCS	Bercha	\$298,540	2012 -2014	risk assessment, oil spill, offshore, onshore
	Update to the Fault Tree for Oil-spill Occurrence Estimators needed Under the Forthcoming BOEM 2012-2017, 5-Year Program	Bercha	\$229,840	2011 - 2016	risk assessment, arctic conditions
	Development of a Very High-resolution Regional Circulation Model of Beaufort Sea Nearshore Areas	Pending			barrier islands, eddies
3.5.2	Encourage coordinated approaches that better represent Arctic processes in Earthsystem models				
	Not Jurisdiction of BOEM				
3.5.3	Build Arctic and subsystem models for coupling with regional and global approaches				
	Beaufort and Chukchi Seas Mesoscale Meteorology Model	UAF	\$1,784,735	2006 - 2012	weather, forecasting, model, surface winds, meteorology, buoys
	Adaptation of Arctic Circulation Model	Rutgers	\$349,999	2010 - 2012	ocean currents, ice coverage, hind cast
	Development of a Very High-resolution Regional Circulation Model of Beaufort Sea Nearshore Areas	Pending			barrier islands, eddies
3.5.4	Develop models of Arctic land ice mass loss, connections to ocean and atmospheric variability, and implications for sea level				
	Not Jurisdiction of BOEM				
3.5.5	Increase Arctic model resolution to improve prediction and inform future research and observations				
	Beaufort and Chukchi Seas Mesoscale Meteorology Model	UAF	\$1,784,735	2006 - 2012	forecasting model, winds, meteorological stations, buoys, WRF
	Development of an accurate model of the Beaufort and Chukchi Ice Drift and Dispersion for Forecasting Spill Trajectories and Providing Decision Support for Spill Response	UAF-CMI	\$359,078	2013 -2016	spill response, oil trajectories, ice velocities, ice deformation, convergence zone
	Adaptation of Arctic Circulation Model	Rutgers	\$349,999	2010 - 2012	ocean currents, ice coverage, hind cast
	Development of a Very High-resolution Regional Circulation Model of Beaufort Sea Nearshore Areas	Pending			
3.5.6	Use insights from models to inform process research; use process research to evaluate and improve models				
	Marine Mammal/Physical Oceanography Synthesis (SOAR - Synthesis of Arctic Research)	NOAA	\$1,798,459	2011 - 2016	riverine, traditional knowledge, oceanography, marine mammals
	Enhanced Verification and Interpretation of Freeze-up Conditions for the Northeast Chukchi Shelf: Field Observations and Process Studies; Freeze-up Forecasts	UAF	\$1,995,000	2014 - 2019	sea ice forecasting, sea ice hind cast, freeze-up, Burger
	Beaufort and Chukchi Seas Mesoscale Meteorology Model	UAF	\$1,784,735	2006 - 2012	forecasting model, winds, meteorological stations, buoys, WRF
	Arctic Tracer Release Experiment: Applications for Mapping Spilled Oil in Arctic Waters	UAF	\$1,249,977	2013 - 2016	dispersed dye , drifters, high frequency radar, gliders, drifters, NOAA

ARP Item	Research Topic	BOEM Partner	BOEM Funding	Study Duration	Key Words
	Development of an accurate model of the Beaufort and Chukchi Ice Drift and Dispersion for Forecasting Spill Trajectories and Providing Decision Support for Spill Response	UAF-CMI	\$359,078	2013 -2016	spill response, oil trajectories, ice velocities, ice deformation, convergence zone
	Adaptation of Arctic Circulation Model	Rutgers	\$349,999	2010 - 2012	ocean currents, ice coverage, hind cast
	Characterization of the Circulation on the continental Shelf Areas of the Northeast Chukchi and Western Beaufort Seas	UAF	\$5,056,252	2012 - 2016	high frequency radar, ocean currents, gliders, drifters, Barrow Canyon
	Ecosystem Observations in the Chukchi Sea: Biophysical Mooring and Climate Modeling	NOAA	\$2,068,928	2010 - 2015	ice coverage, forecast
	Application of High Frequency Radar to Potential Hydrocarbon Development Areas in the Northeast Chukchi Sea	UAF	\$1,056,322	2009-2014	surface currents, Barrow Canyon, circulation
	Mapping and Characterization of Recurring Polynyas and Landfast Ice in the Chukchi Sea	UAF	\$461,404	2009 - 2012	ice leads, landfast ice, breakouts
	Satellite-Tracked Drifter Measurements in the Northeast Chukchi Sea	UAF	\$459,892	2011- 2015	ocean currents, current velocities
	Development and Testing of a Low-Cost Satellite Tracked Ice Drifter for Arctic Alaska	UAF-CMI	\$433,409	2014 - 2017	ice velocities, model validation
	Development of a Very High-resolution Regional Circulation Model of Beaufort Sea Nearshore Areas	Pending			
3.5.7	Integrate Arctic climate-model results with observational validation and verification to understand the principal drivers and uncertainties of Arctic climate changes				
	Ecosystem Observations in the Chukchi Sea: Biophysical Mooring and Climate Modeling	NOAA	\$2,068,928	2010 - 2015	ice coverage, forecast
	Enhanced Verification and Interpretation of Freeze-up Conditions for the Northeast Chukchi Shelf: Field Observations and Process Studies; Freeze-up Forecasts	UAF	\$1,995,000.00	2014 - 2019	sea ice forecasting, sea ice hind cast, freeze-up, Burger
	Satellite-Tracked Drifter Measurements in the Northeast Chukchi Sea	UAF	\$459,892	2011- 2015	ocean currents, current velocities
	ShoreZone Mapping of the North Slope of Alaska	Nuka	\$554,121	2011 - 2015	imagery, groundtruthing, geomorphic, nearshore habitat, mapping
3.6	Assess Strengths And Vulnerabilities Of Arctic Communities Facing The Impacts Of Climate Change And Assist In Developing Adaptation Strategies And Tools To Maximize Sustainability, Well-Being, And Cultural And Linguistic Heritage				
3.6.1	In collaboration with local communities, develop methods for assessing community sustainability and resilience and determine the efficiency of current adaptation strategies				
	The Study of Sharing Networks to Assess the Vulnerabilities of Local Communities to Oil and Gas Development Impacts in Arctic Alaska	UAF	\$785,000	2007 - 2013	subsistence, Wainwright, Kaktovik, Venetie, Iñupiat
	Social Indicators in Coastal Alaska: Arctic Communities	Stephen Braund	\$669,659	2011 - 2014	marine mammal, fish, subsistence, harvest
	Aggregate Effects Research & Environmental Mitigation Monitoring of Oil Operations in the Vicinity of Nuiqsut	Stephen Braund	\$373,298	2009 - 2013	Iñupiat, oil, gas, subsistence, harvest
3.6.2	Identify the current vulnerabilities of Arctic communities and ecosystems to climate change and explore their interactions with socio-economic and other stressors				
	Social Indicators in Coastal Alaska: Arctic Communities	Stephen Braund	\$669,659	2011 - 2014	traditional knowledge, climate change, subsistence, economy,
	Aggregate Effects Research & Environmental Mitigation Monitoring of Oil Operations in the Vicinity of Nuiqsut	Stephen Braund	\$393,490	2009 - 2013	Iñupiat, Nuiqsut, oil, gas, subsistence, harvest, mitigation

ARP Item	Research Topic	BOEM Partner	BOEM Funding	Study Duration	Key Words
	Analysis of Variation in Abundance of Arctic Cisco in the Colville River: Study	ABR	\$345,520	2004 - 2007	traditional knowledge, Iñupiat, Nuiqsut, arctic cisco, climate change
3.6.3	Develop projections of future climate scenarios and demographic conditions to forecast potential strengths and weaknesses of human and ecological systems in the Arctic				
	North Slope Borough Economy: 1975 to Present	Northern Economics	\$145,255	2005 - 2006	employment, income, demography
3.6.4	Assist Arctic communities in documenting, revitalizing, and strengthening indigenous languages and cultural heritage				
	A Year in the Life of a Bowhead Whale: An Animated Film	UAF-CMI	\$87,587	2012 - 2014	Alaska Museum of the North, animated film, production, storyboarding
	Traditional Knowledge Implementation: Accessing Arctic Community Panels of Subject Matter Experts	Pending			
3.7	Understand Factors That Impact Human Health In The Arctic, Including Infectious And Non-Communicable Diseases, Climate Change, Environmental Contamination, And Behavior And Mental-Health Disorders				
3.7.1	Continue to expand circumpolar surveillance and research for infectious diseases, non-communicable diseases, trauma, injury, sanitation services, and indoor air quality to help prevent morbidity and mortality				
	Not Jurisdiction of BOEM				
3.7.2	Continue interagency collaboration to monitor the impacts of climate change and environmental contaminants on human health and wildlife				
	Chukchi Sea Offshore Monitoring in Drilling Area (COMIDA): Chemistry and Benthos	UT-Austin	\$2,887,495	2008 - 2012	benthic biota, food web, sediment chemistry, contaminants
	ANIMIDA III: Contaminants, Sources, and Bioaccumulation	Olgoonik/ Fairweather	\$2,700,000	2013 - 2017	long term monitoring, sediment, bivalves, amphipods, hydrocarbons
	Arctic Air Quality Impact Assessment Modeling	ERG	\$1,751,036	2013 - 2016	pollutants, air quality
	Analysis of Variation in Abundance of Arctic Cisco in the Colville River: Study	ABR	\$345,520	2004 - 2007	traditional knowledge, Iñupiat, Nuiqsut, fish, climate change
	Sensitivity to Hydrocarbons and Baselines of Exposure in Marine Birds on the Chukchi and Beaufort Seas	UAF-CMI	\$194,676	2013 - 2016	marine birds, crude oil, cytochrome p450, 7-ethoxyresorufin-O-deethylase
	ANIMIDA III: Arctic Kelp Communities in the Beaufort Sea: Sentinels of Long-Term Change	UT-Austin	\$128,774	2014 - 2017	cANIMIDA, Camden Bay, chemical fingerprint, biota, sediments
3.7.3	Continue to support investigator-initiated research in major health priority areas such as mental health including substance abuse and suicide, obesity, diabetes, and cancer				
	Not Jurisdiction of BOEM				
3.7.4	Continue to engage indigenous communities and tribal groups in research activities and projects in the Arctic				
	Bowhead Whale feeding Variability in the Western Alaskan Beaufort Sea: Oceanography and Feeding	NOAA/ Others	\$8,095,000	2006 - 2013	feeding, variability, behavior, Cross Island, Barrow, aircraft, tagging
	Satellite Tracking of Bowhead Whales: Habitat Use, Passive Acoustic and Environmental Monitoring	ADF&G	\$2,699,857	2012 - 2015	tagging, Saint Lawrence, Point Hope, Canada,

ARP Item	Research Topic	BOEM Partner	BOEM Funding	Study Duration	Key Words
	Distribution of Fish, Crab and Lower Trophic Communities in the Chukchi Sea Lease Area (Arctic Ecosystem Integrated Survey)	UAF/NOAA	\$2,600,000	2012 - 2016	ecology, demersal, pelagic, invertebrate, food-web
	Ice Seal Movements and Foraging: Village based Satellite Tracking and Acoustic Monitoring of Ringed, Bearded, and Spotted Seals With the TEK component, this should be included here	ADF&G	\$1,174,994	2013 - 2017	Traditional knowledge, satellite telemetry, habitat, satellite mapping
	COMIDA: Impact Monitoring for Offshore Subsistence Hunting	Stephen Braund	\$999,805	2009 - 2013	Iñupiat, harvest, Point Lay, Wainwright, climate, sea ice, traditional knowledge,
	The Study of Sharing Networks to Assess the Vulnerabilities of Local Communities to Oil and Gas Development Impacts in Arctic Alaska	UAF	\$785,000	2007 - 2013	subsistence, Wainwright, Kaktovik, Venetie,
	Social Indicators in Coastal Alaska: Arctic Communities	Stephen Braund	\$669,659	2011 - 2014	communities, economic, cultural, subsistence, Arctic Council
	Subsistence Mapping of Nuiqsut, Kaktovik and Barrow : Past and Present Comparison	Stephen Braund	\$399,994	2004 - 2007	Iñupiat, harvest, traditional knowledge
	Analysis of Variation in Abundance of Arctic Cisco in the Colville River: Study	ABR	\$345,520	2004 - 2007	traditional knowledge, Iñupiat, Nuiqsut, fish, climate change
	Continuation of Impact Assessment for Cross Island Whaling Activities - Beaufort Sea	ASCR	\$328,507	2008 - 2013	Nuiqsut, subsistence, Nuiqsut Whalers Association, Alaska Eskimo Whaling Commission
	Sea Level Measurements along the Alaska Chukchi and Beaufort Coasts	UAF-CMI	\$72,178	2014 - 2017	ocean currents, storm surges

CONTRIBUTING ALASKA OCS REGION STAFF

Chris Campbell, Sociocultural Specialist

Cathy Coon, Marine Biologist

Dr. Heather Crowley, Oceanographer

Nancy Deschu, Fishery Biologist

Carol Fairfield, Marine Ecologist

Dr. Dan Holiday, Wildlife Biologist

Warren Horowitz, Oceanographer

Virginia Raps, Meteorologist

Rick Raymond, Wildlife Biologist

Caryn Smith, Oceanographer

Kate Wedemeyer, Fisheries Oceanographer

Marty Byrne, Cartographer

Dr. Dee Williams, Chief, Environmental Sciences Management Section