

ENVIRONMENTAL STUDIES PROGRAM: Studies Development Plan FY 2013-2015

Region: Alaska

Planning Area(s): Cook Inlet

Title: Cook Inlet Workshop: Information Status & Research Planning
(AK-12-01-02)

BOEM Information Need(s) to be Addressed: The BOEM 5-year leasing program 2012-2017 may consider a lease sale in the Cook Inlet. An OCS Cook Inlet Lease Sale EIS hasn't been undertaken since 2003. This area has a number of natural resources development issues (State and Federal oil/gas, coal production, hydro/kinetic energy), ESA issues (Cook Inlet Beluga Whale) as well as importance for commercial, recreational, and subsistence fishing. In addition there has been a lot of research conducted by State and Federal agencies in the last decade. A workshop would provide a method to identify and gather literature, and identify current research programs, and current resource uses and stakeholder concerns. Information made more accessible by these efforts will be used in NEPA analysis and documentation for Lease Sales, Explorations Plans (EPs), and Development and Production Plans (DPPs), including cumulative impacts, as well as meeting preparations and the writing of new studies descriptions.

Total Cost: TBD

Period of Performance: FY 2013-2014

Conducting Organization: TBD

BOEM Contact: TBD

Description:

Background: Cook Inlet holds promising energy resources by State, Federal, and private industry for oil and gas, coal, and alternative energy. Additionally scientists are accumulating a wealth of information about Cook Inlet oceanography that could prove invaluable in predicting the movement of pollutants and oil spills as resource development is considered. The National Ocean Service's circulation model will be completed in 2013.

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 OCS for alternative energy projects, such as wind, wave, or ocean current facilities. As Cook Inlet holds promising efforts for alternative energy resources this workshop would build on existing information conducted by NOAA/AEA. It would use the new Cook Inlet Response Tool – created by AOOS/CIRCAC, the National Ocean Service (NOS) Circulation model (complete in 2013), and new NOS multibeam data available for Kachemak Bay and Upper Cook Inlet.

Objectives: The objective of this study is to assess the current status of information about the Cook Inlet marine, coastal, and human environment and to prioritize information needs. Topics will include: oceanography and ecosystems; fish and fisheries; seabirds, shorebirds and

waterfowl; marine mammals; socioeconomic and subsistence issues; or other subjects relevant for NEPA analysis.

Methods:

1. Conduct a literature search of material relevant to Cook Inlet authored over the last 15 years. Information will be compiled using available tools, such as Web of Knowledge, and results will be provided in a RefWorks database.
2. Compile a report with GIS maps that summarizes:
 - current research programs in Cook Inlet conducted by Federal and State agencies, industry, non-governmental organizations, etc.
 - current and permitted energy uses in the area, including: oil and gas, coal, wind, hydro-energy
 - other relevant information such as vessel traffic, ESA issues, etc.
3. Hold a facilitated 2-3 day workshop in Anchorage with subject-matter experts, knowledgeable local stakeholders, relevant agency representatives, and BOEM staff to prioritize information needs and evaluate study concepts for future monitoring.

Current Status: Planned new start

Final Report Due: TBD

Publications Completed: None

Affiliated WWW Sites: <http://www.boem.gov/studies/>

Revised Date: December 2012

ESPIS: Environmental Studies Program Information System

All *completed* ESP studies can be found here:

http://www.data.boem.gov/homepg/data_center/other/espis/espisfront.asp