

Environmental Impact Statement on Effects of Oil & Gas Activities (Seismic and Exploratory Drilling) in the Arctic Ocean

**Public Scoping Meeting
Barrow, AK
March 10, 2010**



Office of Protected Resources

NOAA Fisheries



National Marine Fisheries Service

Welcome and Introductions

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Scoping Meeting Agenda

- Information on Scoping Process
- Review of Proposed Action
- NEPA Process
- Activities covered by EIS
- Issues and Concerns
- Next Steps
- Public Comment Period



Statement of Intent

- Analyze the environmental impacts of issuing Incidental Take Authorizations (ITAs) pursuant to sections 101(a)(5)(A) and (D) of the Marine Mammal Protection Act (MMPA)
- Issue ITAs to the oil and gas industry for the taking of marine mammals incidental to offshore exploration activities in Federal and state waters of the U.S. Chukchi and Beaufort Seas



MMPA Definitions

- *Take* = to harass, hunt, capture, kill or collect, or attempt to harass, hunt, capture, kill or collect
- *Harassment* = any act of pursuit, torment, or annoyance which:
 - has the potential to injure (Level A)
 - has the potential to disturb by causing disruption of behavioral patterns, including, but not limited to, migration, breathing, nursing, breeding, feeding, or sheltering (Level B)



Purpose of NEPA

The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) promotes efforts to:

- Minimize impacts to the environment, including the human environment
- Assess environmental impacts of proposed action and a reasonable range of alternatives
- Solicit public comments on issues and alternatives during scoping process



Proposed Action

- Authorize incidental takes allowing industry “the incidental, but not intentional, taking of small numbers of marine mammals” within the Chukchi and Beaufort Seas
- NMFS and MMS must understand consequences of this action on the environment before issuing authorizations
 - Effects on marine mammal species or stocks
 - Effects on communities and subsistence



Requirements of MMPA

Authorizations shall be granted if:

- taking will have a negligible impact on the species or stock(s)
- taking will not have an unmitigable adverse impact on the availability of the species or stock(s) for subsistence uses
- the permissible methods of taking and requirements pertaining to the mitigation, monitoring, and reporting of such takings are set forth



Previous NEPA Documents

- June 28, 2006 – MMS Programmatic Environmental Assessment (PEA) for 2006 Arctic OCS seismic surveys
 - Analyzed effects of 8 concurrent surveys in Beaufort and Chukchi Seas (4 in each planning area)
 - NMFS indicated increased activity and new available science would warrant an EIS
- April 6, 2007 – NMFS and MMS published Draft Programmatic EIS (DPEIS)



Why is new EIS needed?

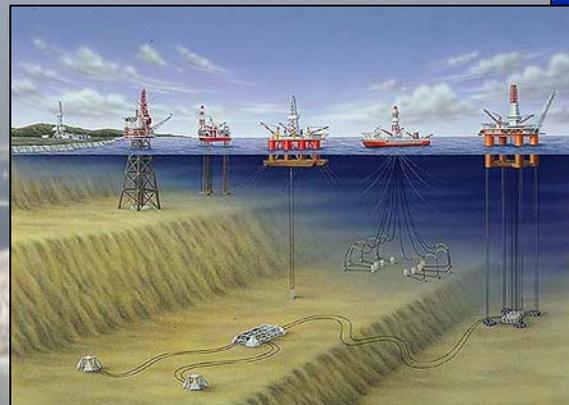
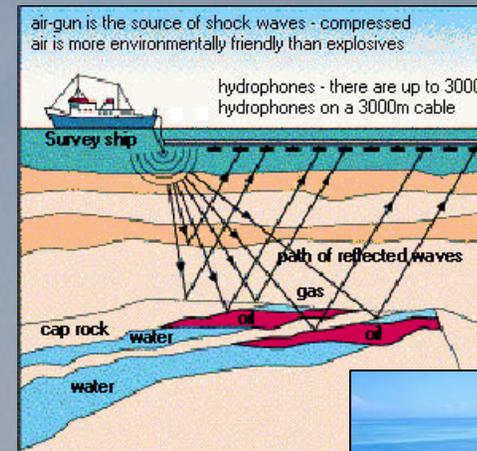
- New information that alters scope, alternatives, and analyses
- Industry suggests increased seismic activity
- Applications have been received for exploratory drilling
- Cumulative impact analysis to address a longer time frame
 - October 2009 – 2007 EIS withdrawn
 - February 2010 – NMFS announces notice of intent to prepare new EIS

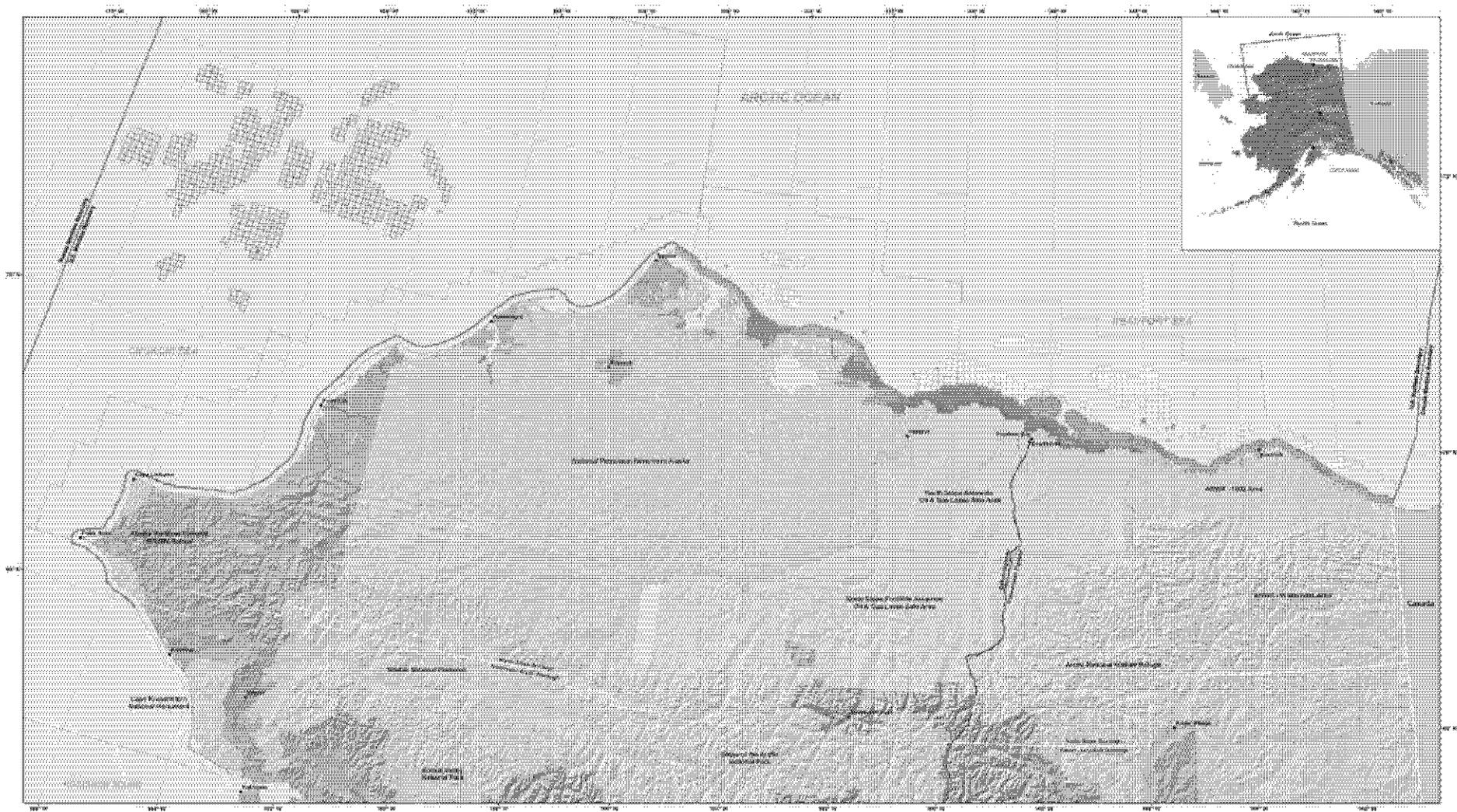


What will EIS include?

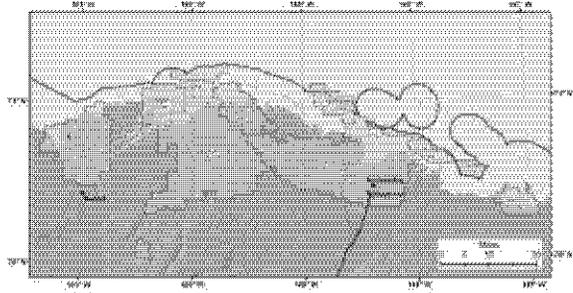
Exploratory activities

- Shallow hazard/site clearance surveys
- 2D/3D seismic surveys
- Exploratory drilling

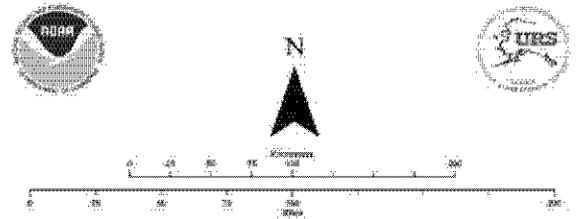




OIL AND GAS UNITS OF THE NORTH SLOPE OF ALASKA



**FEDERAL AND STATE OFFSHORE OIL & GAS LEASES
BEAUFORT & CHUKCHI SEAS**



Map Symbols

- Offshore Oil & Gas Wells
- Federal/State Maritime Boundary (3-Miles Offshore)
- Active State Leases (As of December 1, 2009)
- Beaufort Sea Available State Leases
- Beaufort Sea Lease Sale Boundary
- Active Federal Leases
- Pending Federal Leases
- Beaufort and Chukchi Federal Lease Sale Boundary
- Offshore Oil & Gas Lease Sale Areas
- Federal Administrative Areas

Beaufort Sea Lease Sale Authority
 1000 West 10th Avenue, Suite 100
 Anchorage, Alaska 99501
 Phone: (907) 562-1000
 Fax: (907) 562-1001
 Email: bslsa@bisa.gov
 Website: www.bisa.gov
 URS
 2800 Central Expressway, Suite 200
 Anchorage, Alaska 99503
 Phone: (907) 562-1000
 Fax: (907) 562-1001
 Email: urs@urscorp.com
 Website: www.urscorp.com

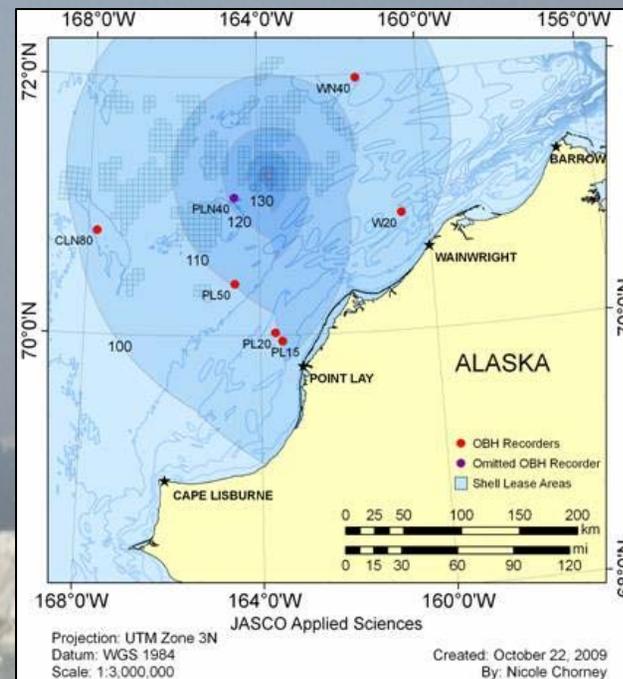
What will EIS include?

- Consider Impacts on Resources
 - Physical
 - Biological
 - Social
- Types of Impacts
 - Direct and Indirect
 - Short and Long-term
 - Cumulative



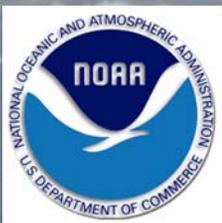
Impacts on Physical

- Physical Oceanography
 - Sea Ice
 - Water Column/Water Quality
 - Sediments
- Climate
- Air Quality
- Acoustics



Impacts on Biological

- Marine mammals
- Seabirds
- Other marine species
 - Marine fish
 - Plankton
 - Benthic
- Threatened and Endangered



Impacts on Sociocultural

- Coastal communities
- Subsistence uses
- Historic and cultural sites
- Inupiat way of life
- Human health
- Land and water use
- Transportation
- Recreation and tourism
- Visual
- Environmental Justice



Development of Alternatives

- Input from scoping process
- Levels of Activity
(Number, scale/size, location, and duration of):
 - seismic activities
 - exploratory drilling activities
 - shallow hazard/site clearance activities
 - anticipated support activities (vessel, aircraft, shore)



Development of Alternatives

- Mitigation

- Exclusion zones based on received levels of sound
- Exclusion zones based on presence of specific biological factors in combination with received levels of sound
- Exclusion zones based on presence and timing of subsistence activities
- Time/area closures for biological and subsistence reasons



Issues and Concerns

- Protection of subsistence resources and Inupiat culture and way of life
- Disturbance to marine mammal migration patterns (bowhead, beluga, etc.)
- Impacts on marine fish, reproduction, growth, and development
- Oil and gas activity impacts on marine mammals and seabirds, including noise, movement, operations



Issues and Concerns (cont.)

- Impacts to threatened & endangered species (including polar bear, walrus)
- Incorporation of Traditional Knowledge in the decision-making process
- Effectiveness and feasibility of marine mammal monitoring and other mitigation measures
- Provide adequate lead time for communities to understand activities and respond



Requesting Information

- Effects of oil and gas seismic and exploration on:
 - marine mammal behavior and use of habitat
 - availability of species for subsistence uses and success of subsistence harvesting
- New Arctic ecosystem science
- New technology for monitoring seismic/drilling activity
- Recommendations for monitoring and mitigation



Option for Rulemaking

- NMFS is considering a long-term planning process under MMPA for 5-year regulations
 - Rather than annual Incidental Harassment Authorization (IHA)
 - Industry will submit petition
 - Implementation goal is 2012
 - EIS would provide NEPA compliance with either annual or 5-year ITAs



Next Steps in EIS Process

- Review comments received during meetings and comment period
- Issue scoping report
- Develop alternatives based on comments
- Prepare Draft EIS
 - Describe environment affected by proposed action
 - Evaluate environmental consequences of proposed action
 - Release Draft EIS for public comment
(*estimated* December 2010)
 - Public comment period (*estimated* through March 2011)
- Prepare Final EIS (June 2011)



Scoping Meeting Locations

- February 18 – Kotzebue
- February 19 – Point Hope
- February 22 – Point Lay
- March 9 – Wainwright
- March 10 – Barrow
- March 11 – Nuiqsut
- March 12 – Kaktovik
- March 23 – Anchorage



Scoping Meeting Procedures

- Oral Comments
 - Please sign in at the registration table
 - Please be concise
 - Transcripts of today's meeting are being captured by a court reporter



Scoping Meeting Procedures

- **Written Comments**

- Comments due no later than April 9, 2010
- May be turned in today, mailed, e-mailed, or faxed
- Submit e-mail comments to: *arcticeis.comments@noaa.gov*
- Submit written comments to:

**Michael Payne
NOAA/NMFS
Office of Protected Resources
Permits and Conservation Division
1315 East-West Highway
Silver Spring, MD 20910
Fax: (301) 713-0376**



Additional Information

- Available on NMFS web page:

<http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/pr/permits/eis/arctic.htm>

- To receive a copy of the DEIS, please register and indicate your interest. The DEIS will also be posted on the website for electronic review.



A photograph of a sunset over the ocean. The sun is a bright yellow-orange orb on the horizon, casting a shimmering reflection on the dark water. The sky is filled with soft, horizontal clouds in shades of orange, yellow, and grey.

Thank You for Participating

in the
Effects of Oil and Gas Activities
(Seismic Surveys and Exploratory Drilling)
in the Arctic Ocean
Scoping Process



Five-Year Regulations

Pros

- Allow for more comprehensive analyses of impacts of multiple activities
- Allow for more comprehensive review of monitoring plans and their interactions
- NMFS could require measures typically found in Conflict Avoidance Agreement (CAA)
- Would not have to be negotiated every year



Five-Year Regulations

Cons

- Description of Action more difficult for 5-year period
- Public review process is less defined in 5-year regulations compared to annual IHAs
- Initial application takes longer to complete than annual IHA process

