

Additional Information & Talking Points for Anchorage Public Hearing on Offshore Drilling

PLEASE RSVP IF YOU PLAN TO TESTIFY: DOI_Events@ios.doi.gov & Kelly@akmarine.org
(*note not required but helpful)

WHERE: Dena'ina Civic and Convention Center (downtown corner of Seventh and F St.)
600 W. Seventh Avenue Anchorage, Alaska 99501

WHEN: *Tuesday, April 14*, sign-in begins at 8:00 am

WHAT: Next Tuesday, we have the rare opportunity to provide comments to the Secretary of the Interior, Ken Salazar, at a public hearing in Anchorage on the future of offshore energy development in Alaska's federal waters. A strong turnout of individuals speaking out for protection of Bristol Bay is vital in getting the Secretary to halt current leases proposed for Bristol Bay's fish-rich waters in 2011 and 2014.

Details and Tips on Speaking:

- Arrive early if you can, as that will determine the order in which you speak.
- Register at the sign-in table and fill out a comment card when you arrive. You will be given a speaker number at that time.
- Testimony is limited to **only 3 minutes (about 600 words)**.
- It is important that each speaker tell in their own words why you feel protecting Bristol Bay and the Bering Sea is important. Please see talking points below for guidance.
- Testimony is received on the record by Department of Interior staff who will not answer any questions.
- If you miss your assigned speaking slot, there will be no opportunity to make it up.
- Speakers will not be permitted to cede time to another speaker.
- Only one person may speak on behalf of an organization or tribe. Please speak as an individual if there is already someone from your organization speaking.
- You may submit additional materials when you submit and give your testimony.

Format and Timing:

We understand that the format of the hearings will be:

- 8:00 AM - Sign-up for testimony begins
- 9:00 AM - Secretary Salazar will give an introductory speech followed by a discussion of the MMS/USGS report on potential offshore energy resources. Elected officials such as the Governor, Senators, and Representatives will then be asked to speak. Members of the audience will be allowed to submit written questions to the Secretary during this period of time.
- **Noon-1:00 PM --- The Secretary will leave the hearing. A break for lunch will occur. Please join us at noon for a Wild Oceans Celebration Cookout at the Town Square Park, corner of 6th Avenue and F Streets.**
- 1:00-4:00 PM - Hearing resumes, the general public will be given an opportunity to speak to MMS staff for 3 minutes. The order of the testimony will be determined by a sign-in sheet that will be posted in the room.
- 4:00 PM-6:00 PM- Break for dinner.
- 6:00-8:00 PM - A final evening round of testimony will take place.

Offshore Drilling in Bristol Bay and the Southeast Bering Sea: Suggested Talking Points for Anchorage Hearing

The most important points to make are:

- ❖ Urge protection of Bristol Bay from offshore drilling and deferral of currently scheduled North Aleutian Basin (Bristol Bay) leases.
- ❖ Urge the Obama administration not to pursue drilling in sensitive areas of our ocean like Bristol Bay and to undertake an aggressive transition towards renewable energy options for our nation.

If you are a resident of the Bristol Bay region, participate in the region's fishing industry, or in any way rely upon the health of the region's resources, you can **comment on the importance of healthy marine and coastal resources to you and your family, and urge the federal government to protect your way of life.**

Other points you may consider making include:

- **Alaska's Bristol Bay and southeast Bering Sea stand out as an area within our nation's Outer Continental Shelf that demands protection** due to the tremendous ecological and economic value of the renewable fisheries resources that exist here.
- **Offshore oil and gas operations pose serious risks to commercial and subsistence fisheries** throughout Bristol Bay and the Bering Sea. These fisheries are locally, nationally, and globally important providing for more than 40% of total U.S. fish catch with an annual value exceeding \$2 billion dollars. The area targeted for offshore oil and gas development overlaps with vital habitat and fishing grounds for salmon, red king crab, herring, Pacific halibut and Bering Sea pollock and cod.
- **The economic benefits of *renewable* fisheries resources far outweigh the potential economic value of *nonrenewable* offshore oil and gas resources.** While Bristol Bay and Bering Sea fisheries produce thousands of jobs and provide almost half of our nation's seafood harvest, the region holds less than 1% of oil and 2% of gas resources estimated by MMS to be technically recoverable in the nation's Outer Continental Shelf.ⁱ MMS predicted the total net economic value of developing the region's oil and gas resources at \$7.7 billion dollars over a 25-40 year life span.ⁱⁱ Over that same period, fisheries resources could produce \$50-80 billion dollars of value for the nation.
- **The fisheries of Bristol Bay and the southeast Bering Sea are absolutely critical to local economies in western Alaska and also support fishermen and fishing families across the entire state of Alaska.** In Alaska, the seafood industry remains the state's largest private sector employer, generating 56,600 direct jobs and 22,000 indirect jobs annually- more than the oil and gas and mining industries combined.ⁱⁱⁱ
- **Bristol Bay is home to the world's largest wild run of sockeye salmon.** The region's salmon are important not only ecologically, with Bristol Bay serving as one of the last global strongholds for Pacific salmon, but also economically and culturally. The area targeted for leasing falls directly within important marine habitat for salmon from Bristol Bay and throughout western Alaska.
- **The Bristol Bay region is of global ecological importance for fish, seabirds, waterfowl and marine mammals.** The eastern Bering Sea is renowned for its enormous biological productivity and provides habitat for hundreds of fish species, dozens of marine mammal species and is home to one of the world's greatest concentrations of seabird colonies.
- **Subsistence is the irreplaceable mainstay of Alaska Native tradition and culture.** Salmon is the life-blood of village economies and ways of life. In addition to salmon, southwestern Alaskan communities rely on halibut, herring, sea mammals and other ocean and coastal resources. Impacts from offshore drilling would threaten these important subsistence traditions.
- **There are four national wildlife refuges (NWRs) in the region that could be affected by offshore oil and gas development:** Alaska Peninsula NWR, Alaska Maritime NWR, Izembek NWR, and Togiak NWR. The proposed

Tips and Reminders:

- Testimony is limited to 3 minutes (about 600 words)
- Only one representative per organization may be allowed to testify
- Your testimony can be as simple as saying who you are, and stating your support for protecting Bristol Bay
- Your personal story and own words are powerful

transportation route for getting oil and gas to the market calls for a pipeline through the Alaska Peninsula NWR which provides habitat for salmon, waterfowl, wolf, wolverine, lynx, caribou, brown bears, and numerous other species. Izembek NWR, which contains some of the world's largest eelgrass beds and globally important wetlands that provide habitat for millions of migratory birds, is directly adjacent to the proposed lease sale area.

- **Federal studies predict at least one major spill** as well as a number of smaller spills if drilling occurs here. Recovery of spilled oil in Bristol Bay is would be difficult if not impossible for much of the year because clean-up technology is inadequate in rough sea conditions, ice, and strong tides and currents.
- **Seismic surveys** have been shown to dramatically reduce fish catch rates and can have significant, negative impacts on marine mammals even before any oil or gas is extracted.
- **The sprawling foot of infrastructure required** for development- which involves pipelines, platforms, roads, worker housing, waste disposal facilities, oil and gas storage and processing facilities- would result in industrialization of one of the most important ecological marine and coastal areas in the United States.
- Drilling would provide **very limited benefits** to the state & local communities, as **revenue sharing is not required** for leasing in federal waters.
- Experts have stated drilling in the region is **unlikely to have any effect on local energy prices** and would generate few new jobs in communities.
- **Experts have pointed to a dramatic lack of scientific information** needed to predict potential impacts of offshore drilling in the Bristol Bay region. The National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) even recommended deleting Bristol Bay from the offshore leasing program calling it “unrealistically ambitious” because of the scarce available information to estimate or avoid impacts to important fisheries.
- **We already determined that Bristol Bay is too sensitive an area to allow offshore oil and gas drilling.** After the Exxon Valdez oil spill demonstrated the tremendous damage an oil spill in Alaskan waters can have on fish, wildlife, and communities, Congress placed the region under the nationwide offshore drilling moratorium and the American public paid more than \$100 million dollars in 1995 to buy back Bristol Bay leases sold in the 1980s.
- **The Bering Sea ecosystem is already under stress from climate change.** Scientists have demonstrated that warming temperatures have already had significant and unprecedented effects on the southeast Bering Sea and Bristol Bay ecosystem including sea bird die-offs, rare algal blooms, declines in marine mammals and altered fish distribution. Increased ocean acidification, warmer ocean temperatures, disrupted oceanic production cycles, and warmer stream temperatures are expected to cause declines in productivity in the region over the next 30 years. Any further stress, such as offshore oil and gas activities, will exacerbate these threats to the integrity and resilience of the ecosystem.
- **It's time that America aggressively invests in the development of renewable energy.** The burning of fossil fuels since the beginning of the industrial revolution has resulted in over 500 billion tons of carbon dioxide being absorbed by the world's ocean, today over 20 million tons daily are absorbed by the world's oceans. This is changing the entire chemical balance of the ocean better known as **ocean acidification**. Scientists predict ocean acidification will have profound and lasting effect on the commercially viable ocean resources and subsistence foods that coastal communities depend on. We urge the Obama administration not to pursue drilling in sensitive areas of our ocean like Bristol Bay and to undertake an aggressive transition towards renewable energy options for our nation.
- **Drilling in Bristol Bay is not the answer** to reducing high local or national energy prices. Our nation cannot drill our way to energy independence and must aggressively pursue renewable energy technologies and implement energy efficiency and conservation measures to reduce our dependence on fossil fuels. Renewable energy resources exist in Alaska and the Bristol Bay region that could provide long-term, sustainable, lower-cost energy to residents while creating jobs consistent with the fisheries-based economy of Bristol Bay.

ⁱ Minerals Management Service, Assessment of Undiscovered Technically Recoverable Resources of the Nation's Outer Continental Shelf, 2006: <http://www.mms.gov/revaldiv/PDFs/NA2006BrochurePlanningAreaInsert.pdf>

ⁱⁱ Minerals Management Service, Proposed Final Program Outer Continental Shelf Oil and gas Leasing Program, 2007-2012: <http://www.mms.gov/5-year/PDFs/MMSProposedFinalProgram2007-2012.pdf>

ⁱⁱⁱ Marine Conservation Alliance, The Seafood Industry in Alaska's Economy, 2009: <http://www.marineconservationalliance.org/press/pr20090121.pdf>