

MAKE YOUR VOICE HEARD ON OFFSHORE DRILLING IN BRISTOL BAY

Comment During the Scoping Period by Friday, October 17!



The federal government is currently engaged in the “scoping” process for the proposed 2011 offshore oil and gas lease sale in Bristol Bay and the southeastern Bering Sea (officially known as North Aleutian Basin Sale 214). A **comment period is open until Friday, October 17, 2008**. Concerned members of the public, researchers, residents of the Bristol Bay region, subsistence users, commercial and sport fishermen all have the opportunity to voice concerns over the proposed lease sale and influence what issues are considered in the environmental review process.

What is Scoping and Why is it Important?



Scoping is the first official step taken by the Minerals Management Service (MMS)- the federal agency in charge of offshore oil and gas decisions in federal waters - in preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the proposed oil and gas lease sale.

MMS is asking for public comments on the full range and “scope” of issues to be considered by the agency as it prepares an EIS. The issues to be considered can pertain to the general ecological, economic, social, and cultural importance of the region as well as to the full range of potential impacts that should be considered in the decision-making process.

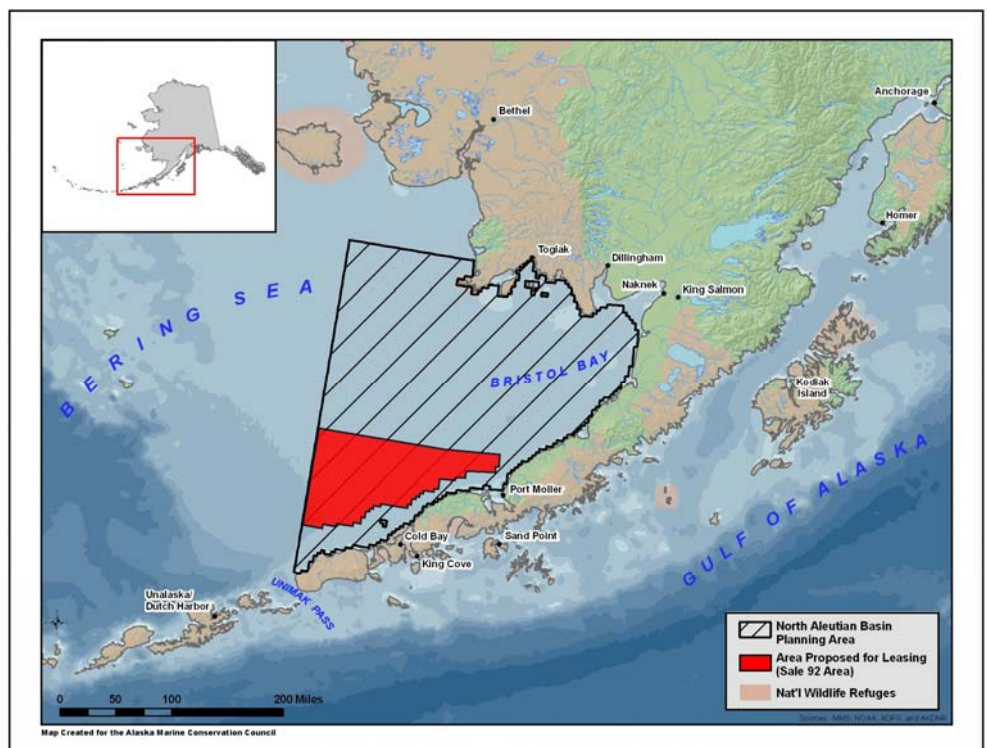
Once scoping has been completed, MMS will prepare a Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS), and in this document MMS is supposed to consider, and respond to, the

comments raised during scoping.

Your Comments are Vital to the Process

Public input by those with intimate knowledge of the marine and coastal resources of the Bristol Bay region that could be affected by offshore drilling is crucial to ensuring a robust and thorough decision-making process.

The scoping process also offers an important opportunity simply to express opposition to oil and gas drilling amidst the rich waters of Bristol Bay and the southeast Bering Sea. With a new presidential administration coming into place, comments and information gathered during scoping could be vital to decisions about whether to proceed with the lease sale.



Map: The red block represents the 5.6 million acre area of fish-rich waters scheduled for leasing in 2011- the very same area previously sold and bought back by taxpayers after the Exxon Valdez spill.

Suggested Talking Points

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 consider how drilling may affect your way of life.

You may consider making comments on how offshore drilling activities may negatively impact the region's fish, marine mammals, seabird/waterfowl species, and even terrestrial animals. Harmful seismic surveys, contaminated drilling discharges, the sprawling footprint of infrastructure, and potentially catastrophic oil spills all pose great risks to the region's resources. Also important, however, are comments that urge the federal government to consider the potential effects from drilling to local economies, subsistence traditions, and to coastal communities throughout the region.

Other points you may consider making include:

- **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. 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.** The Minerals Management Service has estimated the total net economic value of developing Bristol Bay's oil and gas resources at \$7.7 billion dollars over the entire 25-40 year lifespan of the project. Every year of offshore drilling would put at risk an estimated \$2 billion dollar annual fisheries economy.
- **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 amongst important marine habitat for salmon from Bristol Bay and throughout western Alaska.
- **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.
- **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 unfeasible because clean-up technology is inadequate in rough sea conditions, ice, and strong tides and currents.
- **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.
- **Drilling in Bristol Bay is not the answer** to reducing high local or national energy prices. Renewable energy resources exist in Bristol Bay region that could provide long-term, sustainable, lower-cost energy to residents of the region while creating jobs consistent with the fisheries-based economy. 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.

For a draft comment letter and more resources to help you write your own comments, go to: <http://www.akmarine.org/our-work/protect-bristol-bay>

How to Submit Comments:

Send in scoping comments by October 17, 2008 and specify you are commenting on North Aleutian Basin Sale 214

Mail comments to:

MMS Alaska OCS Region
Attn: Sale 214 CALL
3801 Centerpoint Drive
Anchorage, AK 99503-5823

Fax comments to: (907) 334-5242

E-mail comments to: sale214NOI@mms.gov

*Email a copy of your comments to the Kelly Harrell at the Alaska Marine Conservation Council at Kelly@akmarine.org and we will compile them to send to other important decision makers. You can also contact Kelly for more information at (907) 277-5360.

