

FACT SHEET

A COMPREHENSIVE, SCIENCE-BASED OFFSHORE ENERGY PLAN

As part of a comprehensive energy strategy for the country, the Obama Administration has developed an open, science-based approach to determining what areas of the Outer Continental Shelf (OCS) are and are not appropriate for potential oil and gas development. The Administration's OCS strategy spans a revised 2007-2012 leasing program and a new 2012-2017 leasing program that will be developed based on science, environmental analysis, public input, safety, and other important considerations.

Alaska

The Obama Administration's has pursued a **cautious, science-based approach** for determining which areas in the Alaska OCS may – or may not – be appropriate for oil and gas leasing.

- In March, Secretary Salazar [cancelled the remaining four lease sales](#) in the 2007-2012 program that the Bush Administration had scheduled for the Chukchi and Beaufort Seas in the Arctic. Secretary Salazar determined that the country must take a cautious approach in the Arctic, and gather additional scientific information about resources, risks, and environmental sensitivities before making decisions about potential future lease sales in frontier areas.
- To better understand the resilience of Arctic coastal and marine ecosystems to potential OCS resource extraction activities, along with spill risks and spill response capabilities, Secretary Salazar directed the **United States Geological Survey (USGS) to conduct an initial, [independent evaluation of science needs in the region](#)**. The study will summarize what information is available, where knowledge gaps exist, and what research is needed to mitigate risks.
- In March, President Obama also withdrew [Bristol Bay, Alaska](#) – an area proposed for leasing by the previous Administration – from consideration for oil and gas development through 2017 and cancelled a lease sale that had been scheduled for 2011. Fisheries, tourism, and environmental values in Alaska's Bristol Bay make the area a national treasure and inappropriate for oil and gas drilling.
- Oil and gas companies hold leases for development in the Arctic that were issued under the previous Administration. Shell, which has leases in both the Beaufort and Chukchi Seas in the Arctic, had sought to begin drilling 5 exploratory wells in those areas this summer. Secretary Salazar announced on May 27 that Applications for Permits to Drill those 5 wells will not be considered until 2011 because of the need for further information-gathering, evaluation of proposed drilling technology, and evaluation of oil spill response capabilities for Arctic waters.

- The Administration will decide whether to move forward with a proposed lease sale in the Cook Inlet in Alaska – an area with existing oil and gas infrastructure – based on whether there is interest from industry to develop, on lessons learned from the BP oil spill, and whether environmental analysis shows that additional development can be done responsibly.
- The Department will make decisions about potential future lease sales in Alaska in the 2012-2017 OCS program based on public input, scientific analysis, and the results of ongoing investigations and reviews into the BP oil spill.

Atlantic

The Obama Administration's OCS strategy puts the northern Atlantic off-limits to further consideration for oil and gas development through 2017. As to the Mid and South Atlantic OCS, the Administration has proposed **to gather information** about what oil and gas resources may exist in these planning areas, conduct thorough environmental analysis, and gather public input to determine whether to consider the potential inclusion of those areas in the 2012-2017 five year plan.

- The Obama Administration will conduct a programmatic environmental impact statement (EIS) for seismic studies in the Mid and South Atlantic OCS. Seismic studies will determine the quantity and location of potential energy resources and help guide future decisions about whether to allow oil and gas drilling in the Atlantic Ocean.
- In March, 2010, Secretary Salazar decided to conditionally move ahead with additional reviews of the proposed Lease Sale 220 off the coast of Virginia, which the Bush Administration had included in the 2007-2012 program. Secretary Salazar has made clear, however, that a final decision about whether to move forward with Lease Sale 220 will depend on safety reviews that are under way in response to the BP oil spill and whether leasing off the coast of Virginia can be done in a way that protects the military mission and the environment.
 - On May 27, 2010, Secretary Salazar announced that based on military training requirements and the need to fully consider the recommendations from the Presidential Commission on the BP Deepwater Horizon oil spill, he is cancelling Lease Sale 220.
- At the appropriate time, the Department of the Interior will hold public meetings and conduct an environmental impact statement that will inform decisions about whether any areas in the Mid and South Atlantic should be included in the 2012-2017 program.

Gulf of Mexico

The Obama Administration's OCS strategy recognizes that the Gulf of Mexico holds 70% of the nation's economically recoverable oil and 82% of the economically recoverable gas reserves on the OCS and has existing oil and gas infrastructure to support development. Exploration and production must be conducted safely, responsibly, and subject to environmental analysis, public input, and safety considerations.

- Currently, three lease sales are scheduled for the Central and Western Gulf of Mexico before the end of 2012, not including the August, 2010 lease sale that Secretary Salazar cancelled on May 27, 2010. Each of the remaining three lease sales will be reviewed under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), and will be subject to recommendations and decisions that may arise out of the reviews and investigations of the BP oil spill.
- Environmental analysis and public input will be gathered on potential lease sales in 2012-2017 in the Gulf of Mexico. The Administration also announced in March that it would work with Congress to determine whether and how to potentially open new areas in the Eastern Gulf of Mexico that are currently under Congressional moratorium, subject to environmental reviews, public comment, and other considerations.

Pacific

The Administration's OCS strategy recognizes there is consistent opposition from the public, States, and Members of Congress to expanded offshore development in the Pacific Ocean. No actions are proposed.