

Other voices—

Working together -the OCS challenge

Many of Alaska's people make their living from the state's valuable coastal resources. Fish, timber, oil and gas are among the most important. Because many people use these resources, conflicts become inevitable. There are conflicts between users and the resources, and between different interest groups.

To handle these increasing demands, many state and federal agencies, and some local governments, have established regulations and other management tools.

The Alaska Coastal Management Program was established to coordinate these management efforts dealing with the protection, use and development of coastal resources.

At present, the state's number one priority for coastal planning is preparing for the impacts of Outer Continental Shelf oil and gas development.

Although the federal government controls the sale and regulation of OCS oil and gas, state agencies must respond cooperatively and develop planning schemes to help our citizens cope with the massive onshore impacts.

Pending federal legislation would give assistance to the state and local governments to do the necessary planning and to build roads, sewers, schools and other facilities that will be needed by the oil industry (Amendments to the Coastal Zone Management Act of 1975).

Looking towards comprehensive coastal planning, the Coastal Management Program has funded several state agencies to complete studies of the fish, wildlife, and other resources in areas to be impacted by OCS leasing.

With Alaska's OCS Supplemental Grant, the Department of Community and Regional Affairs is completing a plan to assist coastal communities in the location of necessary oil and gas facilities.

This includes pass-through funding for planning by communities by themselves. The Departments of Environmental Conservation, Natural Resources, and Fish and Game are completing studies of environmental impacts which will be available to all involved in the planning process.

Of growing concern are the conflicts of resource use, and the laws and regulations we have to avoid or reduce these conflicts. Therefore, the potential impacts of forest management on fish streams in Southeast Alaska, the development of mining in coastal areas, and the need to protect wetlands and tidelands in areas of urban growth are all coastal management concerns.

OCS development is only one of the resource uses that must be considered. But the OCS challenge is a big one, and it is here now. It will have a long-term effect on future patterns of growth, and therefore on demands for our other land and water resource wealth. If we don't have a system for coordinating plans and policies between state and local governments for OCS, it will be more difficult later as new resource demands arise.

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