

Andrus Announces New Schedule for OCS Oil and Gas Lease Sales

Secretary of the Interior Cecil D. Andrus announced last week a new planning schedule for oil and gas lease sales on the outer continental shelf (OCS) for the period 1979 through 1981. "In Alaska the long-range schedule picks up the proposed October 1977 sale in the Lower Cook Inlet, thus showing six sales proposed for Alaskan waters through 1981," said Edward J. Hoffmann, manager, Alaska OCS Office.

Supplementing the revised schedule for 1977 and 1978 which was issued by the Secretary May 17, 1977, the new

schedule calls for five sales in 1979, four in 1980, and six in 1981.

"Because of the critical importance of sound development of the OCS to assist in meeting our domestic energy needs," Andrus said, "the planning schedule has been prepared in close consultation with the affected coastal states and takes into account the comments received from them and from local governments, industry, environmental groups and other interested parties."

There is approximately a three-year interval between the first

sales in a frontier area and subsequent sales in the same geologic province. Andrus said that this interval would provide for an orderly level of activity for both exploration and development and permit the use of exploratory results for one sale in making tract selections for a later sale.

"Development of several of the frontier areas in the OCS off the coast of Alaska, such as the Beaufort Sea, pose significant technologic challenges. It was decided to offer leases in these areas with the understanding that we will proceed with these

sales only if there is existing technology for exploratory operations and it is reasonable to assume that technology for development operations will be available at the appropriate time. Further safeguards exist after the lease sale in that there is a separate approval process for both the exploratory and the development phase. I believe this is the best approach to speeding OCS development while maintaining the necessary safeguards since availability of leased acreage should provide the greatest incentive for rapid development of the needed

technology."

The schedule proposes the following timing of sales:

1979—No. 49 Mid Atlantic, February; No. 48 Southern California, June; No. 58, Gulf of Mexico, July; No. 54, South Atlantic-Blake Plateau, November; Federal-State Beaufort Sea, December.

1980—No. 55 N.E. Gulf of Alaska, June; No. 62 Gulf of Mexico, August; No. 46 Kodiak, October; No. 52 North Atlantic, November.

1981—No. 53 Central-N. Cal-

(Continued on page 12)

Andrus . . .

(Continued from page 1)

ifornia, February; No. 60 Cook Inlet, March; No. 56 South Atlantic, April; No. 59 Mid Atlantic, August; No. 66 Gulf of Mexico, September; No. 57 Bering-Norton, December.