

# ● What is call for nominations, comments?

In issuing a call for nominations and comments for a certain outer continental shelf (OCS) area, the Bureau of Land Management is requesting information from groups ranging in interest from lay people in the general public to land men and others in the petroleum in-

dustry. Calls are issued for large contiguous areas. Industry is invited to indicate what specific blocks it would like to bid on were a sale to be held. Government (other federal agencies, state governments and local municipalities or boroughs)—as well as other industries, universities,

research institutions and special interest organizations are asked to identify particular blocks they believe should be excluded from oil and natural gas leasing or to be leased only under special conditions because of conflicting resource values and environmental concerns.

The bureau is asking for geological, environmental, biological, archaeological, socio-economic or other specific and general information that might have significant bearing upon potential leasing and development of particular tracts. Such information is used to develop recommendations to the department for tentative selection of a specific OCS area for which a draft environmental statement will be prepared. Therefore, with this call, BLM is initiating the information gathering phase of the department leasing procedure.

A call for nominations and comments, such as this one for the Beaufort Sea proposal, is the first of a series of steps that invites public participation in OCS decision-making. Each step in the process must comply with the requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), the guidelines of the President's Council on Environmental Quality, and Interior Department regulations. None of these steps constitutes a decision to hold a sale.

After publication of the draft environmental statement, about 30 days elapse before a public hearing can be called. This is to allow time for review, further comments, and preparation of appropriate remarks, anticipated to address the particular environmental statement, to be made orally at the public hearing on in written form before an announced deadline.

Following this, the agency, in further complying with NEPA, prepares a final environmental statement, taking into account results of the hearing. The statement reflects the views of the hearing witnesses as well as additional environmental information that may have developed since preparation of the draft statement.

The final environmental statement must be submitted to the CEQ for at least 30 days review before the secretary of Interior and the governor are authorized to make a decision whether or not to hold a sale. The time between a call for nominations and an actual decision is about a year to 18 months.

It should be pointed out that the secretary may also determine whether to eliminate some of the area studied and what lease stipulations are to be imposed on the leases.

