

OCS leasing schedule announced

Governor Bill Sheffield issued the following statement on March 21 following the release by Interior Secretary Don Hodel of a proposed five-year oil and gas leasing schedule for the outer continental shelf:

"The State of Alaska will be examining the Secretary's proposed leasing schedule very closely before submitting comments by the May 20th deadline. An initial reading of the document shows there's much at stake for Alaska in this five-year program. No fewer than 16 separate lease sales, including all five 'frontier' sales planned by the Interior under this schedule, are set for Alaska waters.

"Several of our concerns with the current leasing schedule appear to have been addressed by the Secretary. I am encouraged that he is focusing on the potential of leasing smaller areas, rather than the areawide system

now being employed. As well, it's encouraging to see a three-year hiatus between sales in the same area, rather than the current two-year cycle.

"However, as I told Secretary Hodel in Washington early this month, the state remains opposed to any leasing in Bristol Bay. The new schedule proposes a second lease sale in this most productive fishery in 1988, as a follow-up to the sale planned late

this year. We remain hopeful the Interior Department will see the wisdom of following the state's lead in placing a 10-year moratorium on leasing in this area.

"Overall, there appears to be some good news and bad news for Alaskans in this schedule. I encourage public comment on the new federal schedule, as it will be under review by the state in the next two months."
