

Alaska delegation supports OCS plan

The Alaska Congressional Delegation recently expressed support of the Interior Department's five-year Outer Continental Shelf oil and gas leasing program, saying it represents a responsible balance between meeting domestic energy needs and protecting fishery resources.

The plan, released last month by Interior Secretary Donald Hodel, would permit lease sales on tracts located in the Beaufort Sea, Chukchi Sea, Navarin Basin, Norton Basin, St. George Basin, Cook Inlet, Shumagin and Hope Basin between January 1988 and May 1992.

The plan does not include several areas which have been deferred from leasing as a result of consultations between the Department of the Interior, the Alaska Congressional Delegation, the State of Alaska, as well as Native, commercial fishing and environmental organizations.

The deferred areas are located along the Yukon River Delta, around St. Lawrence Island and in the northern, southwestern and eastern sections of the Norton Basin planning area.

In the St. George Basin, the Interior Department has deferred lease sales adjacent to the Pribilof Islands and near Unimak Pass, along the western, northern and northeastern edges of the planning area and along the Aleutian Islands.

The western and southern edges of the Navarin Basin also are deferred under the plan.

In addition, the Department of the Interior has highlighted for special future scrutiny those areas which the State of Alaska and the groups requested be deferred, but were included in the lease sale program.