

OCS HEARINGS HELD

The State of Alaska has 65-70% of the Nation's continental shelf and more OCS than all the Nation's other OCS areas combined. The BLM released in June 1979 the Proposed Five-Year OCS Oil and Gas Lease Schedule, March 1980-February 1985. This proposed lease schedule affects all OCS areas under Federal jurisdiction, including OCS areas offshore Alaska.

Lease sales have already been held in Alaska in the Northern Gulf of Alaska and the Lower Cook Inlet. The proposed Beaufort Sea sale in December, 1979, is a joint Federal-State lease sale since the proposed area includes both submerged land under State jurisdiction and submerged land under Federal jurisdiction.

Hearings were held by the BLM in the Yukon Room of the Sheraton Hotel in Anchorage on October 1 and 2, 1979, on the Proposed Five-Year Oil and Gas Lease Schedule for the United States Outer Continental Shelf areas. Hearings were also held in New York, Washington D.C., New Orleans and Los Angeles, as this proposed schedule affects OCS areas in the Bering, Beaufort, and Chukchi Seas and the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans.

Comments at the Anchorage hearings centered on the proposed sales to occur in Alaska, including those areas on the Gulf of Alaska, off Kodiak Island, Cook Inlet, the Norton Basin, St. George Basin, Beaufort Sea, North Aleutian Shelf, Navarin Basin and Chukchi Sea. Representatives from such diverse groups as Arco, Kodiak Borough, the North Slope Borough, the Alaska Center for the Environment, Nunam Kitlutsisti, Bristol Bay Native Corporation, RurAL CAP, and Trustees for Alaska testified on the lease schedule.

Michael Jeffrey, Alaska Legal Services attorney from Barrow, testified in favor of two alternatives to the proposed five-year schedule, the first being that of no action (No Sale) in the Beaufort and Chukchi Seas; and the second being that of holding 25 lease sales, as opposed to the 31 lease sales scheduled, which would omit sales in the St. George Basin, Northern Aleutian Shelf, Navarin Basin, Norton Sound and Chukchi Sea. Reasons he gave for deleting the sales in those areas included the insufficiency of current industrial technology for safe drilling

on shear and pack ice, the sensitivity of maine life and migratory birds to noise and water pollution, the lack of adequate research in the Beaufort and Chukchi Seas, the dependency of the Arctic residents on marine wildlife which are sensitive to potential hazards of offshore oil development; and the need for more adequate preparation of the North Slope Borough's Coastal Zone Management Plan.

Norman Cohen of RurAL CAP spoke on the need for deletion of the proposed sales from the proposed schedule in Alaska until the affected local and rural areas impacted by OCS activity develop a coastal zone management program similar in scope to that program underway by the North Slope Borough, for "the Norton Basin, St. George Basin, the Northern Aleutian Shelf, and the Navarin Basin, this ability of local, rural areas, which will be impacted by OCS activity, to protect themselves and their environment is not available. Also in Kodiak, the Borough has yet to fund a coastal management program, and therefore will have no continuing control over its OCS lease areas." The Coast Zone

Management Act of 1972 provides for local and state governments to develop programs providing a means to have a voice in the OCS process.

Kodiak Island Borough in its comments to the proposed lease schedule said that OCS activity offshore Kodiak Island would result in additional strain on its existing infra-structure and base of economy—its fishing industry. Its position is that if OCS activity is to occur that development of OCS-related facilities in and around population centers of Kodiak will be discouraged and in the cases where they must be built, that they be limited and self-sustaining. The Kodiak Community Development Corporation's (KACDC) comments on the schedule encouraged no sales offshore of the Island, as the projected return from oil activity would be small in comparison to the projected return in the other OCS areas and has the potential of adversely affecting the Island's healthy fishing industry. Wayne Marshall of KACDC in his testimony said, "The Draft Environmental Impact Statement accurately states that Kodiak Island's fishing in-

dustry is highly sensitive to the intrusion of the oil industry into the renewable resource rich fishing areas surrounding Kodiak Island."

Kodiak Area Native Association's testimony emphasized the concern that the villages of Kodiak Island become more aware of impacts of OCS activity, especially with regard to on-shore activity. It pointed out that the Kodiak Island Borough needed more time to develop coastal zone management plans for the rural areas of the Island.

Don Nielsen of Bristol Bay Native Corporation testified in favor of the proposed lease schedule and also encouraged including the Bristol Bay Basin in the lease schedule. Currently, only the St. George Basin and North Aleutian Shelf are included in the schedule in the Bristol Bay area.

The deadline for written comments on the Proposed Five-Year OCS Oil and Gas Lease Schedule may be sent to the Director, BLM, Department of the Interior, 18th & C Streets, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20240, and must be received by October 19, 1979.