

## **Frequently Asked Questions Proposed Program**

**Q: What is the Proposed Program?**

A: The Proposed Program is the third stage of a five-stage process to develop a schedule of potential lease sales for the 2017-2022 Outer Continental Shelf Oil and Gas Leasing Program, as required by the Outer Continental Shelf Lands Act (OCSLA).

**Q: Why does BOEM prepare the Five-Year Program for Oil and Gas Leasing on the Outer Continental Shelf (OCS)?**

A: Section 18 of the Outer Continental Shelf Lands Act (OCSLA) requires the Secretary of the Interior to prepare and maintain a schedule of proposed Outer Continental Shelf (OCS) oil and gas lease sales determined to best meet national energy needs. The Five-Year Program provides a schedule of potential oil and gas lease sales, indicating the size, timing, and location of proposed leasing activity. The current Five-Year Program for 2012–2017 expires in August 2017.

**Q: How does the Proposed Program help develop the Five-Year Program?**

A: The Five-Year Program process is a winnowing process, whereby the Secretary gathers information at each stage in the planning process and may, if she determines it to be appropriate, narrow the suite of offshore areas made available to best meet the energy needs of the Nation. Part of that information gathering process involves substantial stakeholder dialogue and consideration of public comments.

The Proposed Program itself does not authorize operations on the OCS. Rather, it is the second of three Secretarial proposals required by Section 18 of the Outer Continental Shelf Lands Act (OCSLA) to create an oil and gas leasing program that identifies offshore areas for potential lease sales during the next five-year period, in this case, from 2017–2022. As required by OCSLA, the Proposed Program will be open for public comment and then is followed by the Proposed Final Program and, at least 60 days later, the approval of the program by the Secretary.

The Proposed Program analyzes the eight OCS planning areas included in the Draft Proposed Program released in January 2015, pursuant to the eight factors set forth in Section 18 of OCSLA. Only those areas and options that the Secretary decides are appropriate to include in the Proposed Program decision will be further analyzed in preparing the Proposed Final Program and the Final Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement. Further, even if included in the approved Final Program, some lease sales may not be held. Prior to deciding whether to hold a lease sale, BOEM will conduct additional analyses, including a NEPA review, and provide opportunity for public comment.

**Q: What are the next steps in the Five-Year Program development process?**

A: Following the publication of the Proposed Program, there is a 90-day comment period. The Draft Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement, which is being published simultaneously with the Proposed Program, will have a 45-day comment period.

BOEM is providing opportunities for public input via requests for formal comments on the Proposed Program decision document and Draft Programmatic EIS and through a series of public meetings on the Draft Programmatic EIS following publication.

Following consideration of the comments, BOEM will publish the Proposed Final Program (PFP) and the Final Programmatic EIS. At least 60 days after that (after Congressional and Presidential review), the Secretary will approve the Final Program. Each of these steps is mandated by the Outer Continental Shelf Lands Act (OCSLA).

**Q: What areas are included in the Proposed Program?**

A: The Proposed Program proposes sales in six planning areas—three in the Gulf of Mexico and three in Alaska.

**Q: Where are lease sales proposed?**

A: The Proposed Program schedules 13 potential lease sales for the 2017–2022 period in six planning areas – 10 sales in the Gulf of Mexico and three off the coast of Alaska.

**Q: How does this Proposed Program differ from the current (2012-2017) program?**

A: The Proposed Program offers the same areas for leasing as the current 2012-2017 program. One difference in the 2017-2022 program is that we are proposing to hold ten region-wide sales comprised of the Western, Central, and Eastern Gulf of Mexico unleased acreage not subject to moratoria or otherwise unavailable, instead of two annual sales separately offering the Central or the Western area and periodic sales in the Eastern area. Also, in 2015 the President withdrew certain sensitive areas in the Beaufort and Chukchi Seas from consideration for leasing, and the Cook Inlet Program area has been reduced as compared to the 2012-2017 Program area.

**Q. How does this Proposed Program differ from the Draft Proposed Program published in January 2015?**

A: The main difference between this Proposed Program and the Draft Proposed Program is that the potential lease sale in the Mid- and South Atlantic scheduled for 2021 has been removed. In addition, BOEM has identified several areas in Alaska and one in the Gulf of Mexico – labeled as “environmentally important areas” – where public comment and best available science has indicated there is potential conflict between oil and gas activities and important ecological resources and subsistence activities. We are soliciting further information and comment on whether these areas warrant additional protection through alternatives such as mitigation measures or exclusion from leasing.

**Q: How many comments did BOEM receive on the Draft Proposed Program?**

A: BOEM received more than one million (approximately 1,083,500) comments on the Draft Proposed Program from the public, various stakeholders and partners, including numerous environmental NGOs, government entities (e.g., local municipalities, county, state, and

elected officials), local businesses, industry, academic institutions, tribal and cultural groups from the Alaska and Atlantic Planning Areas, and industry NGOs. The comments expressed a full spectrum of views on offshore leasing.

**Q. How many public meetings were held for the Draft Proposed Program and how many will be held for the Proposed Program?**

A: After the DPP was published, 23 public scoping meetings were held to solicit input on the Draft Programmatic EIS. In total, approximately 2,100 citizens participated in these public meetings, including 1,800 on the Atlantic Coast. In addition, BOEM staff made every effort to meet and discuss the Five Year Program process, meeting with more than 50 groups throughout the nation.

Similar meetings will be held after the publication of the Draft PEIS and Proposed Program decision documents.

**Q. Did the Secretary take the comments into consideration when making decisions on the Proposed Program?**

A: Yes, public input is an integral part of the national oil and gas leasing program development process. Section 18 of the OCS Lands Act specifies a multi-step process of consultation and analysis that must be completed before the Secretary may approve a new Five-Year Program. This process requires the Secretary to consider, among other factors, comments and concerns of States, local governments and tribes, as well as public input.

**Q: How many opportunities will the public have to weigh in on this proposed Five-Year Program?**

A: There are multiple opportunities for the public to provide comments during the program preparation process—three under the Outer Continental Shelf Lands Act (OCSLA) program process and two under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). Public comments are sought at each of the following steps:

*Past Opportunities*

1. Issuance of an initial Request for Information and Comments (Received approximately 500,000 comments and held several informal, educational meetings at the request of Atlantic coast state governments).
2. Issuance of the Draft Proposed Program (over a million comments received and many meetings at the request of Atlantic coast organizations)
3. Scoping period, which included public meetings, prior to preparing a Draft Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement (PEIS), in accordance with National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) (23 public scoping meetings and almost 380,000 comments received)

*Current Opportunities*

4. Issuance of the Proposed Program
5. Issuance of the Draft PEIS (concurrent with the issuance of the Proposed Program).

**Q: What type of information is BOEM seeking?**

A: BOEM would like to receive comments and suggestions on the Proposed Program's analyses of areas, including their characteristics of geology, ecology, environment, benefits and costs of oil and gas activities, industry interest, and laws, goals, and policies of affected states; and on the size, timing, and location of proposed lease sales.

BOEM would like to get feedback on the Draft Programmatic EIS, including comments on potential impacts from activities that may stem from lease sales scheduled under the Program, as well as additional information on relevant resources (for example, marine mammals, habitats, fisheries, tourism).

**Q: What factors are considered when deciding where to hold a lease sale?**

A: Pursuant to Section 18 of the Outer Continental Shelf Lands Act, there are eight factors considered in determining size, timing and location of leasing:

- Geographic, Geological, and Ecological Characteristics
- Equitable Sharing of Developmental Benefits and Environmental Risks
- Location with Respect to Regional and National Energy Markets and Needs
- Location with Respect to Other Uses of the Sea and Seabed
- Interest of Potential Oil and Gas Producers
- Laws, Goals, and Policies of Affected States
- Environmental Sensitivity and Marine Productivity
- Environmental and Predictive Information

The size, timing and location decisions made by the Secretary of the Interior also must, to the maximum extent practicable, balance the potential for environmental damage, the potential for the discovery of oil and gas, and the potential for adverse impact on the coastal zone.

**Q: Is there a priority of importance for the eight factors and/or the balancing decision elements?**

A: No. There is no priority as to the importance of the eight factors. Section 18 of the Outer Continental Shelf Lands Act requires that the Secretary consider them all in making decisions. The Act vests the Secretary with discretion to weigh the elements so as to "best meet national energy needs."

**Q: If an area is included in the Proposed Program, can it still be removed before the program is finalized?**

A: Yes. The Proposed Program is the second of three lease sale proposals required under the Section 18 multi-step process. Areas and sales that are included in the Proposed Program can be reduced or removed before the Five-Year Program is finalized. Further, even if included in the approved Final Program, there are additional decision points in the lease sale process where the area offered for leasing could be reduced or a lease sale canceled.

**Q: If an area isn't included in the Proposed Program, can it be added before the program is finalized?**

A: No. No sale or area can be added to the program without restarting the program preparation and comment process at the stage in which the sale or area was deleted. Proposed areas and sales in the Proposed Program can be deleted but not added.

**Q: Can a lease sale be cancelled once the Program is finalized?**

A: Yes. Once a Final Program is approved, the Secretary has full discretion to cancel or delay a lease sale as well as to narrow the geographic scope of a proposed leasing area, without developing a new program.

**Q: Can a lease sale be added once the Program is finalized?**

A: No. The Department of the Interior cannot offer an area for lease without it being included in an approved Five-Year Program.

**Q: Are some areas of the OCS off-limits for potential oil and gas development?**

A: Yes. The Gulf of Mexico Energy Security Act of 2006 (GOMESA) placed portions of the Outer Continental Shelf (OCS) off-limits to oil and gas leasing through June 30, 2022. Specifically, leasing is prohibited in the Eastern Gulf of Mexico within 125 miles of Florida; all of the Eastern Gulf of Mexico east of 86 degrees, 41 minutes West longitude; and a portion of the Central Gulf of Mexico within 100 miles of Florida.

Pursuant to Section 12 of the OCS Lands Act, on December 16, 2014, President Obama withdrew the North Aleutian Basin (including Bristol Bay) in Alaska, for a time period without a specific expiration, from consideration of leasing for the purposes of oil and gas exploration, development, or production.

Also pursuant to Section 12 of the OCS Lands Act, on January 27, 2015, President Obama withdrew portions of the Alaskan Arctic planning areas from future oil and gas leasing. These Presidential withdrawals included a 25-mile coastal buffer, subsistence use area, and the Hanna Shoal (lying within the contours of the 40-meter isobath) in the Chukchi Sea Planning Area and the Barrow and Kaktovik whaling areas in the Beaufort Sea Planning Area.

Similarly, all National Marine Sanctuaries were withdrawn, for a time period without a specific expiration, by President Clinton on June 12, 1998.

**Q: What role did other federal agencies play in developing the Proposed Program?**

A: When BOEM published the Draft Proposed Program in January 2015, the Bureau received comments from six Federal agencies (Department of Defense, the Department of Energy, the Department of State, Department of Transportation, the National Park Service

and the Marine Mammals Commission). Five Federal agencies commented on the initial Request For Information in June 2014, which began the Five-Year program development process: National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA), National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, Environmental Protection Agency, Department of Defense, and the Department of Transportation. Additionally, BOEM has further worked with both DOD and NASA to gather more information on potential multi-use conflicts. BOEM will continue coordinating with Federal agencies in advance of finalizing the 2017-2022 Program.

**Q: What impact does the recent drop in oil prices have on the development of the Five-Year Program?**

A: An increase in domestic onshore production and low oil and natural gas prices have dampened interest in and profitability of offshore production. Given the long-term nature of the program development process and the exploration and development process after a lease sale, long-term price trends are the most relevant for government and industry decisions. The Five-Year Program analyses are conducted using three different price scenarios to represent the wide range of future prices which might occur over the life-cycle of leases that may be issued under the next Five-Year Program. The Proposed Program considers all eight factors listed in Section 18 of the OCSLA.

**Q: How much oil and gas is on the OCS?**

A: The Bureau estimates that the entire OCS contains approximately 90 billion barrels of oil (bbo) and 327 trillion cubic feet (tcf) of undiscovered technically recoverable oil and natural gas (leased and unleased – mean estimate). The Proposed Program makes available 67 bbo and 223 tcf of gas, or approximately 72% of the total OCS mean undiscovered technically recoverable resources on a barrels-of-oil-equivalent (BOE) basis.

**GULF OF MEXICO**

**Q: What is being proposed in the Gulf of Mexico?**

A: The Proposed Program evaluates ten region-wide sales comprised of the Western, Central, and Eastern Gulf of Mexico unleased acreage not subject to moratoria or otherwise unavailable. This includes one sale each in 2017 and 2022, and two sales each in 2018, 2019, 2020, and 2021.

**Q: What is different for the Gulf in this Program from the current Five Year Program?**

A: Like the 2012-2017 Program, the Proposed Program offers annual sales in all areas of the Gulf of Mexico not subject to moratorium. The difference is that the current Program offers separate annual sales for the Central, and Western Gulf and periodic sales in the Eastern Gulf. The Proposed Program for 2017–2022 schedules ten region-wide sales comprised of the Western, Central, and Eastern Gulf unleased acreage not subject to moratoria or otherwise unavailable: one sale each in 2017 and 2022, and two sales each in 2018, 2019,

2020, and 2021. This proposal provides greater flexibility for industry, particularly in response to recent Mexican energy reforms.

**Q: Why did you change the way sales will happen in the Gulf of Mexico (all areas to be included in each sale) in this Proposed Program?**

A: BOEM is proposing this change to provide greater flexibility to industry, including more frequent opportunities to bid on rejected, relinquished, or expired Outer Continental Shelf lease blocks, as well as facilitating better planning to explore resources that may straddle the U.S.-Mexico boundary.

Any individual sale could be scaled back during the lease sale process to conform more closely to the traditional separate planning area model should circumstances warrant.

## **ALASKA**

**Q: What is being proposed in Alaska?**

A: There are three lease sales evaluated in the 2017–2022 Proposed Program off the coast of Alaska. In Alaska, the Proposed Program continues the targeted leasing strategy set forth in the current Program and identifies one potential sale each in portions of the Beaufort Sea (Sale 255), Cook Inlet (Sale 258), and Chukchi Sea (Sale 262) Planning Areas.

**Q: What is different for Alaska in this Proposed Program from the current Five Year Program?**

A: The 2017–2022 Proposed Program proposes Alaska lease sales in the same Planning Areas as the 2012–2017 Program, but the Program Areas (i.e., the portions of the Planning Areas included in the Program) are somewhat different due to deferrals and withdrawn areas identified since finalizing the current Program. In addition, BOEM has identified several areas in Alaska – labeled as “environmentally important areas” – where public comment and best available science has indicated there is potential conflict between oil and gas activities and important ecological resources and subsistence activities. We are soliciting further information and comment on whether these areas should be excluded from the Final Program or protected through other measures.

**Q: What are Environmentally Important Areas (EIAs)? Are these subject to public comment?**

A: After considering extensive public input, BOEM identified environmentally and culturally important areas where there is potential conflict between oil and gas activity, ecologically important habitats, and subsistence, cultural, and economic resources. Some of these Environmentally Important Areas may warrant additional consideration or protection for environmental or subsistence reasons at either the Final Program or lease sale stage.

As BOEM considers the importance that some of these areas have for subsistence and cultural reasons, additional feedback, particularly from the North Slope communities, is needed on the specific boundaries of the areas that are critically important for subsistence and cultural purposes.

There are several opportunities for continued evaluation and consideration of these areas. BOEM will use stakeholder input from the Draft Programmatic EIS comment period to refine the locations, potential mitigation, and suitability of the areas for oil and gas lease sales in this Program.

**Q: What is the basis for Environmentally Important Areas (EIAs) identified in the Beaufort, Chukchi, and Cook Inlet Programs?**

A: Stakeholders provided valuable information and data on sensitive ecological and cultural areas in the Alaska Program Areas during the scoping process for the Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement. BOEM internal experts also did the same.

In the Beaufort Sea and Chukchi Sea Program Areas, the primary areas delineated were habitats critically important to marine mammals, such as bowhead whales and walrus, and the communities who rely on these and other species for subsistence activities. These areas were developed based on the best available science and input from stakeholders, such as North Slope Borough (NSB), the Northwest Arctic Borough (NAB), the Alaska Eskimo Whaling Commission (AEWC) Nuiqsut whalers, State of Alaska, and Marine Mammal Commission.

In Cook Inlet, the EIA was developed based on comments received and existing critical habitat for the Cook Inlet Distinct Population Segment of beluga whale, which is listed as endangered under the Endangered Species Act.

This approach continues BOEM's well-established practice of working closely with North Slope communities to de-conflict oil and gas activities from subsistence activities on the Arctic OCS.

Many North Slope organizations acknowledged that there can be benefits from oil and gas activity, if it is done safely, provided it does not conflict with the subsistence activities upon which those communities rely. These entities and other North Slope community members, however, also noted the need to protect additional areas from oil and gas activity for maintenance of a traditional way of life.

**Q: Will lease sales proposed for the Alaska region be late in the program as they were last time?**

A: Potential sales in the three Alaska program areas are scheduled late in the five-year period to provide additional opportunity to evaluate and obtain information regarding

environmental issues, subsistence use needs, infrastructure capabilities, and results from any exploration activity associated with existing leases. Beaufort Sea Sale 255 is proposed for 2020, Cook Inlet Sale 258 is proposed for 2021, and Chukchi Sea Sale 262 is proposed for 2022. The Proposed Program will analyze and consider an option to move the Beaufort Sea sale from 2020 to 2019.

**Q: What areas are deferred from leasing in the Alaska OCS?**

A: The Proposed Program excludes the following areas from leasing consideration:

- Beaufort Sea--Barrow and Kaktovik whaling areas (Presidentially withdrawn on January 27, 2015);
- Chukchi Sea—the 25-mile coastal buffer, a subsistence use area, and the Hanna Shoal region lying within the contours of the 40-meter isobaths (Presidentially withdrawn on January 27, 2015)
- Cook Inlet—the southern portion of the planning area, where there is limited industry interest and the potential for conflict with endangered species and subsistence use.

**Q: How will the Arctic standards rule affect this Proposed Program?**

A: BOEM and BSEE are cooperatively developing regulations to codify and enhance existing requirements for exploratory drilling and related operations in the unique environment of the Arctic region. The rule is expected to be completed this summer and will cover overall exploratory drilling operations in ice and adverse weather conditions.

**Q: How does the Proposed Program relate to last week's Joint Statement between President Obama and Prime Minister Trudeau?**

A: President Obama and Prime Minister Trudeau last week announced principles for Arctic leadership, including a commitment to ensure that any commercial activities in the Arctic will occur only when the highest safety and environmental standards are met, including national and global climate and environmental goals, as well as honor Indigenous rights and agreements. As BOEM moves forward with offshore oil and gas planning, we intend to work with our Canadian partners to meet the world-class standard for Arctic stewardship set by these two nations.

**ATLANTIC**

**Q: What is being proposed for the Atlantic?**

A: No sales are proposed for the Atlantic in the Proposed Program.

**Q: Why was the Atlantic removed from the Proposed Program?**

A: After a careful consideration of the factors listed in Section 18 of the OCSLA, the Atlantic Program Area lease sale proposed for 2021 in the Draft Proposed Program was removed from the Proposed Program for a number of reasons, including: strong local opposition; conflicts with other ocean uses such as commercial (e.g. fishing, tourism, shipping and

transportation), national defense and NASA activities; current market dynamics; and national energy needs. The decision to remove the Atlantic from the 2017-2022 Program was also based on careful consideration of the comments received from Governors of affected states.

**Q: What comments did DOD and NASA provide on the Draft Proposed Program?**

The Department of Defense's 2015 Assessment communicated concerns and important considerations within the Atlantic Program Area that was proposed in the Draft Proposed Program. DOD's Assessment identifies much of the area offshore Virginia, as well as portions of the Program Area offshore North Carolina, South Carolina and Georgia, as areas that should not be made available for oil and gas development or where permanent oil and gas surface structures should not be located at this time.

Additionally, NASA's Wallop's Island Flight Facility (WFF) on Wallops Island, Virginia, is a key location for operational test, integration, and certification of NASA and commercial orbital launch technologies. NASA communicated that oil and gas activities in the Atlantic Program Area could potentially impact operations at WFF. NASA's primary concern is that the presence of oil and gas activities could result in NASA's inability to meet its own launch commit criteria.

**Q: How does removing the Atlantic affect the estimates of oil and gas available for the nation?**

A: Domestic oil and gas production will remain strong without the additional production from a potential lease sale in the Atlantic. Specifically, BOEM estimates that U.S. oil production will be only approximately 0.10 percent lower without the production anticipated from a single lease sale in the Mid- and South Atlantic Program Area than it would have been with that production.

Even with the Atlantic Program Area removed, the Proposed Program includes more than 70 percent of the available undiscovered technically recoverable resources (UTTR) available on the OCS.

**PACIFIC**

**Q: What is being proposed for the Pacific in this Program?**

A: Areas off the Pacific coast were not included in the Draft Proposed Program and are also not included in this Proposed Program.

**Q: Why is there no activity proposed in the Pacific?**

A: The exclusion of the Pacific Region is consistent with the long-standing interests of Pacific coast states, as framed in the 2006 West Coast Governors Agreement on Ocean Health. This agreement expressed the Governors' opposition to oil and gas development off their

coasts, and these states have continued to voice concerns, including in formal comments responding to the Request for Information.

**Q: What is different for the Pacific in this Program?**

A: There is no difference between the current Program and the Proposed Program. Neither Program includes areas in the Pacific for leasing consideration.

**ADDITIONAL BACKGROUND**

**Q: Why is this planning process necessary?**

A: The Five-Year Program planning process mandated by the Congress through the Outer Continental Shelf Lands Act (OCSLA) was specifically designed to provide a long-term strategic approach to exploration and development of the Nation's Outer Continental Shelf (OCS) oil and gas resources. It can take 15-20 years after a Five-Year Program is approved for exploration and development to occur and proceed to production in areas included in that Program.

A significant portion—some 16 percent of America's domestic crude oil production and 5 percent of our natural gas production—comes from the Nation's OCS. That production is coming from leases issued as a result of previous five-year programs going back decades.

**Q: How much energy does the Outer Continental Shelf provide our nation?**

A: The Outer Continental Shelf currently provides about 16 percent of domestic oil production and about 5 percent of domestic natural gas production. In 2015, production on the U.S. OCS provided 567 million barrels of oil and 1.35 trillion cubic feet of natural gas, the equivalent of the energy needed to power about 119 million U.S. households for one year.

**Q: What is a Lease Sale?**

A: A lease sale is the process by which BOEM transfers the right to explore and develop the oil and natural gas resources within the leased area of the OCS, subject to the Department of the Interior approval and regulation. Before each sale, BOEM prepares National Environmental Policy Act documents. BOEM conducts each lease sale pursuant to all relevant statutes, as well as its own regulations.

**Q: The Department of the Interior (through BOEM and BSEE) has an extensive regulatory and inspection program; can you describe this a bit more?**

A: The oil industry cannot just begin operations once a lease is obtained. A company must file an exploration plan before drilling any wells, which is subject to a technical and environmental review by BOEM, followed by an engineering review and drilling permit by Bureau of Safety and Environmental Enforcement (BSEE). Once a discovery is made and the company is interested in developing, it must file a development and production plan for

BOEM to review before production can begin. For major facilities, BSEE conducts an onsite inspection before allowing production to begin. Often this is a joint inspection with the US Coast Guard. Other applicable permits, such as waste discharge permits, must also be obtained from other Federal agencies, as required by law. BSEE has inspectors that daily fly offshore to conduct safety and environmental inspections.

**Q: What is the Outer Continental Shelf (OCS)?**

A: The Outer Continental Shelf consists of all submerged lands (the seafloor) lying seaward of State waters. The OCS begins three nautical miles off the coast (except for Texas and the Gulf coast of Florida, where state waters go out approximately nine nautical miles) and extend to at least 200 nautical miles from the coastline or where it meets another country's waters closer than 200 nautical miles.

The Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (BOEM) manages over 1.7 billion acres of submerged lands on the OCS.

**Q: What is the Outer Continental Shelf Lands Act (OCSLA)?**

A: The Outer Continental Shelf Lands Act, or OCSLA, was passed in 1953 and authorizes the Secretary of the Interior to lease portions of the OCS for oil and gas development, minerals extraction, and renewable energy development. As a result of amendments in 1978, the OCSLA dictates that the first step is to prepare and maintain a schedule of proposed lease sales determined to "best meet national energy needs for the five-year period following its approval or reapproval."

**Q: What is a Programmatic EIS?**

A: A Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement (Programmatic EIS) is a document that analyzes the potential environmental impacts of an action with a broad geographic scope, such as oil and gas leasing in Outer Continental Shelf waters. BOEM uses the Programmatic EIS to analyze the most important environmental issues are when it comes to oil and gas leasing; how we can effectively avoid or manage environmental impacts; and what other options, or alternatives, for the proposed action are available. BOEM begins to determine what the issues and impacts are through a process under NEPA called "scoping."

**Q: What is scoping?**

A: Scoping is the process used to identify all of the issues BOEM should consider when developing the Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement (Programmatic EIS). The "scope" of the Programmatic EIS includes all of the issues that BOEM should consider when it is analyzing the potential effects of the Five Year Outer Continental Shelf Oil and Gas Leasing Program. It also includes the other options – or "alternatives" – BOEM should look at in addition to what is being proposed. BOEM seeks public input to tell us what environmental resources and potential impacts are most important when it comes to oil and gas development on the OCS.

**Q: What is a Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement (Programmatic EIS) and why was it developed as part of the process to develop a new Five-Year Program?**

A: BOEM recognizes that there is a potential for environmental impact from the activities associated with leasing for oil and gas. In addition, the Outer Continental Shelf Lands Act requires evaluation of a number of environmental factors as part of the Section 18 analyses, and BOEM has opted to use NEPA as a vehicle to do a programmatic analysis of potential oil and gas impacts. The Notice of Intent (NOI), published concurrently with the Notice of Availability of the Draft Proposed Program, announced the public scoping process for the Programmatic EIS. Throughout the scoping process, Federal, state, and local government agencies and the public had many opportunities to assist BOEM in determining the significant issues and alternatives for analysis in the Programmatic EIS. The public now has an additional opportunity to comment on the Draft Programmatic EIS. All substantive comments received on the Draft Programmatic EIS will be addressed in the Final Programmatic EIS. Subsequent EISs will be prepared for each lease sale.

**Q: How will the information being gathered for the Environmental Impact Statement affect the final decision about where oil and gas leasing will take place?**

A: Only those areas and options that the Secretary decided were appropriate to include in the Draft Proposed Program (DPP) decision were analyzed in the Proposed Program and the associated Draft Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement (Programmatic EIS). Subsequently, only the Outer Continental Shelf (OCS) areas and options that the Secretary decides to include in the Proposed Program will be analyzed in the Proposed Final Program (PFP) and in the Final Programmatic EIS. The Final Programmatic EIS will consider potential geographic exclusions and mitigations on leasing activities for the 2017–2022 Program, and the final decision on the program may adopt any exclusions or restrictions that the Secretary considers necessary for environmental protection that are sufficiently identifiable at that stage. Those exclusions or restrictions not chosen at the program stage may, as appropriate, be considered at later, more focused stages in the leasing process, including the lease sale and plan review processes.