

BOEM five-year OCS plan meets opposition in Senate hearing

May 19, 2016

The Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee held a hearing on May 19 to discuss the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management's (BOEM) 2017-2022 Outer Continental Shelf (OCS) oil and gas leasing program. The proposed program calls for 10 lease sales in the Gulf of Mexico, 3 in the Arctic, and none in the Pacific or Atlantic OCS regions.

Opponents of the plan, including Committee Chair Senator Lisa Murkowski (R-AK) and Senator Bill Cassidy (R-LA), argued that it would negatively impact jobs and the economy, and potentially slow the progress the U.S. has made in decreasing its reliance on foreign oil imports. They were also upset over the Administration's decisions to limit the number of Arctic leases and to remove the Atlantic leases from the plan. Chairman Murkowski cited the 70 percent of Alaskans who support Arctic lease sales as an indication that the agency is biased in its evaluation of the region.

Proponents of the plan, including Committee Ranking Member Senator Maria Cantwell (D-WA), argued that the limited leases were better for the environment based on the devastating impact of the BP Deepwater Horizon oil spill in 2010, a lack of updated navigation charts required for new leases, and their concern for the exposure of marine mammals to seismic surveys used in oil and gas exploration.

Sources: The Bureau of Ocean Energy Management, Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources, British Petroleum (BP), Federal Register
