

Federal agency declares Gulf of Mexico safe for seismic surveys

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The Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (BOEM) declared on August 8 that the Gulf of Mexico is safe for seismic surveys. BOEM's Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement (PEIS), a review conducted in tandem with the Bureau of Safety and Environmental Enforcement (BSEE) and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's (NOAA) National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), assessed the potential environmental impacts of geological and geophysical activities on marine ecosystems associated with the proposed 2012-2017 Outer Continental Shelf (OCS) Oil and Gas Leasing Program. The review has been in progress since 2013.

Seismic surveys are undertaken in order to explore for oil and natural gas, locate potential areas for renewable energy projects, and support marine mineral resource programs. In a recent House Natural Resources Subcommittee hearing on offshore energy development in the Atlantic, witnesses discussed the potential for oil and gas exploration, although some raised concerns about the safety of seismic surveys for marine life. BOEM concluded from its environmental review that geophysical surveys of the Gulf of Mexico would not cause major harm to the ecosystem.

Expanding seismic surveying in the Gulf's OCS is an instrumental step for the implementation of President Trump's executive order, "Implementing an America-First Offshore Energy Strategy."

Sources: Bureau of Ocean Energy Management, E&E News, House Natural Resources Subcommittee on Energy and Mineral Resources
