

Coastal Plain Oil and Gas Leasing Program / Environmental Impact Statement Questions & Answers

Q: What is a Notice of Intent to prepare an Environmental Impact Statement?

A: Notice of Intent (NOI) is required under the National Environmental Policy Act to initiate the public process pursuant to an Environmental Impact Statement. It provides notification to the public that BLM is soliciting comments on the proposed action to create an oil and gas leasing program for the Coastal Plain. The purpose of the public scoping process is to determine relevant issues that will influence the scope of the EIS, including alternatives to the proposed action within the parameters outlined in the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act of 2017.

Q: Why is the action being proposed?

A: The proposed action is in accordance with the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act of 2017 (Tax Act) to implement a leasing program within the Coastal Plain. The Leasing EIS will serve to inform BLM's implementation of the Tax Act, including the requirement to hold not fewer than two lease sales area-wide. It may also inform post-lease activities, including seismic and drilling exploration, development, and transportation of oil and gas in and from the Coastal Plain. Specifically, the Leasing EIS will consider and analyze the potential environmental impacts of various leasing alternatives, including the areas to offer for sale, and the terms and conditions (i.e., lease stipulations and best management practices) to be applied to leases and associated oil and gas activities to properly balance oil and gas development with existing uses and conservation of surface resources, and to limit the footprint of production and support facilities on Federal lands to no more than 2,000 surface acres.

Q: What are the roles of the FWS and BLM in preparing the Coastal Plain Leasing Program Environmental Impact Statement?

A: Title II, Section 20001 of the Tax Act directs the Secretary of the Interior, acting through the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), to establish and administer a competitive oil and gas leasing program for the leasing, development, production, and transportation of oil and gas in and from the Coastal Plain. The Secretary is directed to manage the oil and gas program on the Coastal Plain in a manner similar to the administration of lease sales under the Naval Petroleum Reserves Production Act of 1976 (including regulations).

Q: What are the public lands affected by the Coastal Plain Oil and Gas Leasing Program Environmental Impact Statement?

A: 1.5 million acres of the western coastal plain of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge (less than 8 percent of total ANWR acreage), previously known as the 1002 area referring to the section of the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (ANILCA) regarding oil and gas activity on the Coastal Plain.

Q: What is the process for the Coastal Plain Leasing EIS?

A:

- Prepare Notice of Intent (NOI) to prepare the EIS to be published in the Federal Register:
- Conduct Public Scoping Meetings and Alaska Native Consultation: (time period specified in NOI April 20-June 19)
- Prepare the Draft EIS
- Prepare and publish Notice of Availability (NOA) for the Draft EIS. The Federal Register announcement will include the dates of the public review period and dates of all public meetings to be held in conjunction with the comment period.
- Publish Federal Register Notice to solicit interest in lease sale areas (concurrent with the NOA for the Draft EIS).
- Assess comments received on the Draft EIS and the expressions of interest and prepare Final EIS.
- Publish a NOA for the Final EIS in the Federal Register.
- Issue ROD and Lease Sale Notice.
- Hold Lease Sale. Issue leases that meet fair market value within 60 days.

Q: What kind of outreach are you conducting?

A: The Notice of Intent begins a 60-day public scoping period. During this time, we will hold public meetings in communities on the North Slope and in other relevant cities, and we will conduct Tribal and Alaska Native Corporation consultation. There will also be extensive outreach via social media and the BLM Alaska website. Scoping comments can be dropped off to the BLM State Office in person, can be submitted by email, fax or in person at any of the public meetings.

- website: www.blm.gov/alaska/coastal-plain-eis
- email: blm_ak_coastalplain_EIS@blm.gov
- mail: Attn: Coastal Plain Oil and Gas Leasing Program EIS
222 West 7th Avenue, Stop #13
Anchorage, Alaska 99513.

Comment Period Extension

Q: Why was it requested the BLM extend the public comment period?

A: Requests were made for various reasons, including adequate time to provide written and verbal comments due to subsistence hunting and fishing harvests.

Q: Who requested the extension?

A: Various stakeholders, including individuals, environmental organizations, and six tribal governments (to date).

Q: Why didn't BLM extend the comment period?

A: We have received a diversity of stakeholders' input explaining the various issues BLM will take into account as we develop the EIS. BLM has heard consistent messages across the State regarding thoughts, interests and concerns to inform development of the EIS. While the public comment period will not be extended, there are other means to provide substantive comments, including online, in-person or by mail.

It is also important to characterize the objective of the scoping comment period. The scoping period seeks substantive comments to include concerns about particular resources or habitats, as well as information that can be used to develop alternatives to the leasing program, such as the identification of high-priority areas for leasing.

Q: Why did BLM extend the comment period for the Greater Mooses Tooth (GMT) 2 SEIS, but not the Coastal Plain Leasing EIS?

A: The Coastal Plain EIS scoping period is to gather input to inform the development of the Coastal Plain Oil and Gas Leasing EIS. The GMT2 comment period was for a review of the draft analysis, and it was determined an extension was appropriate.

Meetings

Q: Why didn't the BLM expand the public meetings?

A: BLM did expand the scoping meeting locations to include Venetie at the request of the Arctic Village and Venetie village councils (Venetie has a pop. 202, and is approximately 25 miles south of ANWR, 175 miles south of the Coastal Plain). BLM added the Washington, D.C. meeting in response to the concerns of several environmental organizations.

*Venetie is pronounced VEEN-uh-tie (VEEN-ə-tie)