



THE SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR  
WASHINGTON

JUN 29 2017

The Honorable Ray Cooper  
Governor of North Carolina  
Raleigh, North Carolina 27603

Dear Governor Cooper:

The purpose of this letter is to inform you that, at my direction, the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (BOEM) has initiated the process of preparing a new National Outer Continental Shelf (OCS) Oil and Gas Leasing Program (National OCS Program). Pursuant to section 18 of the OCS Lands Act, 43 U.S.C. § 1344, the Secretary of the Interior (Secretary) is required to prepare, periodically revise, and maintain an oil and gas leasing program. The National OCS Program is a schedule of proposed lease sales determined to “best meet national energy needs for the five-year period following its approval or reapproval.”

A key aspect of the President’s Executive Order of April 28, 2017, “Implementing an America-First Offshore Energy Strategy” and my Secretary’s Order of May 1, 2017, the Department of the Interior is initiating the process to develop a new National OCS Program, approximately 2 years ahead of schedule. The President’s Executive Order reconfirmed that it is “the policy of the United States to encourage energy exploration and production, including on the Outer Continental Shelf, in order to maintain the Nation’s position as a global energy leader and foster energy security and resilience for the benefit of the American people, while ensuring that any such activity is safe and environmentally responsible.” By developing a new National OCS Program, we will 1) enhance opportunities for energy exploration, leasing, and development of the OCS; 2) establish regulatory certainty for OCS activities; and 3) enhance conservation stewardship. A new National OCS Program will provide jobs, energy security, and revenue for the American people. Revenue generated by the Department of the Interior from oil and natural gas leasing on the OCS is deployed nationwide for programs such as the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) and the Historic Preservation Fund (HPF). Since 1982, offshore oil and natural gas leasing revenue has provided \$30.6 billion to LWCF and \$4.65 billion to HPF.

The National OCS Program for 2017-2022, signed by then-Secretary Jewell on January 17, 2017, will become effective on July 1, 2017. It schedules 10 potential lease sales in the Gulf of Mexico and one in Cook Inlet, offshore Alaska; it will remain in effect until a new National OCS Program is approved. In order to significantly revise an approved National OCS Program, including considering leasing in areas other than those in the approved National OCS Program, I am required to undertake all substantive and procedural steps set forth in section 18, listed below.

Development of a new National OCS Program under the OCS Lands Act includes several public comment periods and a multistep analysis, to include 1) initial solicitation of information and comments through the publication of a Request for Information and Comments (RFI) in the

Federal Register; 2) development of a draft proposed leasing program (DPP), a proposed leasing program (PP), and a proposed final leasing program (PFP); 3) submittal of the PFP to the President and Congress; and 4) approval by the Secretary of a final leasing program. It is important to note that in addition to providing information and comments in response to the RFI, interested parties will have opportunities to comment on the DPP and the PP.

The BOEM will receive information and comments from interested parties for a period of 45 days following publication of the RFI in the Federal Register.

In response to the RFI, and pursuant to section 18 of the OCS Lands Act, we respectfully invite you to submit any information or comments that you believe should be taken into consideration during the preparation of the new National OCS Program. In particular, pursuant to section 18(a)(2)(F), we ask you to identify any "laws, goals, and policies" of your State that you consider relevant for my consideration in deciding where and when to schedule potential lease sales.

We look forward to working with you throughout the development of the new National OCS Program. In order to facilitate any coordination with your State, we request that you provide us with the name and contact information of the person with whom the Department of the Interior should work during the development of the new National OCS Program.

If you have any questions or comments concerning the enclosed information and documents, please do not hesitate to contact Ms. Renee Orr, BOEM, Chief, Office of Strategic Resources, at (202) 208-3515 or [Renee.Orr@boem.gov](mailto:Renee.Orr@boem.gov).

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "R. Zinke", with a large, sweeping flourish above the name.

Ryan K. Zinke  
Secretary of the Interior

Enclosures