

The EIS analyzes the environmental consequences of the disposal and subsequent reuse of the 638 acres comprising Fort Ritchie. Two disposal alternatives were analyzed: (1) The No Action Alternative, which entails maintaining the property in caretaker status after closure; and (2) the Encumbered Disposal Alternative, which entails transferring the property to future owners with Army-imposed limitations, or encumbrances, on the future use of the property. Additionally, the Final EIS analyses the potential environmental and socioeconomic consequences of three reuse alternatives: (1) Low Intensity Reuse Alternative; (2) Low-Medium Intensity Reuse Alternative; and (3) Medium Intensity Reuse Alternative. Disposal alternatives were developed by the Army. Reuse alternatives were developed by the Fort Ritchie Local Redevelopment Authority. The resources areas evaluated for potential impacts by the proposed action (disposal) and the secondary action (reuse) include: Land Use; Climate; Air Quality; Noise; Geology, Soils, and Topography; Water Resources; Infrastructure; Hazardous and Toxic Substances; Biological Resources and Ecosystems; Cultural Resources; Legacy Resources; Sociological Environment; Economic Development; Quality of Life; Installation Agreement, and Permits and Regulatory Authorizations. The Army's preferred alternative for disposal of Fort Ritchie is disposal with encumbered title on all Fort Ritchie property transfers. An encumbrance is any Army-imposed or legal constraint on the future use or development of the property. Encumbrances support future Army interests, regulatory and statutory compliance, promote continued protection of sensitive resources to foster environmentally sustainable redevelopment, hasten availability of property, or provide mitigation requirements. Encumbrances determined relevant in the EIS to disposal of Fort Ritchie relate to wetlands, historical resources, threatened and endangered species, utilities easements, easements and rights-of-way, access easements, utility interdependencies, remedial activities, and lead-based paint. Property will be remediated as appropriate and retained in caretaker status until transfer by encumbered title.

The Army proposes to make the 638 acres available for conveyance to, and subsequent reuse by, the Fort Ritchie Local Redevelopment Authority (LRA).

**COPIES:** Comments received on the Draft EIS have been considered and responses

included in a document dated January 1998. This document, together with the Draft EIS dated July 1997, constitute the Final EIS. Copies of the January 1998 document, along with the July 1997 Draft EIS, will be available for review at the following locations: Adams County Library, Gettysburg, PA; Alexander Hamilton Library, Waynesboro, PA; Blue Ridge Summit Library, Blue Ridge Summit, PA; C. Burr Artz Central Library, Frederick, MD; Robert F. Barrick Library, Fort Ritchie, MD; and the Washington County Free Library, Hagerstown, MD.

**DATES:** Written public comments and suggestions received within 30 days of the publication of the Environmental Protection Agency's Notice of Availability for this action will be considered by the Army during final decision making.

**ADDRESSES:** A copy of the January 1998 document and the July 1997 Draft EIS, together which constitute the Final Impact Statement, may be obtained from, and comments provided to, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, ATTN: Mr. Clifford Kidd (CENAB-PL-EM), Baltimore District, P.O. Box 1715, Baltimore, Maryland 21203-1715, or by calling direct to (410) 962-3100.

Dated: May 14, 1998.

**Raymond J. Fatz,**

*Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Army (Environment, Safety and Occupational Health) OASA (I,L&E).*

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## DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE

### Department of the Army, Corps of Engineers

#### Notice of Availability and Public Hearings for Draft Environmental Impact Statement for Beaufort Sea Oil and Gas Development/Northstar Project, Beaufort Sea, Alaska

**AGENCY:** U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, DoD.

**ACTION:** Notice of availability.

**SUMMARY:** Pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA), as amended (42 U.S.C. 4371 et seq.), the Army Corps of Engineers, Alaska District, in coordination with the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA); the Minerals Management Service (MMS); the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS); the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS); and the North Slope Borough as cooperating agencies, is issuing a Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS)

for oil and gas development activities within the Northstar Unit in the Beaufort Sea, Alaska.

**DATES:** Written comments on the DEIS, draft National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permit, or draft 1422 Underground Injection Control (UIC) permit will be accepted during the public review period, beginning June 1, 1998 and ending July 30, 1998. All written comments on the DEIS and related federal permits and approvals should be sent to the Alaska District Army Corps of Engineers, Regulatory Branch no later than July 30, 1998.

#### FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

Copies of the DEIS including appendices, or information on matters pertaining to this notice can be obtained on request from: Ms. Terry Carpenter, Project Manager, Alaska District Army Corps of Engineers, Regulatory Branch, P.O. Box 898, Anchorage, AK 99506-0898, fax (907) 753-5567.

**SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:** 1. BP Exploration (Alaska) Inc. (BPXA) proposes to develop and produce oil and gas from the Northstar Unit, located between 2 and 8 miles offshore of Point Storkersen in the Alaskan Beaufort Sea. Oil and gas drilling, processing, and production is proposed to be located at Seal Island, a manmade gravel island built during the 1980s. BPXA's proposed project includes reconstructing and enlarging Seal Island and directionally drilling production, gas injection, and disposal wells from the island. Transportation of oil and gas would be by buried subsea pipelines from Seal Island to shore and above-ground pipelines from the shore to onshore facilities and the beginning of the TransAlaska Pipeline System (TAPS) at Pump Station 1.

2. Because this project represents the first development of Outer Continental Shelf oil and gas resources in the Alaskan Beaufort Sea, the DEIS addresses a range of potentially applicable technologies and development/production options and provides useful information to evaluate future development proposals.

3. Analysis of these options for the Northstar reservoir resulted in identification of 4 action alternatives for development/production of oil and gas from the Northstar Unit. The DEIS evaluates the impacts of the 4 action alternatives and a no action alternative, and identifies an environmentally preferred alternative.

4. The DEIS consists of 4 volumes, with an additional 3 volumes of appendices (A-Project Description; B-Biological Assessment; C-J-other

information, including NPDES documents). The DEIS Executive Summary can also be viewed at the following web site: <http://www.northstareis.com>.

5. Copies of the DEIS and appendices are also available for public review at:

- a. Alaska Resources Library and Information Services, 3150 C Street, Suite 100, Anchorage, Alaska 99503.
- b. Z.J. Loussac Library, 3600 Denali Street, Anchorage, Alaska 99503.
- c. Tuzzy Consortium Library, Barrow, Alaska.
- d. North Slope Borough Office, Barrow, Alaska.
- e. Barrow City Office, Barrow, Alaska.
- f. Alaska Eskimo Whaling Commission Office, Barrow, Alaska.
- g. Nuiqsut City Office, Nuiqsut, Alaska.
- h. Kaktovik City Office, Kaktovik, Alaska.
- i. Noel Wien Public Library, 1215 Cowles Street, Fairbanks, Alaska 99701.
- j. Valdez Consortium Library, P.O. Box 609, Valdez, Alaska 99686.
- k. Juneau Public Library, 292 Marine Way, Juneau, Alaska 99801.

6. This DEIS is intended to meet the NEPA compliance and/or other public notice requirements for the following agency actions:

- a. *Corps of Engineers*: Section 10, Rivers and Harbors Act; Section 404, Clean Water Act; Section 103, Marine Protection, Resources, and Sanctuary Act.
- b. *Environmental Protection agency*: Section 402, Clean Water Act (NPDES); Part C, Safe Drinking Water Act (UIC).
- c. *Minerals Management Service*: Outer Continental Shelf (OCS) Development and Production Plan.

7. EPA's draft 402 NPDES and UIC permits and explanatory fact sheets are included in this DEIS as Appendices F, G, H, and J and are intended for public review and comment.

8. The MMS is requesting comments on the Northstar Project Description (Appendix A of the DEIS, and analyzed as Alternative 2 in the DEIS). The Northstar development project includes drilling wells into, and producing oil from, two OCS leases, and requires an approved Development and Production Plan (DPP). The Northstar Project Description (Appendix A) was developed to meet the submission requirements under 30 CFR 250.34 for a DPP. The MMS has determined that the Project Description, in conjunction with the DEIS, meets the requirements under 30 CFR 250.34(f). The Northstar development offshore facilities will be located on State of Alaska submerged lands. An oil spill contingency plan will be submitted pursuant to 30 CFR 254.50

and 254.53. The plan will be reviewed under the State of Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation process, and is not part of either the DEIS or DPP.

9. No OCS action to approve, disapprove, or require modification to the DPP will be taken by MMS until the Final EIS is released. No OCS development and production activities can be conducted unless and until the DPP is approved as required by 30 CFR 250.34(1).

10. A Biological Assessment, as required by the Endangered Species Act, is included as Appendix B to the DEIS. This document will be used to initiate formal consultation under Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act with the USFWS and NMFS on three species: the endangered bowhead whale, and the threatened spectacled and Steller's eiders.

11. All written comments on the DEIS, draft NPDES permit, draft UIC permit, or DPP should be sent to: Ms. Terry Carpenter, Project Manager, Regulatory Branch, Alaska District Army Corps of Engineers, P.O. Box 898, Anchorage, AK 99506-0898. Comments specific to EPA's draft permit will be forwarded to EPA for their consideration, and those specific to MMS's DPP will be forwarded to MMS.

12. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers will be conducting public workshops at 5 locations in Alaska early in the 60-day comment period. These workshops are intended to help the public become familiar with the DEIS and the draft NPDES and UIC permits.

13. To collect oral and written comments on the DEIS (Corps), the draft NPDES and UIC permits (EPA), or the DPP (MMS), separately scheduled public hearings will be held at the same 5 locations in Alaska. A court reporter will record the proceedings at each public hearing.

14. The public workshops and public hearings will be held on the following dates:

- a. *Public Workshops*:
  - (1) Tuesday, June 23, 1998, 7:30 p.m.—Nuiqsut Community Center, Nuiqsut, Alaska.
  - (2) Wednesday, June 24, 1998, 6:00 p.m.—Kaktovik Community Center, Kaktovik, Alaska.
  - (3) Thursday, June 25, 1998, 7:30 p.m.—North Slope Borough Assembly Room, Barrow, Alaska.
  - (4) Tuesday, June 30, 1998, 7:00 p.m.—BLM Conference Room, Fairbanks, Alaska.
  - (5) Wednesday, July 1, 1998, 7:00 p.m.—Federal Building Conference Room, Anchorage, Alaska.
- b. *Public Hearings*:

(1) Monday, July 13, 1998, 7:30 p.m.—North Slope Borough Assembly Room, Barrow, Alaska.

(2) Tuesday, July 14, 1998, 7:00 p.m.—Kaktovik Community Center, Kaktovik, Alaska.

(3) Wednesday, July 15, 1998, 7:00 p.m.—Nuiqsut Community Center, Nuiqsut, Alaska.

(4) Thursday, July 16, 1998, 7:00 p.m.—BLM Conference Room, Fairbanks, Alaska.

(5) Monday, July 20, 1998, 7:00 p.m.—Wilda Marston Theatre at Z.J. Loussac Library, Anchorage, Alaska.

15. An Inupiat translator will be available at the public hearings held in Barrow, Kaktovik and Nuiqsut. Oral and written comments on the DEIS received during the public review period will be addressed in the Final Environmental Impact Statement.

16. The federal permits and approvals are also subject to review for consistency with the State Coastal Management Program. Coastal Consistency review of the Northstar development project will be initiated on June 1, 1998 with release of the DEIS.

**Gregory D. Showalter,**

*Army Federal Register Liaison Officer.*

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## DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE

### Department of the Navy

#### Public Hearing for the Draft Environmental Impact Statement for Increased Flight and Related Operations in the Patuxent River Complex, Patuxent River, MD

**AGENCY:** Department of the Navy, DOD.

**ACTION:** Announcement of public hearing.

**SUMMARY:** The Department of the Navy has prepared and filed with the Environmental Protection Agency the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) for Increased Flight and Related Operations in the Patuxent River Complex, Patuxent River, MD. A public hearing will be held for the purpose to receive oral and written comments on the DEIS. Federal, state and local agencies, and interested individuals are invited to be present or represented at the hearing.

**DATES:** Hearing dates are as follows:

- 1. June 10, 1998, 7:00 to 8:30 p.m., Lusby, MD
- 2. June 15, 1998, 7:00 to 8:30 p.m., Cambridge, MD
- 3. June 17, 1998, 7:00 to 8:30 p.m., Heathsville, VA