

From the Desk of:

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Regional Director, Alaska OCS Bureau
Bureau of Ocean Energy Management, Regulation and Enforcement
3801 Centerpoint Drive, Suite 500
Anchorage, Alaska 99503-5820
("Attn: Chukchi Sea Draft SEIS")

I am writing to submit my comments regarding the Chukchi Sea Draft SEIS. This is one of the single most important issues Alaska will face well into the foreseeable future.

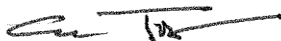
I strongly support drilling on Alaska's Outer Continental Shelf (OCS) because the Chukchi Sea is considered one of the best opportunities for offshore exploration in the country. If you are going to have a drilling program, you need to go where the resource is. Clearly there is a huge resource available. The Chukchi OCS is an important future source of U.S. energy supply with current estimates ranging up to 29 billion barrels of oil and 209 trillion cubic feet of natural gas potentially in place.

The arctic as it exists in Alaska and off Alaska's coasts is without question a very challenging environment for any industrial undertaking. The proposed development will be performed by a very experienced group of people, and it will be overseen by competent regulators. Production resulting from Sale 193 will occur under the world's highest safety and environmental standards. Many mitigation measures, including seasonal operating restrictions, will minimize potential impacts, and conflicts avoidance mechanisms will protect subsistence whaling and other harvest activities. These resources can be developed safely, and since the country needs the energy, and Alaska needs the jobs, this is a real win – win opportunity that should be moved forward.

Drilling in the Arctic is vastly different than deepwater exploration and development in other places. There are major differences in well design, as well as fundamental differences in the geology on Alaska's OCS versus the places where deepwater operations are occurring today. The pressure encountered in deepwater drilling is many times greater than in Alaska where wells would be in very shallow water. All of these contrasts should lead BOEM to conclude that exploration should move forward in the Chukchi.

All in all, the operators that propose to drill on Alaska's OCS have a huge experience base. They can do this correctly. In the past decade, over 250 studies have been funded in the Arctic, with the majority focused on the Beaufort and Chukchi Seas. The time for study is over, and now it is time to allow the development of Alaska's OCS to move forward.

Sincerely,



Scott Thorson