

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

November 14, 2011

The Honorable Ken Salazar, Secretary
U.S. Department of the Interior
1849 C Street, NW
Washington, DC 20240

Dear Secretary Salazar:

Last week's announcement of new lease sales in the Beaufort and Chukchi Seas as part of the 2012-17 Outer Continental Shelf Lease Sale Plan was good news for Alaska and for our nation's ability to provide secure sources of domestic energy. However, without quick progress on Shell Exploration and Production Company's Plan of Exploration for the Chukchi Sea in 2012, promises of future lease sales will ring hollow to Alaskans. I urge you to quickly release a review schedule with hard deadlines so Shell and many of the other companies involved can mobilize resources in time to make 2012 Chukchi exploration a reality.

I appreciate the Bureau of Ocean Energy and Management's (BOEM) timely and thorough completion of the revised Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (SEIS) for Chukchi Lease Sale 193. The record of decision for the SEIS on October 3, 2011, and the subsequent reaffirmation of the lease sale by the federal courts paved the way for reviewing the Plan of Exploration Shell submitted in May of this year.

I know that Shell has worked with BOEM to provide additional information as needed, and I ask you to have the agency begin the completeness review as soon as possible so the public comment period can begin and Shell can have a final decision. As you are aware, in order to marshal the large number of vessels from around the world required for safe operations, they need a clear and hopefully favorable decision by the end of the year.

In addition to the Plan of Exploration, BOEM must also approve the Contingency Plan (C-Plan) for operations in both the Beaufort and Chukchi Seas. BOEM has had the C-Plans for over six months. My understanding is the Alaska C-Plans have been approved by the agency several times in the past, both pre and post Deepwater Horizon incident, and the current plan only makes minor changes to the previously approved plans. Although I fully understand and support the need to have a robust plan in place, I hope a concrete timetable for completing the review will be established soon. No one, and certainly no Alaskan, wants to see an oil spill of any size in the waters off our coasts. At

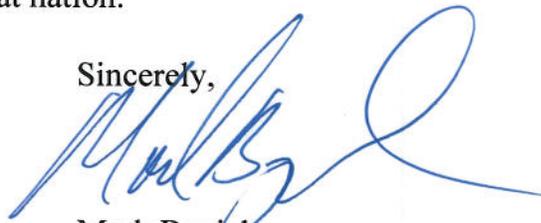
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the same time, the company faces practical and logistical deadlines. Your personal attention to both the quality of the plan and delivery schedule will be greatly appreciated.

Finally, allow me a moment to brag about an Alaskan. I truly appreciate your selection of Tommy Beaudreau as the Director of BOEM. He has been direct, helpful and responsive with my staff, and I have personally enjoyed meeting with him as well. While I don't expect to agree with him on every decision, I have faith that Alaskans will be heard and that decisions will be rational and fair.

As always, thank you for your consideration of my requests and for your hard work on behalf of Alaska and this great nation.

Sincerely,



Mark Begich
United States Senator

cc: Dr. James Kendall, BOEM Alaska Region Director