

**Minerals Management Service
Interim Policy Document**

Effective Date: January 4, 2008

IPD No: 08-05

Series: Offshore Minerals Management

Title: Environmental Studies Program

Originating Office: Environmental Sciences Branch, Environmental Division, Offshore Minerals Management

1. Purpose. This Interim Policy Document (IPD) describes the Minerals Management Service (MMS) Environmental Studies Program (ESP). It sets the policy and establishes the responsibility for program management and implementation. It directs all personnel engaged in ESP activities to comply with the requirements of this IPD.

2. Objective. The MMS ESP is intended to provide information needed for prediction, assessment, and management of impacts on the human, marine, and coastal environments of the Outer Continental Shelf (OCS) and near shore areas that may be affected by OCS oil and gas, marine mineral, and alternative energy activities.

3. Authorities.

- A. The Outer Continental Shelf Lands Act (OCSLA—43 U.S.C. § 1331, et. seq., Section 1346).
- B. The Energy Policy Act of 2005 (Public Law 109-58), Section 388.
- C. The Oil Pollution Act of 1990 (Title 33 Chapter 40 Subchapter IV § 2761).

4. References.

- A. Office of Management and Budget (OMB) Final Information Quality Bulletin for Peer Review, December 16, 2004.
- B. Minerals Management Service Information Quality Guidelines, September 30, 2002.
- C. U.S. Department of the Interior (DOI) Information Quality Guidelines Pursuant to Section 515 of the Treasury and General Government Appropriations Act for Fiscal Year 2001 (Public Law 1006-554; H.R. 5658), May 10, 2002.

5. Definitions.

- A. The National Studies List (NSL) includes all projects approved by the MMS Directorate that require funding transactions during the current fiscal year.

B. The Studies Development Plan includes documents prepared annually by the Regions and Headquarters to describe relevant program activities and the proposed environmental studies needed to gather information for the resource management actions.

6. Policy. It is the policy of MMS to:

A. Provide the best available scientific and technical information to support decisions on the offshore oil, gas, alternative energy, and hard minerals programs which may have the potential to affect environmental, social, and economic conditions;

B. Conduct environmental studies primarily through extramural agreements. On an exceptional basis, the ESP will sponsor intramural research with existing capabilities;

C. Maintain data quality consistent with the OMB Bulletin, the DOI Manual, and DOI and MMS Information Quality Guidelines;

D. Maintain an independent, external, scientifically qualified, advisory committee to advise the MMS Directorate on the feasibility and appropriateness of ESP research;

E. Consider stakeholder input in the assessment of information needs and studies development;

F. Maximize distribution of ESP findings through encouragement of publication in the open literature;

G. Encourage partnership in research; and

H. Emphasize diligence and quality in technical and financial management of research.

7. Responsibilities.

A. The Associate Director, Offshore Minerals Management (AD/OMM), is the approving authority for the NSL. The AD/OMM also approves any changes to the NSL for dollar amounts greater than \$300,000 and ensures that appropriate resources are available for management and conduct of the ESP.

B. The Regional Directors (RD's) and the Pacific Regional Manager are responsible for:

(1) Establishing regional priorities and submitting a regional request (to Chief, Environmental Sciences Branch [ESB]) for studies to be considered in development of the annual NSL; and

(2) Submitting regional requests (to Chief, ESB) from the Region for additional new projects during the year.

C. The Headquarters Division Chiefs (or Office Manager, Alternative Energy Program Office) are responsible for:

- (1) Submitting requests (to Chief, ESB) for studies to be considered in development of the NSL;
- (2) Submitting requests (to Chief, ESB) for additional new projects during the year; and
- (3) Indicating the relative priority when submitting endorsement of multiple studies.

D. The Regional Supervisor for Leasing and Environment (RS-LE) is responsible for:

- (1) Providing the guidance and resources necessary for the effective and efficient management of the regional component of the ESP;
- (2) Providing guidance on regional priorities; and
- (3) Approving the final procurement package submission to the Chief, ESB. (In the Pacific Region the Chief, Office of Environmental Evaluation, has these responsibilities.)

E. The Chief, Environmental Division, is the approving authority for any changes to the NSL ranging from greater than \$50,000 to \$300,000.

F. The Chief, Environmental Sciences Branch, is responsible for:

- (1) Managing all aspects of the ESP in a manner which stresses mission relevance, scientific quality, timeliness, cooperation with other potential sponsors, and financial accountability;
- (2) Providing guidance to appropriate program offices regarding the development of the annual Studies Development Plan;
- (3) Preparing the Headquarters component of the annual Studies Development Plan;
- (4) Proposing the relative priority for the diverse Headquarters studies under consideration;
- (5) Preparing a draft NSL to create a balanced national program which addresses the highest priority national and regional information needs;
- (6) Approving all final procurement packages from a program perspective (final packages may also be approved by a designee); and
- (7) Approving any changes to the NSL up to and including \$50,000.

G. The Chief, Procurement Operations Branch, is responsible for ensuring that the appropriate resources are available to process procurement actions in a timely manner.

H. The Chief, Environmental Sciences Section (Environmental Studies Section in Alaska; Senior Environmental Scientist in the Pacific), is responsible for:

(1) Managing the regional component of the ESP in a manner which stresses scientific quality, timeliness, cooperation with other potential sponsors, and financial accountability;

(2) Developing the Region's annual Studies Development Plan; and

(3) Ensuring that all final procurement packages contain all the elements required by the ESB program office.

I. The Contracting Officer's Representative/Project Officer formulates studies, develops procurement packages, and provides technical/management oversight for research projects.

8. Procedures. The operational procedures for the ESP will be contained in a guidebook in the Environmental Division and on the MMS Pipeline. The guidebook is currently under development.

9. Reporting Requirements.

A. Individual ESP research reports will be archived online in the Environmental Studies Program Information System.

B. The ESB reports annually to the National Science Foundation on all ESP research expenditures, and projections for expenditures in the future.

C. The ESB developed performance effectiveness and efficiency measures that respond to OMB Program Assessment Rating Tool (PART) Guidance. The ESB uses these performance measures to report annually on the effectiveness and efficiency of the MMS's Environmental Studies Program.

10. Cancellation. This IPD will remain in effect until incorporated into the MMS Manual, cancelled, or superseded by another IPD.

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