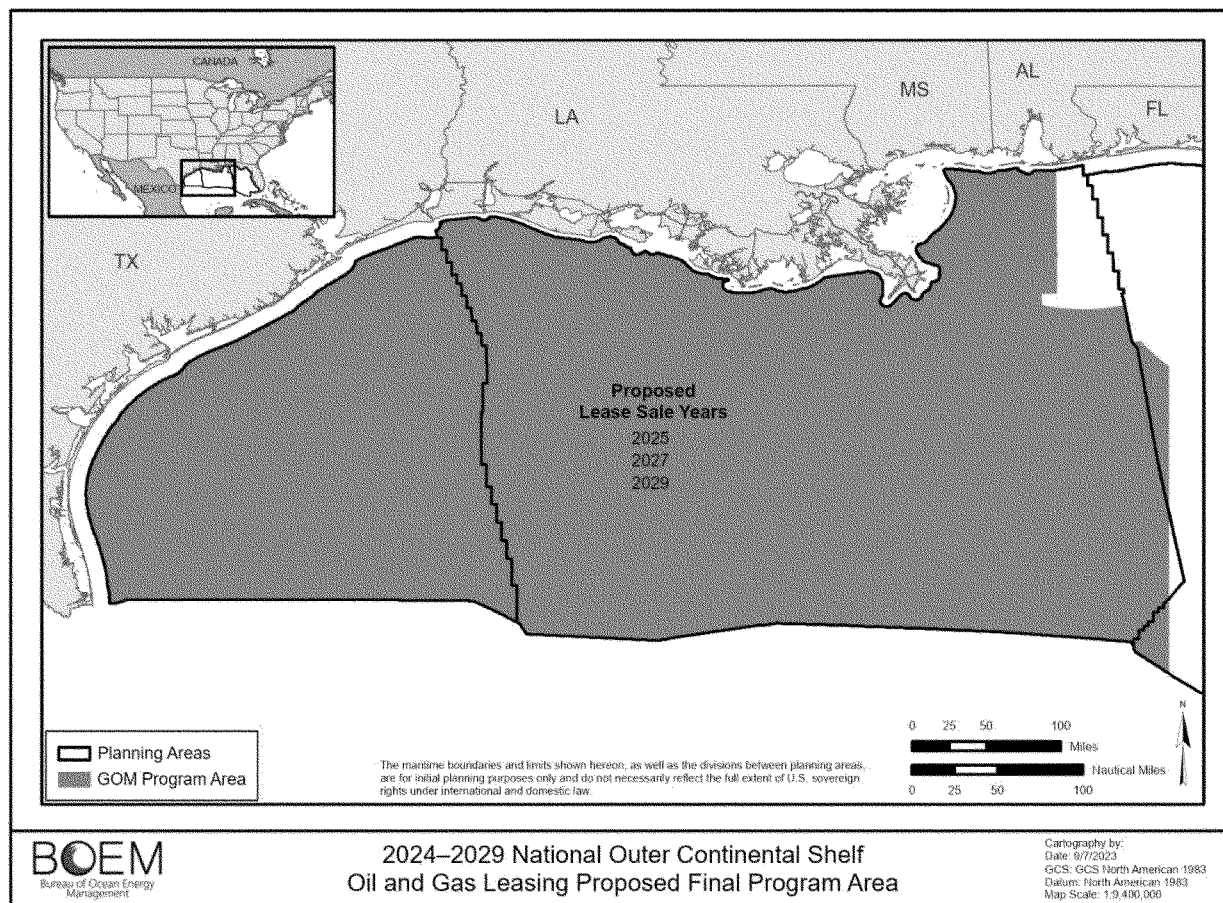


Figure 1: Proposed Final Program Map - Gulf of Mexico Program Area



[FR Doc. 2023-21678 Filed 9-29-23; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 4310-MR-C

## DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

### Bureau of Ocean Energy Management

[Docket No. BOEM-2023-0013]

#### Gulf of Mexico Outer Continental Shelf Oil and Gas Lease Sale 261

**AGENCY:** Bureau of Ocean Energy Management, Interior.

**ACTION:** Notice of delay of sale.

**SUMMARY:** With this notice, the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (BOEM) is announcing the rescheduling of Gulf of Mexico Lease Sale 261. Instead of holding the sale on September 27, 2023, as originally planned, BOEM will open and publicly announce bids received for blocks offered in the sale on November 8, 2023, in accordance with the order issued by the United States Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit on September 25, 2023. Additional information regarding the sale and a new Final Notice of Sale (NOS) package

will be available on BOEM's website at least 30 days prior to the sale date at <https://www.boem.gov/oil-gas-energy/leasing/lease-sale-261>.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** The New Orleans Office Lease Sale Coordinator, Greg Purvis, at [BOEMGOMRLeaseSales@boem.gov](mailto:BOEMGOMRLeaseSales@boem.gov) or 504-736-1729.

**SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:** On August 25, 2023, BOEM published in the **Federal Register** the Final NOS for Lease Sale 261. See 88 FR 58310. In that Final NOS, BOEM announced that the sale would be held on September 27, 2023. Two lawsuits then challenged the Final NOS in the U.S. District Court for the Western District of Louisiana, and plaintiffs in those cases sought preliminary injunctions to force BOEM to (1) include lease blocks previously excluded to protect the Rice's whale and (2) remove provisions in Stipulation No. 4, "Protected Species" that BOEM had added to protect the Rice's whale from certain oil and gas activities while BOEM engaged in a reinstituted consultation under the Endangered Species Act. On September 21, 2023, six

days before the planned sale, the district court issued a preliminary injunction (Case No. 2:23-CV-01157) requiring BOEM to include the previously excluded blocks and modify the stipulation by removing the new Rice's whale protections. The court also ordered BOEM to hold the sale on or before September 30, 2023. On September 22, 2023, the government filed an emergency motion in the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit, requesting an extension of time to allow BOEM to take the administrative steps necessary to hold the modified sale and provide the statutorily required notice to the public of the revised sale terms. On September 25, 2023, the Fifth Circuit issued an order (Case No. 23-30666) directing BOEM to hold Lease Sale 261 as required by the district court, but permitting BOEM until November 8, 2023, to hold the sale. The Fifth Circuit's order stated that no further extensions will be granted.

BOEM is returning all bids submitted by bidders under the previously issued Final NOS and is rescheduling Lease Sale 261 for November 8, 2023. Bidders wishing to participate in Lease Sale 261

must re-submit bids in accordance with the terms and conditions contained in the revised Final NOS which, in accordance with the Outer Continental Shelf Lands Act, BOEM will publish at least 30 days prior to the sale date.

BOEM intends to publish the revised Final NOS in the **Federal Register** and on its website. The public and interested bidders are advised that a lapse in appropriations may preclude BOEM from publishing the Final NOS in the **Federal Register**. In the event of a partial or full government shutdown, BOEM will still publish the Final NOS package (e.g., Final Notice of Sale, Lease Stipulations, and Information to Lessees) on its website at least 30 days prior to the sale date, and that notice will serve as the official notice of the sale.

*Authority:* 43 U.S.C. 1337; 30 CFR part 556.

**Elizabeth Klein,**

*Director, Bureau of Ocean Energy Management.*

[FR Doc. 2023–21714 Filed 9–29–23; 8:45 am]

**BILLING CODE 4340–98–P**

## DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

### Bureau of Ocean Energy Management

[Docket Number: BOEM–2023–0053]

#### Call for Information and Nominations for Western, Central, and Eastern Gulf of Mexico Outer Continental Shelf Oil and Gas Lease Sales for 2024–2029

**AGENCY:** Bureau of Ocean Energy Management, Interior

**ACTION:** Call for information and nominations, request for comments.

**SUMMARY:** The Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (BOEM) issues this Call for Information and Nominations (Call) covering proposed Gulf of Mexico oil and gas lease sales in the available portions of the Western, Central, and Eastern Gulf of Mexico Planning Areas (WPA, CPA, and EPA, respectively). Those sales are described in the 2024–2029 National Outer Continental Shelf (OCS) Oil and Gas Leasing Program (2024–2029 National OCS Program), which BOEM announced on September 29, 2023. This Call solicits industry nominations of acreage for possible inclusion in future sales and requests information from the public on the Call Area for lease sale planning. Specifically, BOEM seeks information on geological conditions, archaeological sites, potential use conflicts, areas of special concern, and other socioeconomic, biological, and

environmental information. This Call is not a final decision to lease and does not prejudice any future secretarial decisions concerning leasing in the Gulf of Mexico.

**DATES:** All nominations and comments must be received by BOEM or postmarked no later than November 1, 2023.

#### ADDRESSES:

*Public Comment Procedures:* All public comments should be submitted through one of the following methods:

1. *Federal eRulemaking Portal:* <http://www.regulations.gov>. In the field entitled, “Search,” enter “BOEM–2023–0053” and then click “search.” Follow the instructions to submit public comments and to view supporting and related materials available for this notice.

2. *U.S. Postal Service or other delivery service to the following address:* Chief of Leasing and Financial Responsibility Section, BOEM, Gulf of Mexico OCS Region, 1201 Elmwood Park Boulevard, Mail Stop GM 266A, New Orleans, Louisiana 70123–2394, telephone (504) 736–7502. Send your comments in an envelope clearly labeled “Comments on the Call for Information and Nominations for 2024–2029 Gulf of Mexico Lease Sales.”

3. *Email:* [BOEMGOMRLeaseSales@boem.gov](mailto:BOEMGOMRLeaseSales@boem.gov)

*Nominations and Indications of Interest Procedures:* To ensure security and confidentiality of proprietary information to the maximum extent possible, please send nominations, indications of interest, and other proprietary information to: Chief of Leasing and Financial Responsibility Section, BOEM, Gulf of Mexico OCS Region, 1201 Elmwood Park Blvd., Mail Stop GM 266A, New Orleans, LA 70123–2394, telephone (504) 736–7502. Consistent with subsection 6 in the “Call for Information and Nominations” section of this Call below, you should mark all documents and every page containing such information with “Confidential—Contains Proprietary Information.” Send your nominations in an envelope clearly labeled “Nominations for 2024–2029 Gulf of Mexico Lease Sales.” Do not send nominations, indications of interest, or other proprietary information through the Federal eRulemaking Portal or to the email address provided above.

#### FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

Bridgette Duplantis, Chief of Leasing and Financial Responsibility Section, BOEM, Gulf of Mexico OCS Region, 1201 Elmwood Park Boulevard, Mail Stop GM 266A, New Orleans, Louisiana 70123–2394, telephone (504) 736–7502,

email: [BOEMGOMRLeaseSales@boem.gov](mailto:BOEMGOMRLeaseSales@boem.gov).

#### SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

*2024–2029 National OCS Program Development:* Information on the development of the 2024–2029 National OCS Program and its programmatic environmental impact statement (PEIS) is available on BOEM’s website at: <https://www.boem.gov/National-OCS-Program/>.

*Environmental Review Process:* BOEM intends to prepare a PEIS, in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), analyzing a representative Gulf of Mexico proposed lease sale and reasonable alternatives. The PEIS will be supplemented as necessary for individual decisions on all future Gulf of Mexico lease sales included in the 2024–2029 National OCS Program.

The PEIS will evaluate the potential effects that oil and gas activities resulting from a lease sale could have on the human, marine, and coastal environments. The PEIS may propose measures and lease stipulations to mitigate adverse impacts for the alternatives being analyzed. Consultations will be conducted, as appropriate. Consultation with Tribal Nations, States, and Federal agencies address BOEM obligations under the Coastal Zone Management Act, Endangered Species Act, the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act, section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act, and Executive Order 13175, “Consultation and Coordination with Indian Tribal Governments.” The results of these consultations assist the Secretary in leasing decisions.

*BOEM’s Leasing Process:* BOEM’s regulations for planning and holding an oil and gas lease sale are found at 30 CFR 556.300–309. These regulations include the following steps:

(1) Call for Information and Nominations: See section below.

(2) Area Identification: Based on the information and nominations submitted in response to this Call, BOEM will recommend an area for further leasing consideration and environmental analysis. Upon approval by the Secretary, BOEM will announce the proposed area identified for leasing in the **Federal Register**, in accordance with 30 CFR 556.302(a)(3).

(3) Proposed Notice of Sale (PNOS): If BOEM proceeds with the leasing process after Area Identification and environmental analysis, it will publish a Notice of Availability of a PNOS in the **Federal Register**. BOEM also will send the PNOS to the Governors of affected States for comment and