

wells within 200 to 400 meters of water depth be lower than those for deep wells in shallower waters. Regulations issued under this subsection shall be retroactive to the date that the notice of proposed rulemaking is published in the Federal Register.

(c) Limitations

The Secretary may place limitations on the royalty relief granted under this section based on market price. The royalty relief granted under this section shall not apply to a lease for which deep water royalty relief is available.

(Pub. L. 109-58, title III, §344, Aug. 8, 2005, 119 Stat. 702.)

REFERENCES IN TEXT

The Outer Continental Shelf Lands Act, referred to in subsecs. (a)(1) and (b), is act Aug. 7, 1953, ch. 345, 67 Stat. 462, as amended, which is classified generally to subchapter III (§1331 et seq.) of chapter 29 of Title 43, Public Lands. For complete classification of this Act to the Code, see Short Title note set out under section 1301 of Title 43 and Tables.

§ 15905. Royalty relief for deep water production

(a) In general

Subject to subsections (b) and (c), for each tract located in water depths of greater than 400 meters in the Western and Central Planning Area of the Gulf of Mexico (including the portion of the Eastern Planning Area of the Gulf of Mexico encompassing whole lease blocks lying west of 87 degrees, 30 minutes West longitude), any oil or gas lease sale under the Outer Continental Shelf Lands Act (43 U.S.C. 1331 et seq.) occurring during the 5-year period beginning on August 8, 2005, shall use the bidding system authorized under section 8(a)(1)(H) of the Outer Continental Shelf Lands Act (43 U.S.C. 1337(a)(1)(H)).

(b) Suspension of royalties

The suspension of royalties under subsection (a) shall be established at a volume of not less than—

- (1) 5,000,000 barrels of oil equivalent for each lease in water depths of 400 to 800 meters;
- (2) 9,000,000 barrels of oil equivalent for each lease in water depths of 800 to 1,600 meters;
- (3) 12,000,000 barrels of oil equivalent for each lease in water depths of 1,600 to 2,000 meters; and
- (4) 16,000,000 barrels of oil equivalent for each lease in water depths greater than 2,000 meters.

(c) Limitation

The Secretary may place limitations on royalty relief granted under this section based on market price.

(Pub. L. 109-58, title III, §345, Aug. 8, 2005, 119 Stat. 703.)

REFERENCES IN TEXT

The Outer Continental Shelf Lands Act, referred to in subsec. (a), is act Aug. 7, 1953, ch. 345, 67 Stat. 462, as amended, which is classified generally to subchapter III (§1331 et seq.) of chapter 29 of Title 43, Public Lands. For complete classification of this Act to the Code, see Short Title note set out under section 1301 of Title 43 and Tables.

§ 15906. North Slope Science Initiative

(a) Establishment

(1) In general

The Secretary of the Interior shall establish a long-term initiative to be known as the “North Slope Science Initiative” (referred to in this section as the “Initiative”).

(2) Purpose

The purpose of the Initiative shall be to implement efforts to coordinate collection of scientific data that will provide a better understanding of the terrestrial, aquatic, and marine ecosystems of the North Slope of Alaska.

(b) Objectives

To ensure that the Initiative is conducted through a comprehensive science strategy and implementation plan, the Initiative shall, at a minimum—

(1) identify and prioritize information needs for inventory, monitoring, and research activities to address the individual and cumulative effects of past, ongoing, and anticipated development activities and environmental change on the North Slope;

(2) develop an understanding of information needs for regulatory and land management agencies, local governments, and the public;

(3) focus on prioritization of pressing natural resource management and ecosystem information needs, coordination, and cooperation among agencies and organizations;

(4) coordinate ongoing and future inventory, monitoring, and research activities to minimize duplication of effort, share financial resources and expertise, and assure the collection of quality information;

(5) identify priority needs not addressed by agency science programs in effect on August 8, 2005, and develop a funding strategy to meet those needs;

(6) provide a consistent approach to high caliber science, including inventory, monitoring, and research;

(7) maintain and improve public and agency access to—

- (A) accumulated and ongoing research; and
- (B) contemporary and traditional local knowledge; and

(8) ensure through appropriate peer review that the science conducted by participating agencies and organizations is of the highest technical quality.

(c) Membership

(1) In general

To ensure comprehensive collection of scientific data, in carrying out the Initiative, the Secretary shall consult and coordinate with Federal, State, and local agencies that have responsibilities for land and resource management across the North Slope.

(2) Cooperative agreements

The Secretary shall enter into cooperative agreements with the State of Alaska, the North Slope Borough, the Arctic Slope Regional Corporation, and other Federal agencies as appropriate to coordinate efforts, share

resources, and fund projects under this section.

(d) Science technical advisory panel

(1) In general

The Initiative shall include a panel to provide advice on proposed inventory, monitoring, and research functions.

(2) Membership

The panel described in paragraph (1) shall consist of a representative group of not more than 15 scientists and technical experts from diverse professions and interests, including the oil and gas industry, subsistence users, Native Alaskan entities, conservation organizations, wildlife management organizations, and academia, as determined by the Secretary.

(e) Reports

Not later than 3 years after August 8, 2005, and each year thereafter, the Secretary shall publish a report that describes the studies and findings of the Initiative.

(f) Authorization of appropriations

There are authorized to be appropriated such sums as are necessary to carry out this section.

(Pub. L. 109-58, title III, §348, Aug. 8, 2005, 119 Stat. 708.)

§ 15907. Orphaned, abandoned, or idled wells on Federal land

(a) In general

The Secretary, in cooperation with the Secretary of Agriculture, shall establish a program not later than 1 year after August 8, 2005, to remediate, reclaim, and close orphaned, abandoned, or idled oil and gas wells located on land administered by the land management agencies within the Department of the Interior and the Department of Agriculture.

(b) Activities

The program under subsection (a) shall—

(1) include a means of ranking orphaned, abandoned, or idled wells sites for priority in remediation, reclamation, and closure, based on public health and safety, potential environmental harm, and other land use priorities;

(2) provide for identification and recovery of the costs of remediation, reclamation, and closure from persons or other entities currently providing a bond or other financial assurance required under State or Federal law for an oil or gas well that is orphaned, abandoned, or idled; and

(3) provide for recovery from the persons or entities identified under paragraph (2), or their sureties or guarantors, of the costs of remediation, reclamation, and closure of such wells.

(c) Cooperation and consultations

In carrying out the program under subsection (a), the Secretary shall—

(1) work cooperatively with the Secretary of Agriculture and the States within which Federal land is located; and

(2) consult with the Secretary of Energy and the Interstate Oil and Gas Compact Commission.

(d) Plan

Not later than 1 year after August 8, 2005, the Secretary, in cooperation with the Secretary of Agriculture, shall submit to Congress a plan for carrying out the program under subsection (a).

(e) Idled well

For the purposes of this section, a well is idled if—

(1) the well has been nonoperational for at least 7 years; and

(2) there is no anticipated beneficial use for the well.

(f) Federal reimbursement for orphaned well reclamation pilot program

(1) Reimbursement for remediating, reclaiming, and closing wells on land subject to a new lease

The Secretary shall carry out a pilot program under which, in issuing a new oil and gas lease on federally owned land on which 1 or more orphaned wells are located, the Secretary—

(A) may require, other than as a condition of the lease, that the lessee remediate, reclaim, and close in accordance with standards established by the Secretary, all orphaned wells on the land leased; and

(B) shall develop a program to reimburse a lessee, through a royalty credit against the Federal share of royalties owed or other means, for the reasonable actual costs of remediating, reclaiming, and closing the orphaned wells pursuant to that requirement.

(2) Reimbursement for reclaiming orphaned wells on other land

In carrying out this subsection, the Secretary—

(A) may authorize any lessee under an oil and gas lease on federally owned land to reclaim in accordance with the Secretary's standards—

(i) an orphaned well on unleased federally owned land; or

(ii) an orphaned well located on an existing lease on federally owned land for the reclamation of which the lessee is not legally responsible; and

(B) shall develop a program to provide reimbursement of 100 percent of the reasonable actual costs of remediating, reclaiming, and closing the orphaned well, through credits against the Federal share of royalties or other means.

(3) Regulations

The Secretary may issue such regulations as are appropriate to carry out this subsection.

(g) Technical assistance program for non-Federal land

(1) In general

The Secretary of Energy shall establish a program to provide technical and financial assistance to oil and gas producing States to facilitate State efforts over a 10-year period to ensure a practical and economical remedy for environmental problems caused by orphaned or abandoned oil and gas exploration or production well sites on State or private land.