

Association of Village Council Presidents Press Release

Contact:

Azara Mohammadi, azaram@avcp.org

907-543-7317

For Immediate Release

AVCP Seeks Withdrawal of Bering Sea from the Proposed National OCS Oil and Gas Program

Bethel, Alaska - The Association of Village Council Presidents (AVCP) submitted comments yesterday on the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (BOEM)'s Proposed National OCS Oil and Gas Leasing Program for 2019-2024. Within, AVCP stated that BOEM should immediately withdraw the Bering Sea from the draft Program, specifically the St. Matthew-Hall, Norton, Navarin, Aleutian, and St. George Basin areas. One core justification included the preservation of millennia's old subsistence practices of the Tribes and Villages located within the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta region, including hunting and fishing in or off of the Bering Sea. These traditional subsistence practices are vital to the culture and economy of the region, alongside commercial fishing. Oil and gas activities will jeopardize local people's ability to secure subsistence food and commercial harvests, and would add ecological stressors on the Bering Sea alongside those brought by climate change. In 2017, AVCP met with officials at BOEM and the Department of Interior, and at that time requested that the Bering Sea be excluded from the upcoming five-year lease program.

Should BOEM decide to not withdraw the Bering Sea, AVCP requested that that the agency fulfill its legal obligation to undertake meaningful consultations with the Tribes concerning the proposed lease sales. To ensure the consultations are meaningful, they must be held in the communities of this region to enable local participation. Through consultation, BOEM will gain vital local knowledge to consider when deciding whether to lease within the Bering Sea.

The Proposed National OCS Oil and Gas Program was released on January 4, 2018, and is available at <https://www.boem.gov/National-OCS-Program/>. Residents of the YK Delta are encouraged to review BOEM's proposal and submit comments before the deadline of March 9, 2018. Online comments and more information about commenting is available on BOEM's website.

For additional questions and information, please contact AVCP at 907-543-7317 or email at azaram@avcp.org.

AVCP is a regional nonprofit tribal consortium comprised of the 56 federally recognized tribes of the YK Delta. The geographic boundaries of AVCP extend from the Yukon River Village of Russian Mission downstream to the Bering Sea coast, north up through Kotlik and south along the coastline to Platinum and then extending up the Kuskokwim River to Stony River, including Lime Village on the Stony River tributary. The area encompasses approximately 6.5 million acres, or 55,000 square miles, in Western Alaska.