



PRESS RELEASE

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MORE INFORMATION:

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ALASKAN VOICES RISE AGAINST LEASE SALE 258

Federal regulators are allowing the challenged lease sale to move forward without any additional measures to protect endangered beluga whales, and with no hearings or public comment.

HOMER, AK — Cook Inletkeeper condemns the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (BOEM)'s recent release of the Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (SEIS) for Oil and Gas Lease Sale 258 without opportunity for public comment. Inletkeeper asserts that the SEIS was conducted with a serious lack of transparency, and without any of the public input that has been standard practice in the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process for fifty years. Inletkeeper argues that Alaskans — including Tribal communities, local residents, and regional stakeholders — deserve a meaningful chance to weigh in on Lease Sale 258 and the first of eleven subsequent offshore oil and gas lease sales planned for Cook Inlet over the next seven years.

“BOEM’s decision to conduct the whole process in secrecy represents the federal government’s new approach to cutting the public out of decisions about our waters, and favoring the billionaire class and giant corporations over the people who call this place home. We are disgusted by this rushed and sloppy process on this final SEIS,” says Bridget Maryott, Co-Executive Director at Cook Inletkeeper. “If this is an indicator of the federal government’s willingness to engage community members, it’s a very bad sign for the upcoming eleven Cook Inlet lease sales that are planned between now and 2032. All citizens should be angry and concerned for our right to control what happens in our own backyard.”

A federal judge ruled in 2024 that BOEM’s initial review of Lease Sale 258 violated NEPA by failing to adequately assess climate impacts, alternatives, and risks to Cook Inlet’s ecosystem. The court ordered a Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (SEIS) and suspended

Hilcorp's lease. Traditionally, SEIS processes include public hearings and comment periods so communities and Tribal governments can identify errors or omissions.

But in December 2025, BOEM finalized the SEIS without any public process — no hearings, no comment period, and no opportunity for Alaskans to review the government's work. Plaintiffs on the original case, including Cook Inletkeeper, were not notified of the publication, as is customary courtesy.

"The court required BOEM to redo the environmental review precisely so the agency could correct its earlier failures. The original EIS was completed in 2022 and in the three intervening years there is new research, information, and cumulative impacts that need to be incorporated into the record," said Loren Barrett, Co-Executive Director for Cook Inletkeeper. "The court ordered the review be done properly — not to cut out Alaskans — and any proper review incorporates current public comment."

Lease Sale 258 is the first of twelve new drilling opportunities in Cook Inlet. In addition to Lease Sale 258, there are six mandated lease sales under the Big Beautiful Bill on which the government is refusing to conduct NEPA review; and five additional sales proposed in the new **Outer Continental Shelf (OCS) 5-year plan** where a narrow 60-day comment window is allowed only for governors and affected local governments — scheduled over the winter holidays and closing January 23, 2026.

"The choice to hold the first of the comment opportunities for the OCS 5-year plan over the winter holidays is telling," said James Currie, Cook Inletkeeper's Communications Director. "It represents a deliberate plan to hold this during a time when fewer people are going to work, and when people would rather spend the days with family and friends — rather than fretting about the industrialization of this place we call home."

Despite these efforts to limit participation, Inletkeeper remains committed to ensuring Alaskans have a voice on both Lease Sale 258 and all subsequent sales and in decisions that are shaping the region's long-term future. "Removing Alaskans from a process that directly affects their fisheries, culture, and livelihoods is unacceptable. BOEM cannot claim to follow NEPA while refusing to hear from the people who live here. The public deserves a real say in decisions that will irreparably shape the future of Cook Inlet," Barrett said. "This is our home, and we're not letting it be carved up behind closed doors."

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