



Background of Offshore Leasing Moratoria

The Minerals Management Service manages the leasing program for the 1.6 million acre outer continental shelf, under the authority of the Outer Continental Shelf Lands Act. The agency has broken the area up into 26 planning areas, depicted on the attached map. However, approximately 80% of the areas are unavailable for leasing due to congressional moratoria and administrative withdrawals.

Congressional Moratoria:

The first congressionally imposed moratorium was put in place for fiscal year 1982 and encompassed 736,000 acres in the Central and Northern California OCS Planning Areas. The Southern California, North Atlantic, and part of the Eastern Gulf of Mexico Planning Areas were first subject to moratoria in fiscal year 1984. The North Aleutian Basin and the Mid-Atlantic Planning Areas were added in fiscal year 1990. The Washington-Oregon Planning Area and the Florida Panhandle area of the Eastern Gulf of Mexico Planning Area were added in fiscal year 1991. The South Atlantic Planning Area was added in fiscal year 1992. With slight adjustments in some areas, all these areas have been subject to yearly moratoria, with the exception of the North Aleutian Basin, which has not been included since fiscal year 2004.

Administrative Withdrawals:

In June 1990, under the authority of Section 12 of the Outer Continental Shelf Lands Act, President George H. W. Bush issued an Executive Order canceling lease sales and withdrawing from future offshore oil and gas lease sales areas off the coasts of California, Florida, New England, Washington and Oregon for ten years and until necessary scientific studies could be completed.

In June 1998, President Clinton issued an Executive Order extending the existing withdrawal from leasing until June 30, 2012, and permanently barring any new leasing in the twelve national marine sanctuaries. The President's decision included all areas then covered by the legislative moratoria, but did not expand the prohibitions to offshore areas where industry had access or to existing leases in moratoria areas. The Areas included in the Presidential withdrawal include: the North Aleutian Basin of Alaska; Washington-Oregon; Northern, Central and Southern California; South, Mid and North Atlantic; and Eastern gulf of Mexico, except for a portion located off Alabama and one more than 100 miles off Florida initially proposed for sale in 2001, referred to as the "sale 181" area.

Current Status:

There have been several recent legislative proposals, some formally introduced in Congress and some simply discussed with stakeholders, to lift moratoria, to change the benefits to states from offshore oil and gas development, or to do both. These proposals include provisions to share leasing royalty and bonus bid revenue with states and adjacent communities, provisions to allow for gas preference or gas only leasing, provisions to change boundary lines between states on the OCS, and provisions to change ownership of the OCS submerged lands.