

REDOIL NEWS RELEASE

Contact:

Robert Thompson (907)640-6119/ bolothompson@hotmail.com

Jack Schaefer (907) 368- 2453 or 2235 (wk)/jschaefer@tikigaq.com

Faith Gemmill, REDOIL Network (907) 750-0188 / redoil1@acsalaska.net

For Immediate Release

February 20, 2007

Alaska Natives Disapprove Shell Oil's Beaufort Sea Oil and Gas Exploration Plan *MMS Allows Contentious Oil and Gas Exploratory Activities to Move Forward Without Public Review*

Fairbanks, Alaska - Today the Minerals Management Service (MMS) announced that they will allow Shell Oil to conduct potentially damaging exploratory oil and gas activities in the Beaufort Sea without consulting public input or conducting an environmental impact statement (EIS).

REDOIL (Resisting Environmental Destruction on Indigenous Lands) a network of Alaska Native grassroots leadership is calling for MMS to issue an EIS. REDOIL and many other Alaska Natives are concerned that oil and gas development and exploratory activities would harm the delicate Beaufort Sea marine and coastal ecosystem. The subsistence rights of Alaska Natives must always be protected at all costs. The risks are high for potential damage therefore REDOIL is calling for MMS to issue an EIS to study the impacts of this kind of adverse activity to the region and allow the public to analyze and respond to the proposed off-shore oil and gas exploration plan.

Although the issue of exploratory drilling and offshore oil and gas development in the Beaufort Sea is widely opposed and highly contentious among North Slope communities, MMS has failed to provide adequate analysis and public review by not issuing an environmental impact statement (EIS) before approving Shell's exploration plan.

"Our animals bypass our village migrating north and then south of us. We feel that there is nothing that can replace our food from our sea. The Native Village of Point Hope has passed a resolution opposing oil & gas development off-shore in the Beaufort and Chukchi Seas and we have consistently expressed our concern and stated opposition to any sort of offshore oil and gas exploration and development on the record yet it seems our voice falls upon deaf ears. The killer Whale and Right Whale migrate through here, and they are an endangered species, we have raised this issue yet our concerns are ignored by the MMS, as is clear by this decision." stated Jack Schaefer, Vice President for the Native Village of Point Hope

Cultural knowledge of the marine and coastal ecosystem of the Beaufort Sea is valuable when these projects come within offshore traditional subsistence use areas. The public and especially the elders and Indigenous Traditional Knowledge (ITK) keepers of the Alaska Native communities must be involved and fully engaged, to address community concerns in

regard to impacts to subsistence. REDOIL is deeply concerned with the risks posed to sensitive marine and coastal environments from oil and gas activities in the Alaskan Outer Continental Shelf (OCS). Vital subsistence resources that are intrinsic to the livelihood of coastal Alaska Native communities within the entire OCS area are at risk.

Shell's exploration activities would occur this summer in several areas in the waters off the shores of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge near the village of Kaktovik and right in the Bowhead Whale migration route. Shell would be using several large exploratory drilling vessels and ice breaking ships. The sort of noise generated from this kind of activity is proven to deflect bowhead whales and other marine life, which could greatly harm subsistence in the region.

Robert Thompson, a subsistence hunter and whaler from the community of Kaktovik says: *"I am an Inupiat resident of Kaktovik which is within the border of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. Shell Oil and the MMS have not addressed many questions related to proposed offshore oil exploration in proximity to Kaktovik. We are concerned that the activities will adversely affect our subsistence whaling and other cultural activities. We have asked about cumulative impacts, these questions have never been answered. Questions relating to human health are now being asked, there have been no answers as to how these concerns will be addressed. Our identity as a people and our cultural survival depends on a clean environment. Indigenous peoples of the Arctic should not be given less consideration than other coastal peoples in the lower 48 where offshore development is prohibited."*

The socio-cultural systems of the communities of the North Slope could be negatively impacted from noise disturbance produced by exploration and drilling activities that stress the whaling migrations. The social systems in these communities would experience direct impact as long-term deflection of whales from their migratory routes or increased skittishness of whales due to increased exploration activities in the Beaufort Sea would make subsistence harvests more difficult, dangerous, and expensive.

"Native Communities have the right to their subsistence way of life. Shell's plans will severely impede subsistence. The MMS must do a full EIS to adequately ensure an open process to address community concerns. Anything less only illustrates that the MMS of the federal governments neglect in responsibility and lack of humanity by failing to listen to the people most directly affected by off-shore oil and gas exploration and development." Says Faith Gemmill, Outreach Coordinator of the REDOIL Network.

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The **REDOIL Network** consists of grassroots Alaska Natives of the Inupiat, Yupik, Aleut, Tlingit, Gwich'in, Eyak and Denaiana Athabascan tribes who have formed a network to address the human and ecological health impacts of the unsustainable development practices of the fossil fuel industry in Alaska. The REDOIL Network strongly supports self-determination rights of tribes in Alaska as well as a just transition from fossil fuel development and promotes the implementation of sustainable development on or near Indigenous lands. The REDOIL Network is a project of the Indigenous Environmental Network