



2019-2024
National Outer Continental Shelf
Oil and Gas Leasing Program

Frequently Asked Questions

Quick Links

What does the Bureau of Ocean Management (BOEM) do?

Bureau of Ocean Energy Management oversees leasing of OCS energy and mineral resources in an environmentally and economically responsible way. This includes administering the leasing program for OCS oil and gas resources, renewable energy resources, and sand and gravel resources.

In terms of conventional energy leasing, as of Nov. 1, BOEM manages approximately 2,900 active OCS Oil and Gas leases, covering 15.3 million acres – the vast majority of which are located in the Gulf of Mexico.

In Fiscal Year 2016, OCS oil and gas leases accounted for about 18% of domestic oil production and 4% of domestic natural gas production. This production generates billions in revenue for the federal, state and local governments, and supports hundreds of thousands of jobs.

What Is the National Outer Continental Shelf Oil and Gas Leasing Program (National OCS Program)?

The National OCS Program consists of a schedule of oil and gas lease sales indicating the size, timing, and location of proposed leasing activity that the Secretary determines will best meet national energy needs for the five-year period following its approval. An area must be included in an approved National OCS Program in order to be offered for leasing.

The Secretary is charged with preparing the National OCS Program to best meet national energy needs, while considering a range of economic, environmental and social considerations. The Secretary is required by law, to the maximum extent possible, to select the timing and location of leasing to obtain a proper balance between the potential for environmental damage, the discovery of oil and gas, and adverse impact on the coastal zone of the areas to be included in the National OCS Program.

Development of a new National OCS Program under the OCS Lands Act requires several comment periods and a multi-step analysis, to include: (1) initial solicitation of information and comments through the publication of a Request for Information and Comments (RFI); (2) development of a DPP, a Proposed Program (PP), and a Proposed Final Program (PFP); and (3) Secretarial approval of a Final Program.

What is the Draft Proposed Program?

The Draft Proposed Program (DPP) is the first stage of a three-stage process to develop the National OCS Program. The National OCS Program development process starts with the broadest consideration of areas potentially available for leasing during the Request for Information stage (i.e., all 26 OCS planning areas). The areas under consideration can be narrowed throughout the process that follows. Following the publication of the DPP, BOEM will develop and publish a Proposed Program, followed by the Proposed Final Program. The Secretary makes the decisions on all three program documents.

Inclusion of an area at the DPP phase is not necessarily an indication it will be included in the National OCS Program or offered in a lease sale. Future decisions could be made to reduce or remove areas or sales.

What is the Outer Continental Shelf (OCS)?

The Outer Continental Shelf (OCS) consists of the seabed lying seaward of State submerged lands and extending to the outer limits of United States jurisdiction (at least 200 nautical miles from the coast). BOEM manages 1.7 billion acres of submerged lands on the OCS, which is more than 2/3 of the total land area of the United States. BOEM divides the OCS into 26 planning areas. Planning areas are an administrative division used as the initial basis for considering what areas to lease.

What is the OCS Lands Act?

The OCS Lands Act established the OCS as "a vital national resource reserve held by the Federal Government for the public, which should be made available for expeditious and orderly development, subject to environmental safeguards, in a manner which is consistent with the maintenance of competition and other national needs " and gave the Secretary of the Interior the authority to grant leases for the exploration, development, and production of oil and gas on the OCS.

The OCS Lands Act requires the Secretary of the Interior to prepare a five-year schedule of proposed oil and gas lease sales. The Secretary of the Interior and BOEM are in the process of developing the 2019-2024 National OCS Oil and Gas Leasing Program (National OCS Program), which includes several opportunities for public involvement and comment.

What are the specific factors that the Secretary of the Interior must consider when developing a National OCS Program?

Per the OCS Lands Act, the Secretary must consider eight factors when determining the size, timing, and location of potential oil and gas lease sales:

- Geographical, Geological, and Ecological Characteristics
- Equitable Sharing of Developmental Benefits and Environmental Risks
- Location with Respect to Regional and National Energy Markets and Needs
- Other Uses of the Sea and Seabed
- Laws, Goals, and Policies of Affected States Identified by Governors
- Interest of Potential Oil and Gas Producers
- Environmental Sensitivity and Marine Productivity
- Environmental and Predictive Information

How does the Secretary prioritize the eight specific factors?

The OCS Lands Act does not specify how the Secretary should consider the eight factors, just that all must be considered. It also does not specify how to achieve the balance between the potential for environmental damage, discovery of oil and gas, and adverse impacts on the coastal zone.

The Secretary has the discretion to assign the weight it deems appropriate to these eight factors when considering the timing and location of the areas to be included in the National OCS Program. More

details about how the Secretary considered each of the eight factors is summarized in Part 1 of the DPP document and the analysis of each of the factors can be found in Parts II and III.

What is a lease sale?

A lease sale is the process by which BOEM provides the right to apply for authorization to explore and develop the mineral resources within the leased area. Typically, a lease sale consists of many OCS blocks. Each block covers an area that is no more than 5,760 acres (a three mile by three mile area).

Before authorizing any activities, BOEM conducts reviews under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and other environmental laws to ensure that the activities will be conducted in a safe and environmentally sound manner, and that the interests of key stakeholders are considered.

What is the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA)?

NEPA requires Federal agencies to consider potential environmental impacts of and alternatives to any action they propose. The NEPA process includes opportunities for public review and comment on these evaluations.

How does NEPA relate to the OCS Lands Act process?

The NEPA process informs decision-making alongside the OCS Lands Act process. For the National OCS Program, BOEM is developing a Programmatic EIS. A Programmatic EIS is a document that contains the analyses regarding the potential environmental impacts of an action within a broad geographic scope, such as oil and gas leasing in the OCS. BOEM uses the Programmatic EIS to disclose the environmental impacts of the National OCS Program, describe ways to effectively avoid or mitigate those impacts, and analyze other viable alternatives and options for the National OCS Program. The Draft Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) analyzes the potential environmental impacts from activities that could occur based on the schedule of lease sales in the DPP. The Final Programmatic EIS analyzes the potential environmental impacts from activities that could occur based on the schedule of lease sales in the Proposed Program.

The Secretary considers the Final Programmatic EIS together with the National OCS Program when making a decision regarding the schedule of lease sales. In addition, BOEM conducts subsequent NEPA reviews before an area is leased, including site-specific analyses.

What is scoping under NEPA?

The first step in the NEPA process is determining potential issues, impacts, and alternatives through a process called scoping. NEPA requires scoping to be an early and open process for determining the potentially significant issues to be addressed by the Programmatic EIS. BOEM is asking for input on what issues should be covered in this Programmatic EIS. The most important things to capture are what people, places, habitats, or species are the most likely to be affected, or other impacts on the environment.

Why are we starting another National OCS Program now?

The development of a new National OCS Program at this time is a key aspect of the implementation of President Donald Trump's America-First Offshore Energy Strategy, as outlined in the President's Executive Order (E.O.) 13795 (April 28, 2017).

To help implement that strategy, Secretary Zinke issued Secretarial Order 3350 (May 1, 2017) to "immediately initiate the development of a new, five-year National OCS Program, with full consideration given to leasing all planning areas offshore Alaska, Mid-Atlantic, South Atlantic, and the Gulf of Mexico." Secretarial Order 3350 calls for the enhancement of opportunities for energy exploration, leasing, and development of the OCS.

The previously approved program, which began this past summer and runs through 2022, will continue to be implemented until the new National OCS Program is approved by the Secretary. Until such time, any sales proposed in the current (2017-2022) program will proceed in accordance with Section 19 of the OCS Lands Act.

When will a final decision be rendered?

The development of a new National OCS Program is a multi-step process that normally takes two to three years to complete. DOI's goal is to have the Final Program approved by the end of 2019.

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Comment**



Past Programs



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2019–2024 Outer Continental Shelf Oil and Gas Leasing Draft Proposed Program Areas and Sale Years: Lower 48 States

□ Planning Area Boundary

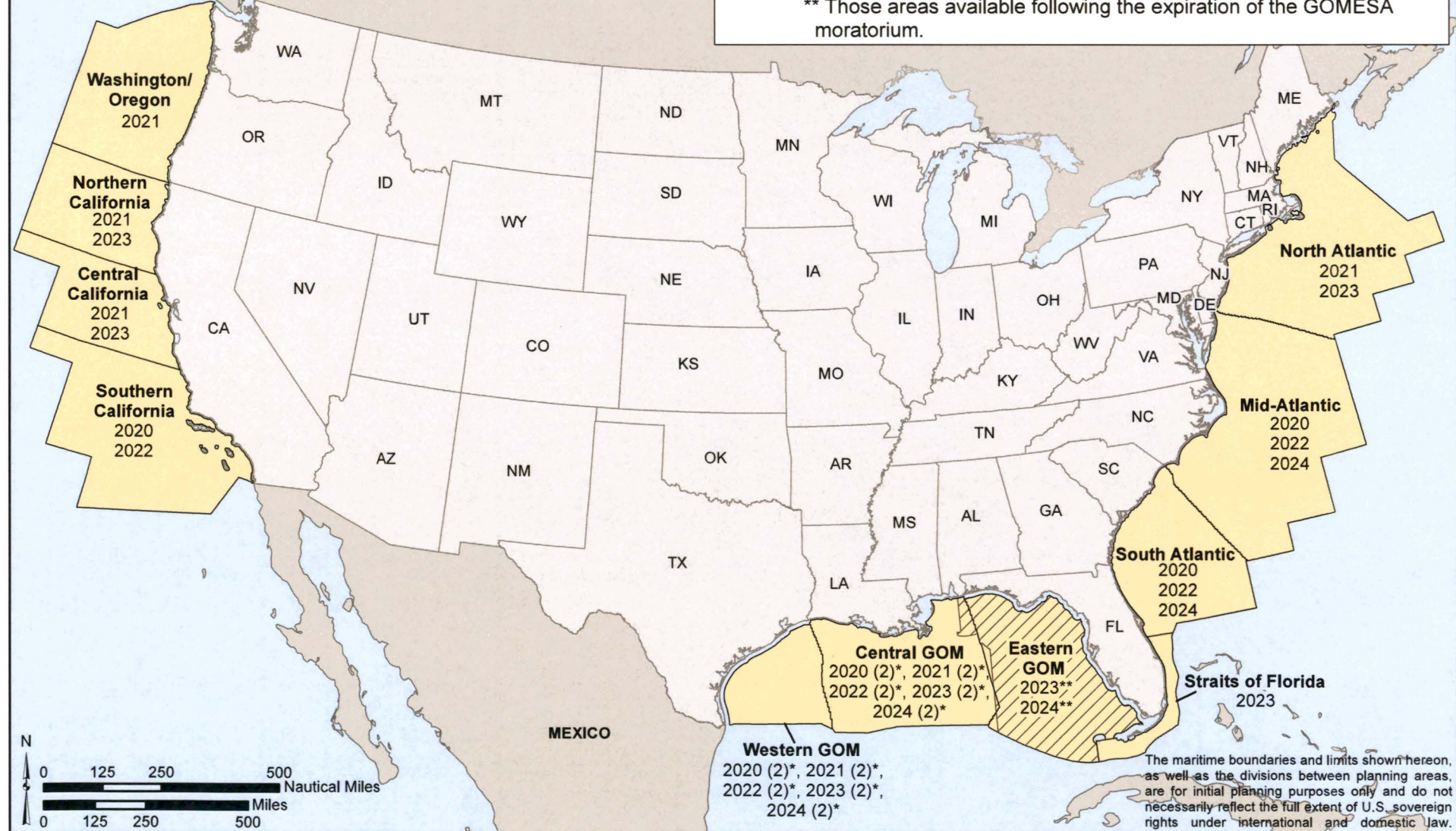
■ Draft Proposed Program Area

▨ Congressional Moratorium (expires June 30, 2022)

Key: * All available areas, not including those subject to the GOMESA moratorium through June 30, 2022.

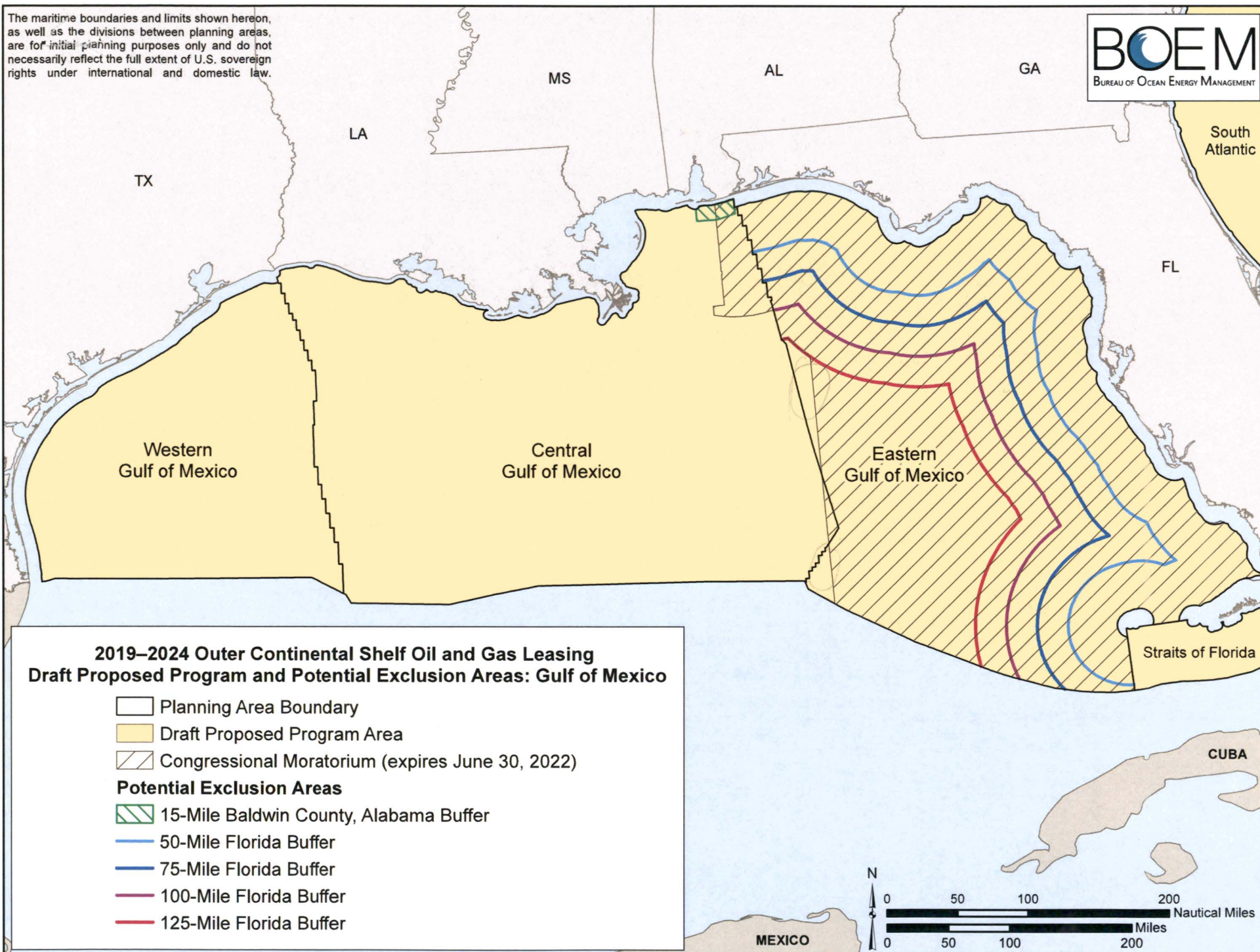
** Those areas available following the expiration of the GOMESA moratorium.

CANADA

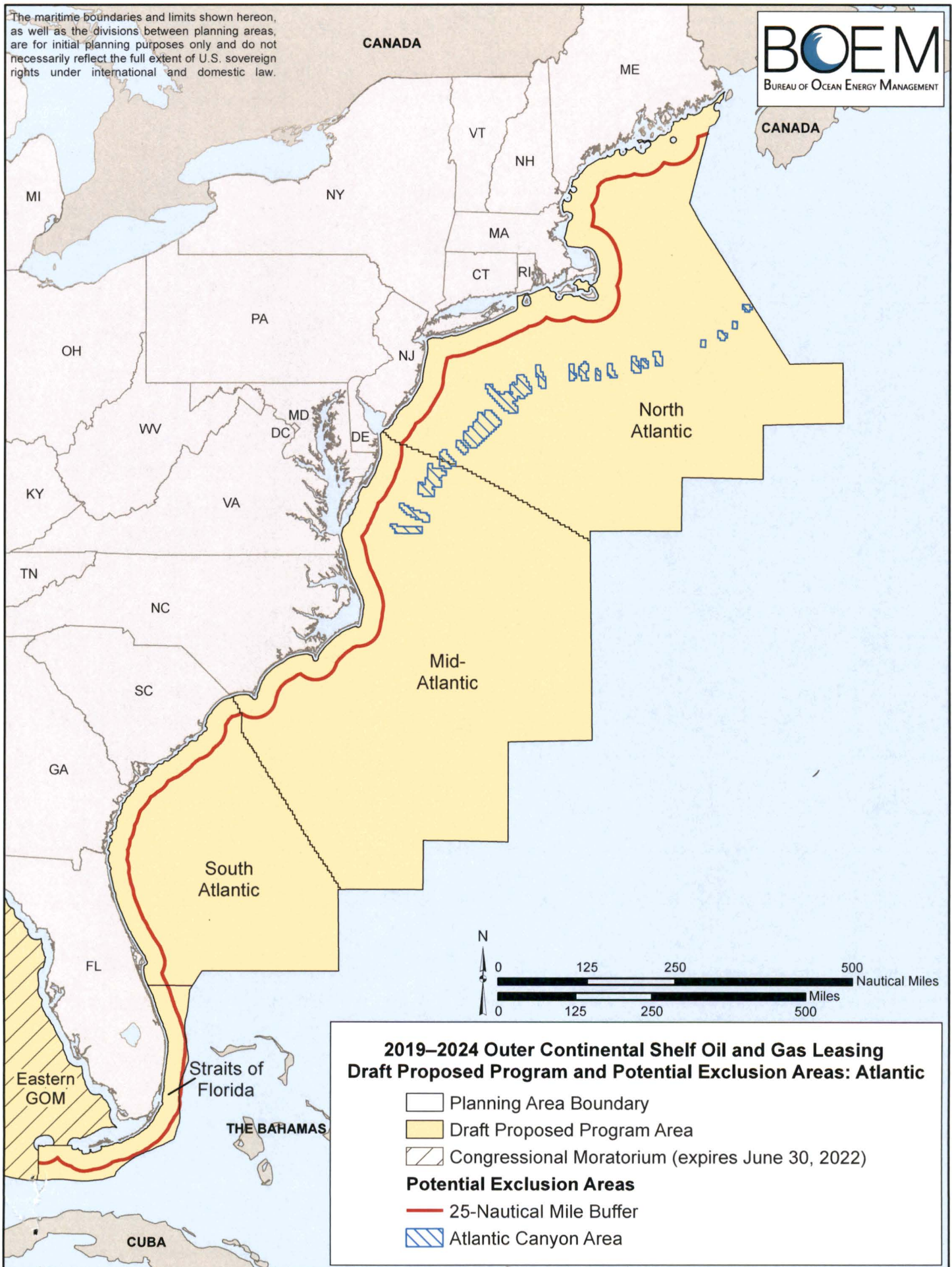


The maritime boundaries and limits shown hereon, as well as the divisions between planning areas, are for initial planning purposes only and do not necessarily reflect the full extent of U.S. sovereign rights under international and domestic law.

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2019–2024 Draft Proposed Program Lease Sale Schedule

	Sale Year	OCS Region	Program Area
1.	2019	Alaska	Beaufort Sea
2.	2020	Alaska	Chukchi Sea
3.	2020	Pacific	Southern California
4.	2020	Gulf of Mexico	Western, Central, and Eastern Gulf of Mexico*
5.	2020	Gulf of Mexico	Western, Central, and Eastern Gulf of Mexico*
6.	2020	Atlantic	South Atlantic
7.	2020	Atlantic	Mid-Atlantic
8.	2021	Alaska	Beaufort Sea
9.	2021	Alaska	Cook Inlet
10.	2021	Pacific	Washington/Oregon
11.	2021	Pacific	Northern California
12.	2021	Pacific	Central California
13.	2021	Atlantic	North Atlantic
14.	2021	Gulf of Mexico	Western, Central, and Eastern Gulf of Mexico*
15.	2021	Gulf of Mexico	Western, Central, and Eastern Gulf of Mexico*
16.	2022	Alaska	Chukchi Sea
17.	2022	Pacific	Southern California
18.	2022	Atlantic	Mid-Atlantic
19.	2022	Atlantic	South Atlantic
20.	2022	Gulf of Mexico	Western, Central, and Eastern Gulf of Mexico*
21.	2022	Gulf of Mexico	Western, Central, and Eastern Gulf of Mexico*
22.	2023	Alaska	Beaufort Sea
23.	2023	Alaska	Cook Inlet
24.	2023	Alaska	Hope Basin
25.	2023	Alaska	Norton Basin
26.	2023	Alaska	St. Matthew-Hall
27.	2023	Alaska	Navarin Basin
28.	2023	Alaska	Aleutian Basin
29.	2023	Alaska	St. George Basin
30.	2023	Alaska	Bowers Basin
31.	2023	Alaska	Aleutian Arc
32.	2023	Alaska	Shumagin
33.	2023	Alaska	Kodiak
34.	2023	Alaska	Gulf of Alaska
35.	2023	Pacific	Central California
36.	2023	Pacific	Northern California
37.	2023	Gulf of Mexico	Western, Central, and Eastern Gulf of Mexico*
38.	2023	Gulf of Mexico	Western, Central, and Eastern Gulf of Mexico*
39.	2023	Gulf of Mexico	Eastern and Central Gulf of Mexico**
40.	2023	Atlantic	Straits of Florida
41.	2023	Atlantic	North Atlantic
42.	2024	Alaska	Chukchi Sea
43.	2024	Gulf of Mexico	Western, Central, and Eastern Gulf of Mexico*
44.	2024	Gulf of Mexico	Western, Central, and Eastern Gulf of Mexico*
45.	2024	Gulf of Mexico	Eastern and Central Gulf of Mexico**
46.	2024	Atlantic	South Atlantic
47.	2024	Atlantic	Mid-Atlantic

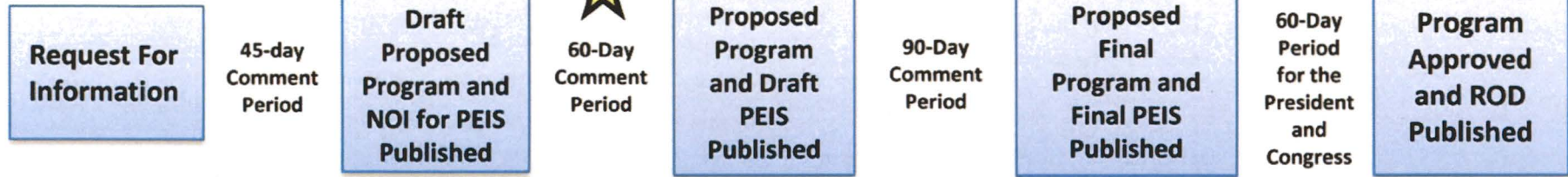
Notes:

* All available areas, not including those subject to the GOMESA moratorium through June 30, 2022.

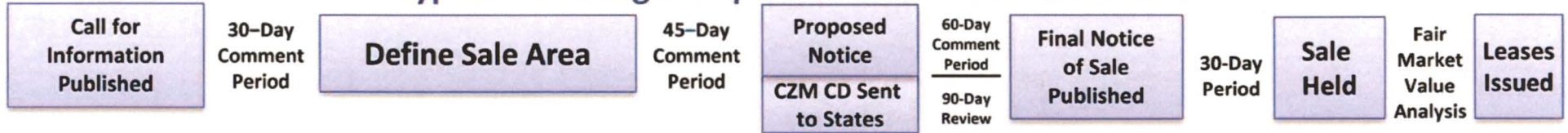
** Those areas available following the expiration of the GOMESA moratorium.

Pre-lease

National OCS Oil and Gas Leasing Program



Typical Planning for Specific Oil and Gas Lease Sale



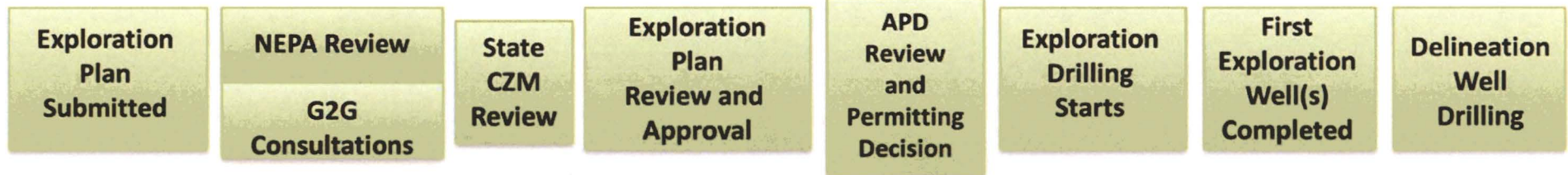
NEPA Review (EIS, EA, or DNA)

Environmental Consultations

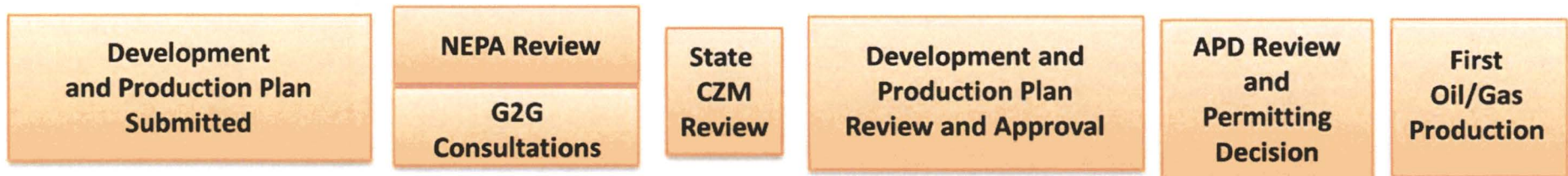
Government-to-Government Consultations

Post-Lease

Oil and Gas Exploration Plan and Drilling Approval



Oil and Gas Development and Production Plan Approval



Key: APD = Application for Permit to Drill; BOEM = Bureau of Ocean Energy Management; BSEE = Bureau of Safety and Environmental Enforcement; CD = Consistency Determination; CZM = Coastal Zone Management; DNA = Determination of NEPA Adequacy; EA = environmental assessment; EIS = environmental impact statement; G2G = government-to-government; NEPA = National Environmental Policy Act; NOI = Notice of Intent; OCS = Outer Continental Shelf; PEIS = programmatic environmental impact statement; ROD = Record of Decision