

Haaland says Interior has no immediate plans for offshore oil lease sale

BY BEN LEFEBVRE | 04/28/2022 11:39 AM EDT

The Interior Department does not have immediate plans to hold a new offshore oil and gas lease sale or release a new five-year plan for future lease sales, Interior Secretary Deb Haaland said Thursday.

Details: Haaland said at a House Appropriations energy subcommittee hearing on [Interior's budget request](#) that “no decisions have been made” on the department's Bureau of Ocean Energy Management holding the three lease sales remaining in the current five-year offshore lease plan that expires in July.

Interior also has no timeframe for coming out with a new five-year plan, Haaland added, saying that the work was delayed because the [Trump administration had stopped working on one](#) as it dealt with its own court battles.

“The internal work at BOEM has been moving forward on a new five-year plan,” Haaland said at the hearing in response to questioning from subcommittee ranking member [Dave Joyce](#) (R-Ohio). “Our staff there has been working hard on this. There’s a significant amount of work that still needs to be done. You also know that there is a lot of varying and conflicting litigation that has been a complicating factor for our department.”

Background: The Biden administration had started its first year in office by placing a moratorium on new lease sales while it conducted a review of the decades-old leasing program rules. A series of lawsuits coming from the Louisiana attorney general and the oil industry first forced Interior to [conduct an offshore lease sale](#) in the Gulf of Mexico in November, but a second lawsuit from environmental groups led to the results of that lease sale being invalidated.

[Interior has since scheduled](#) an onshore oil and gas lease sale for Wyoming. But it has not announced further action on what it will do about the additional lease sales stipulated by the soon-to-expire five-year offshore lease plan or when it might unveil a new plan.

Republicans on the committee raised their concerns about Interior’s lack of oil lease sales in what was otherwise a congenial hearing that largely focused on local issues.

“We can argue over the numbers, whether they shut it down or just made it very, very restrictive,” Rep. [Chris Stewart](#) (R-Utah) said during the hearing of the Biden administration’s oil leasing plans. “We hope we can work with you in the future as we try to take advantage of our oil resources so we don’t have to go to Saudi Arabia, Venezuela and Iran and ask them to increase their oil production.”

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