



# United States Department of the Interior

## BUREAU OF OCEAN ENERGY MANAGEMENT

Alaska OCS Region

3801 Centerpoint Drive, Suite 500

Anchorage, Alaska 99503-5823

OCT 23 2013

The Honorable Shelley Hughes  
Representative  
Alaska State Legislature  
House District 8 Greater Palmer  
600 East Railroad Avenue  
Wasilla, Alaska 99654

Dear Representative Hughes:

The Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (BOEM) is responsible for managing exploration and development of mineral and energy resources in the Outer Continental Shelf, seaward of State boundaries. BOEM's Environmental Studies Program (ESP) supports research to collect information needed for assessment and management of potential impacts from oil and gas development and to enable BOEM to develop mitigation protocols to protect the Arctic environment and the Alaska Native subsistence way of life. The ESP has supported aerial surveys generally flying at altitudes between 1000-2000 feet to monitor distribution and movement of multiple species of marine mammals. Manned aircraft flights can be dangerous and expensive because of long transit times, hazardous weather conditions, fuel-capacity limitations and operation costs. The ESP remains interested in working with our partners to evaluate the use of UAS to help fill information gaps often unattainable from manned aircraft in remote, hazardous or sensitive areas where use of conventional aircraft may present logistical difficulties.

Since 1974, the ESP has supported large scale aerial surveys during the summer and fall to document distribution, relative abundance, and migration of marine mammals in the Beaufort Sea. This decades-long coverage provides one of the longest monitoring efforts of biological phenomenon, which is increasingly valuable during this time of changing Arctic environmental conditions. The geographic area of these aerial surveys was extended to also cover the Chukchi Sea in 2008. **As the use of Unmanned Aircraft Systems increases, it is important to ensure that protocols are developed to avoid conflicts between aerial and UAS surveys which may be proposed for the same geographic area during the same time period. We encourage this Legislative Task Force on Unmanned Aircraft Systems to address coordination with ongoing efforts as legislation is developed.**

When we submit our statement, as per the flyer for this, we have been asked to include the following, with proposed answers given in **bold**:

Your name – **Dee Williams, PhD**

Business name – **BOEM Environmental Studies Program**

Contact information – **907-334-5283; dee.williams@boem.gov**

Business category: **Government**

Business client: **Public**

Sincerely,

Sharon E. Warren  
Acting Regional Director