



The Federal Oil and Gas Programs – No Need to Force More Leasing and Development

The oil and gas industry and their political allies persistently argue that “the answer” to America’s energy needs is “more drilling” and “more access” to federal lands and waters. However, recent data from the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and Minerals Management Service (MMS) indicate that, though tens of millions of acres of onshore and offshore federal lands are already leased to oil and gas companies, the vast majority of these lands are not producing oil or gas. Though over 88 million acres of federal onshore and offshore lands are under lease for oil and gas development, most of those lands and waters – a whopping *65,176,258 acres* – are not producing oil and gas. Moreover, BLM data for FY 2008 indicates that though over 5,000 drilling permits were issued in FY 2008 for federal onshore lands, more than 1,500 permits went unused. Here are the facts:

BLM Onshore Oil and Gas Program --

Amount of onshore federal acreage under lease in 2008 – 48,568,459 (MMS, 2008)¹

Amount of onshore federal acres under lease that are in production – 13,774,073 (MMS, 2008)²

Amount of onshore federal acreages leased but not in production – 34,794,386 (MMS, 2008)³

Number of drilling permits issued on onshore federal lands in FY 2008 – 6,617 (BLM, 2008)⁴

Number of federal onshore drilling permits used by industry in 2008 – 5,044 (BLM, 2008)⁵

Number of “surplus” (issued but not used) drilling permits issued by the BLM in FY 2008 – 1,573 (BLM, 2008)⁶

Number of “producible and serviceable holes” (wells) on federal onshore lands - 86,642 (BLM, 2008)⁷

MMS Offshore Oil and Gas Program --

Number of federal offshore acres under lease – 39,576,617 (MMS, 2008)⁸

Number of federal offshore acres in production – 9,194,745 (MMS, 2008)⁹

Non-producing offshore federal leases (number and acreage) – 5,890 leases, 30,381,872 acres (MMS, 2008)¹⁰

Total onshore and offshore federal acres under lease but not producing – 65,176,258 acres

Bottom Line: There is no need to force more onshore and offshore federal oil and gas development. The oil and gas industry has more leases on our federal lands and waters – tens of millions of acres – than they know what to do with. Instead, Congress should adopt policies to encourage the more efficient use of energy, and the development of clean, renewable technologies to meet our future energy needs.

¹http://www.mrm.mms.gov/MRMWebStats/Disbursements_Royalties.aspx?report=TotalLeasesbyCategory&yeartype=FY&year=2008&asOfDate=11-14-2008

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

⁴ BLM, unpublished spreadsheet data derived from LR 2000 system, FY 2008, p. 22.

⁵ Ibid., p. 24.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid., p. 26,

⁸http://www.mrm.mms.gov/MRMWebStats/Disbursements_Royalties.aspx?report=TotalLeasesbyCategory&yeartype=FY&year=2008&asOfDate=11-14-2008

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid.