

Task force seeks off-shore delay

SEASIDE (AP) — A state-federal task force is seeking a seven-year delay on plans to issue oil and gas leases off the Northwest coast.

The decision Monday by the Pacific Northwest Outer Continental Shelf Task Force follows a recommendation from a subcommittee of the group.

The subcommittee is developing a list of environmental studies needed before decisions are made on the sale of leases for the continental shelf off the coasts of Oregon and Washington. Those sales are scheduled for 1992.

Subcommittee member Pam Miller of the Washington State

Department of Ecology said seven years are needed for field study and analysis to better understand the ecosystems and the potential risks to marine resources posed by oil and gas development.

The task force, formed in January 1989 to advise the interior secretary on oil and gas leasing, exploration and development off the Northwest coast, drafted a resolution recommending that the sale process not go forward until the studies are complete.

Miller said the studies will cost \$20 million to \$25 million and should be financed by the Interior Department.

She said the states of Oregon and Washington are asking Congress for \$6 million for the first year.

Task force member Ed Cassidy, deputy director of the U.S. Mineral Management Service, suggested that some of the money for the studies might have to come from state agencies.

But Oregon and Washington task force members said the cost should be borne by the Mineral Management Service because the whole process was triggered by the proposed federal lease sale.

Carol Alexander, a representative of the Citizens Organized Rally Against Leasing, asked the task force for more than a delay, calling for "a permanent end to the possibility of off-shore oil rigs."

Alexander said that even the Mineral Management Service has rated the outer continental shelf off Oregon and Washington as second only to Alaska's as the most environmentally sensitive and biologically productive in the country.

She said the citizens' group is supporting a bill that would ban new oil and gas leases in most U.S. coastal waters, including those off the coast of Oregon and Washington.

The states of Oregon and Washington already have proposed postponing or canceling the sale.

New storm expected to hit Oregon Wednesday

The snow subsided across Oregon Tuesday and residents braced for what was expected to be the coldest night so far this winter.

Motorists slipped and slid on streets and highways Tuesday morning as residents of Western Oregon struggled through their second straight day of icy weather. But the weather warmed later in the day and conditions improved.

One death apparently was related to the weather.

Trooper Monte Smith of the state police in Roseburg said a vehicle driven by Thomas Alan Morris, 35, of Riddle, struck a bridge on Interstate 5 about 3 miles north of Myrtle Creek at 10:45 p.m. Monday. Morris got out of the car and apparently slipped on the ice, falling off the bridge and onto a road below.

The National Weather Service canceled all snow advisories in the state Tuesday, but said light accumulations were possible in the southern Cascades and Siskiyou as well as in the mountains of Eastern Oregon.

A new storm was headed for the state, however, and was expected to arrive late Wednesday. Precipitation from the latest storm was expected to be in the form of rain on the northwest coast and as snow, possibly mixed with rain, in the northwest interior of the state. Heavy

snow is forecast Thursday in the mountains.

The precipitation is to spread south Thursday, mostly in the form of rain at the lower elevations.

The National Weather Service said the new storm will carry more precipitation than its predecessor and could result in significant snow accumulations in some areas.

Ice covered much of Interstate 5 between Portland and Roseburg early Tuesday and still had spots of ice later in the day.

Traction devices were required for motorists through the Siskiyou, on U.S. Highway 26 at Government Camp and Warm Springs Junction, on Oregon 58 through Willamette Pass and on Interstate 84 between Pendleton and La Grande. Traction tires or devices were required on U.S. 20 through Santiam Pass.

Ice and snow forced closure of many schools Tuesday, including those in Eugene, Springfield, Coos Bay, Forest Grove and Roseburg. Most others delayed their opening.

Meanwhile, as skies cleared, the weather service said Tuesday night could be the coldest night thus far this winter. Lows were forecast in the teens and low 20s in Western Oregon and from minus-5 to 15 degrees east of the Cascades.



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