Gas in the United States, the National Petroleum Council (NPC) concluded that the technically recoverable natural gas resource base is 1,295 trillion cubic feet (TCF) for the lower 48 states. Of this amount, 600 TCF was believed to be recoverable in the future at a wellhead price of $2.50 per million British thermal unit (1990 dollars). According to the NPC (Marginal Wells, July 1994), however, the wellhead price on a current basis trended upward to a high of $2.66 per thousand cubic feet (MCF) during the 1974–1984 period and has declined to around $1.60–$1.80 per MCF over the last eight years.

There is a legitimate concern that low gas prices will result in premature abandonment of the marginal properties with the concurrent loss of potentially recoverable reserves as well as royalties, taxes and employment opportunities. A 1992 study by the Interstate Oil and Gas Compact Commission estimated that there were approximately 215,000 idle or shut-in oil, gas and injection wells in the United States at that time. The NPC believes that as many as 50 percent of these wells are gas and injection wells. While some of these wells are undoubtedly shut-in or temporarily abandoned while waiting for pipeline connections, a large portion of these gas wells are idle because they are uneconomical to produce as a result of low producing rates, low gas prices and/or high operating costs (NPC, Marginal Wells, July 1994).

It is clear that whatever combination of price and cost factors currently define the economic limit of a marginal gas well, production-based incentives will improve gas well economics and extend their lives. Because premature abandonment of marginal wells results in the loss of domestic reserves, such incentives may be the only way to maintain the economic viability of the production and resources that these wells represent.

Comments and suggestions on a reduction in Federal royalties should concentrate not only on the value of a royalty rate reduction for producers of marginal gas, but also on how the royalty rate reduction might best be implemented. Respondents should particularly consider the following issues:

1. The need for economic relief for marginal gas properties. Respondents, both for and against the proposal, should document any economic arguments to the extent practicable. The documentation should include all economic assumptions used for estimated costs, profits, effects on employment, etc. The BLM would especially appreciate detailed source citations for verification and reference.

2. A workable definition of a ''marginal'' gas property. Before its repeal, the Natural Gas Policy Act of 1978 defined a ''stripper'' gas well as one producing 60,000 cubic feet of gas or less per day (MCF/D). For Minerals Management Service accounting purposes, however, any proposal for royalty reductions should be based on a property (i.e., units, communitization agreements, leases, etc.) rather than a well-by-well basis.

3. Discouraging false reporting and manipulation. Proposals should describe measures to discourage manipulation of production rates in order to qualify for a royalty reduction. In addition, it would be useful to the BLM if respondents would suggest possible requirements for qualification and the time frames for subsequent qualification periods, if applicable.

4. Minimal administrative burden. All proposals should be designed in a manner which minimizes the administrative burden placed upon the government and private industry. For example, consideration might be given to a notification process rather than a formal application process.

5. Minimal Program Overlap. When preparing proposals, special consideration should be given to avoiding overlap with existing programs such as the Heavy Oil and Stripper Property royalty rate reductions.

Dated: February 26, 1996.

Sylvia V. Baca,

Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Interior.

[FR Doc. 96–4975 Filed 3–4–96; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 4310–84–P

Minerals Management Service

43 CFR Part 14

Aboriginal Title To The Alaska Outer Continental Shelf

AGENCY: Minerals Management Service (MMS), Department of the Interior.

ACTION: Notice of receipt of petition for rulemaking and request for comments.

SUMMARY: The Department of the Interior announces receipt of, and requests comments on, a petition for rulemaking on issues regarding claimed aboriginal title and aboriginal hunting and fishing rights of federally recognized tribes in Alaska exercisable on the federal Outer Continental Shelf (OCS).

DATES: Comments on the petition are requested through April 4, 1996.

ADDRESSES: Comments on the petition should be directed to: Paul Stang, Chief, Branch of Leasing Coordination, Office of Program Development and Coordination, (MS–4410) Minerals Management Service, 381 Elden Street, Herndon, Virginia 20270–4817. Please indicate that your comment is in response to the petition for rulemaking on aboriginal title and rights on the Alaska OCS.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: William Quinn at (703) 787–1191.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The Villages of Eyak, Tatilek, Chenega, Port Graham and Nanwalek have petitioned the Secretary to promulgate a rule stating that 225 federally recognized tribes in Alaska may claim aboriginal title and aboriginal hunting and fishing rights to the Outer Continental Shelf (OCS) and to make leases on the OCS off Alaska subject to claimed aboriginal title and rights of such tribes. The MMS is the agency within the Department of the Interior responsible for issuing and managing mineral leases on the OCS pursuant to the Outer Continental Shelf Lands Act, 43 U.S.C. 1331 *et seq.*, hence its involvement in this matter.

The initial petition was addressed to both the Secretary of the Interior and the Secretary of Commerce and did not designate any existing rule for revision or propose a new rule text. Therefore, the Secretary's office notified the Villages that under 43 CFR 14.2, a petition for rulemaking must include the text of a rule that the petitioner proposes for adoption. On September 1, 1995, the Solicitor of the Department received a letter from counsel for the petitioning Villages proposing the following rule:

''Proposed regulation of the Secretary of the Interior for the protection of aboriginal title and aboriginal hunting and fishing rights on the Outer Continental Shelf of federally recognized tribes in Alaska.

''1. The Department recognizes that the 225 native Villages on the Secretary's list of ''Native Entities within the State of Alaska Recognized and Eligible to Receive Services from the United States Bureau of Indian Affairs,'' 60 Fed. Reg. 9250, February 16, 1995, are Native Tribes capable of possessing aboriginal claims. *County of Oneida v. Oneida Indian Nation*, 470 U.S. 226, 233 (1974).

''2. Although the existence and scope of the aboriginal titles of individual Alaskan tribes has not yet been determined, based on the historical and contemporary evidence available the Department recognizes that many Alaska coastal tribes have continuously and exclusively occupied areas of the OCS off Alaska for long periods of time and thus possess the potential to establish prima facie

cases of aboriginal title to their respective traditional use areas.

''3. The Department recognizes that the aboriginal title and rights of such tribes were not extinguished by the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (ANCSA), 43 U.S.C. 1601, et seq., the Outer continental Shelf Lands Act, 43 U.S.C. 1331, et seq. or by any other Congressional Act. Nor, is the continuing existence of such rights contrary to the Paramountcy Doctrine (see *United States v. California*, 332 U.S. 19 (1947); *United States v. Maine*, 420 U.S. 515 (1975); and *United States v. Louisiana*, 339 U.S. 699 (1950) or to the Ninth Circuit decisions in *Native Village of Gambell v. Hodel*, 869 F.2d 1273 (9th Cir. 1989) (*Gambell III*) or *Gambell v. Babbitt*, 999 F.2d 403 (9th Cir. 1993) (*Gambell IV*).

''4. Hereafter all Alaska native tribes whose aboriginal territory or aboriginal rights to the OCS would likely suffer trespass or be disturbed or affected in any significant way by Departmental leases of the OCS off the coast of Alaska, shall be given written notice of such sale and of this regulation at least 180 days prior to the official sale of such leases. Oil, gas, or other mineral leases that would likely cause disruptive effects merely by nature of their proximity to aboriginal territory are included within this notice requirement.

''The types of disruptions or effects requiring such prior notice include any potential trespass upon the tribes' aboriginal hunting and fishing grounds, or any potentially significant disturbance, depletion, or interference with Native hunting, fishing or exploitation of other resources or other uses of their aboriginal territory.

''5. The Department recognizes that all existing as well as future leases of the OCS off Alaska are subject to the aboriginal title and aboriginal hunting and fishing rights of Alaskan Native Tribes.''

The matter addressed in the petition has been the subject of litigation for many years now and is currently the subject of litigation brought by the petitioning Villages seeking to halt proposed OCS Lease Sale 149 in the Cook Inlet in Alaska. *Native Village of Eyak, et al.* v. *Trawler Diane Marie, Inc., et al.*, Case No. A95–0063 CIV (HRH) (D. Alaska, filed Feb. 23, 1995). The Government has consistently taken the position that no person or entity has title to, or hunting and fishing rights on, the Alaska OCS. Rather, the Alaska OCS is subject to the paramount authority of the Federal Government, and to uses permitted by the United States pursuant to the Outer Continental Shelf Lands Act, 43 U.S.C. 1331 *et seq.*

Nevertheless, in fairness to the Villages, the MMS is publishing the text of the rule pursuant to 43 CFR part 14 and invites knowledgeable parties to comment on it and to consider the following:

1. Should we engage in this rulemaking?

2. Would such a rule be consistent with the laws governing the OCS?

3. Would granting the rule be consistent with the paramount interest of the United States?

4. Do we have other mechanisms sufficient to protect claimed Native interests? and,

5. Where should undertaking such rulemaking fit in among the other priorities of the agency?

Anyone so wishing should submit comments to MMS at the address above. In a separate Federal Register notice, MMS is also pursuing factual inquiry into the potential nature and extent of the claims of the five petitioning Villages with respect to the areas proposed for lease in Cook Inlet Sale 149 and Gulf of Alaska-Yakutat Sale 158 in connection with the decisions to conduct such sales.

Dated: February 26, 1996.

Cynthia Quarterman,

Director, Minerals Management Service.

[FR Doc. 96–5009 Filed 3–4–96; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 4310–MR–M

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

Coast Guard

46 CFR Parts 108, 110, 111, 112, 113, and 161

[CGD 94–108]

RIN 2115–AF24

Electrical Engineering Requirements for Merchant Vessels

AGENCY: Coast Guard, DOT.

ACTION: Correction to proposed rule.

SUMMARY: This document contains corrections to the notice of proposed rulemaking, which was published Friday, February 2, 1996, as part of the President's Regulatory Reinvention Initiative, the proposed rule amends the Coast Guard's electrical engineering regulations.

EFFECTIVE DATE: March 5, 1996.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Mr. Gerald P. Miante, Project Manager, or LT(jg) Jacqueline M. Twomey, Project Engineer, Design and Engineering Standards Division (G–MMS), (202) 267–2206.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Background

The notice of proposed rulemaking that is the subject of these corrections amends the Coast Guard's electrical engineering regulations to reduce the regulatory burden on the marine industry, purge obsolete regulations and replaces prescriptive requirements with performance-based regulations that incorporate international standards.

Need for Correction

As published, the final rule contains typographical errors and omissions which may prove to be misleading and are in need of correction.

Correction of Publication

Accordingly, the publication on February 2, 1996, of the notice of proposed rulemaking at 61 FR 4132, which was the subject of FR Doc. 96–2149, is corrected as follows:

1. On page 4135, in the first column, in the paragraph entitled ''Section 111.05–33,'' sixth line, the word ''a'' should be added before the word ''current.''

2. On the same page, in the second column, in the paragraph entitled ''Section 111.12–1,'' seventh line, remove the word ''governor'' and add, in its place, the words ''overspeed device''.

3. On page 4136, in the first column, in the paragraph entitled ''Section 111.30–4,'' tenth line, remove the words ''a section'', and add in their place the word ''sections''.

4. On page 4137, in the first column, in the paragraph entitled ''Section 111.60–3,'' fourth line, ''IEC Publication 352'' should be replaced with ''IEC Publication 92–352''.

5. On page 4146, in the list of Underwriters Laboratories' standards, the section affected for UL 62, Flexible Cord and Fixture Wire, should read ''111.60–13(a)''.

6. On page 4153, in the second column, in § 111.60–13(a), fourth and fifth lines, remove the words ''NEMA WC 3 and NEMA WC 8'' and add, in their place the words, ''NEMA WC 3, NEMA WC 8 or UL 62.''

7. On page 4159, in the third column, in the paragraph numbered ''154,'' second line, remove ''(q)'' and add, in its place, ''(g)''.

8. On page 4161, in the third column, in the paragraph numbered ''184,'' second and third lines, remove the words ''(g), (h), and (i) are revised and paragraph (j) is added'' and add, in their place, the words ''(g) and (h) and paragraphs (i) and (j) are added''.

9. On page 4163, in the first column, in § 113.50–5(g), fourth line, add the word ''or'' before ''4X''.

10. On the same page, in the second column, in the paragraph numbered ''201,'' third line, add the words ''paragraph (e) is removed;'' before the words ''and Table 1135.50–15'' and after § 113.50–15(d) remove the five asterisks.