

The U.S. Extended Continental Shelf (ECS)

Ocean Seminar Series

DC Bar's Environment, Energy and Natural Resources Section
and the Environmental Law Institute

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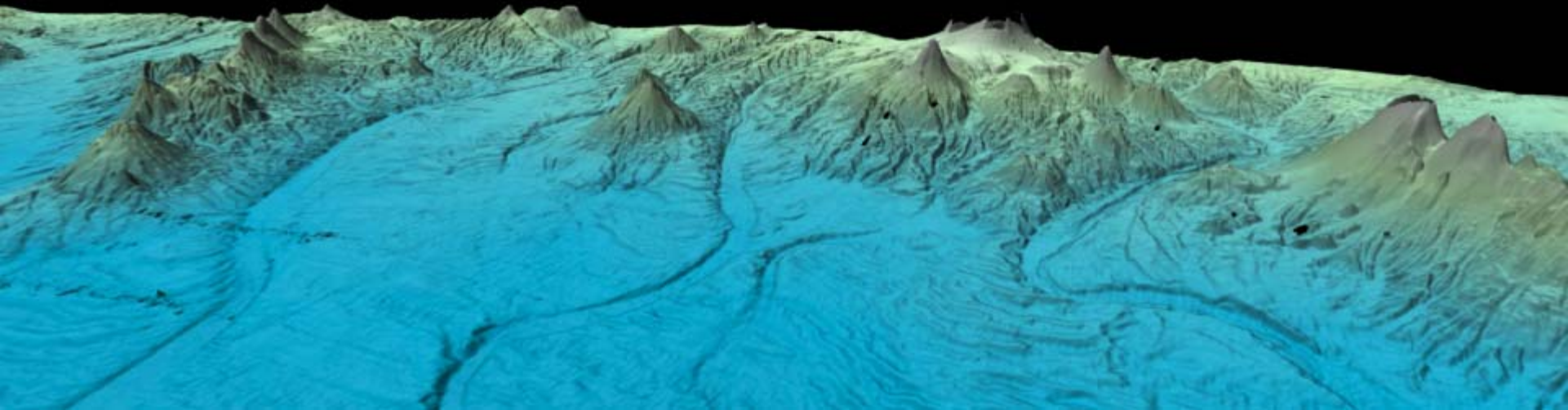


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Defining the Seaward Extent of U.S. Rights

The United States has an extended continental shelf (ECS) that is more than 1 million square kilometers—an area nearly half of the Louisiana Purchase and with energy and mineral resources that are likely worth many billions.

Defining and establishing the limits of the ECS in concrete geographical terms will enable the U.S. to exercise its sovereign rights over these resources with significantly greater certainty -- whether we choose to use or conserve those resources.

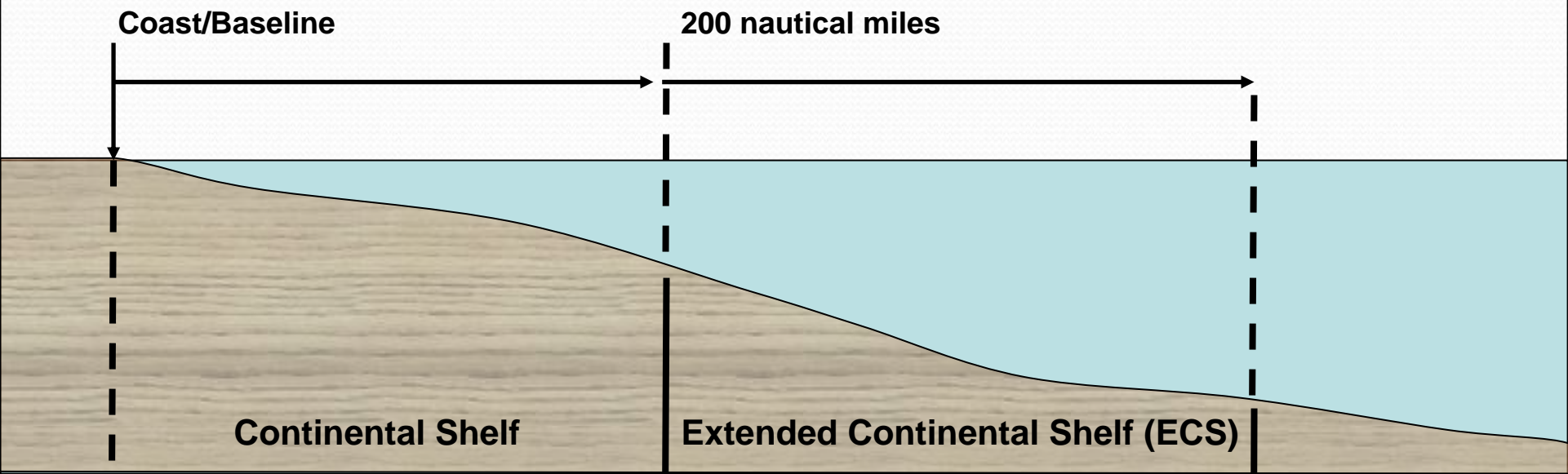


Background

Under international law, as reflected in the Convention on the Law of the Sea, every coastal State automatically has a continental shelf out to 200 nautical miles (nm) from its shore or out to a maritime boundary with another coastal State.

However, a coastal State may define a continental shelf beyond 200 nm (called an extended continental shelf), if it meets the formula and limit lines in the Convention.

The process requires the collection and analysis of data that document the natural prolongation of the continental landmass beyond 200 nm.



How does a State establish its ECS?

LOS Party (like Russia or Canada)

- Makes submission to technical body
- Body reviews, makes recommendations to Coastal State
- Limits “final and binding”

LOS Non-Party (like U.S.)

- Can establish outer limits but doesn't get benefit of Convention procedures to maximize international recognition and legal certainty

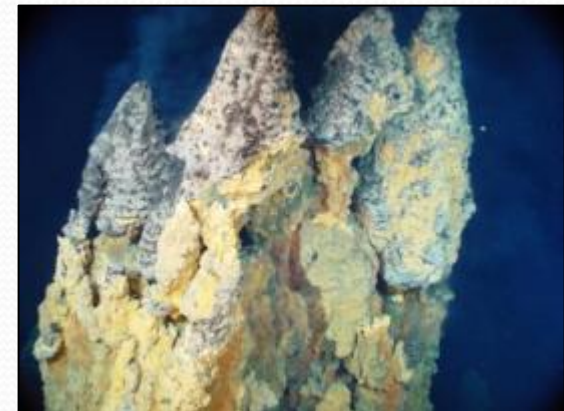
Why does it matter?

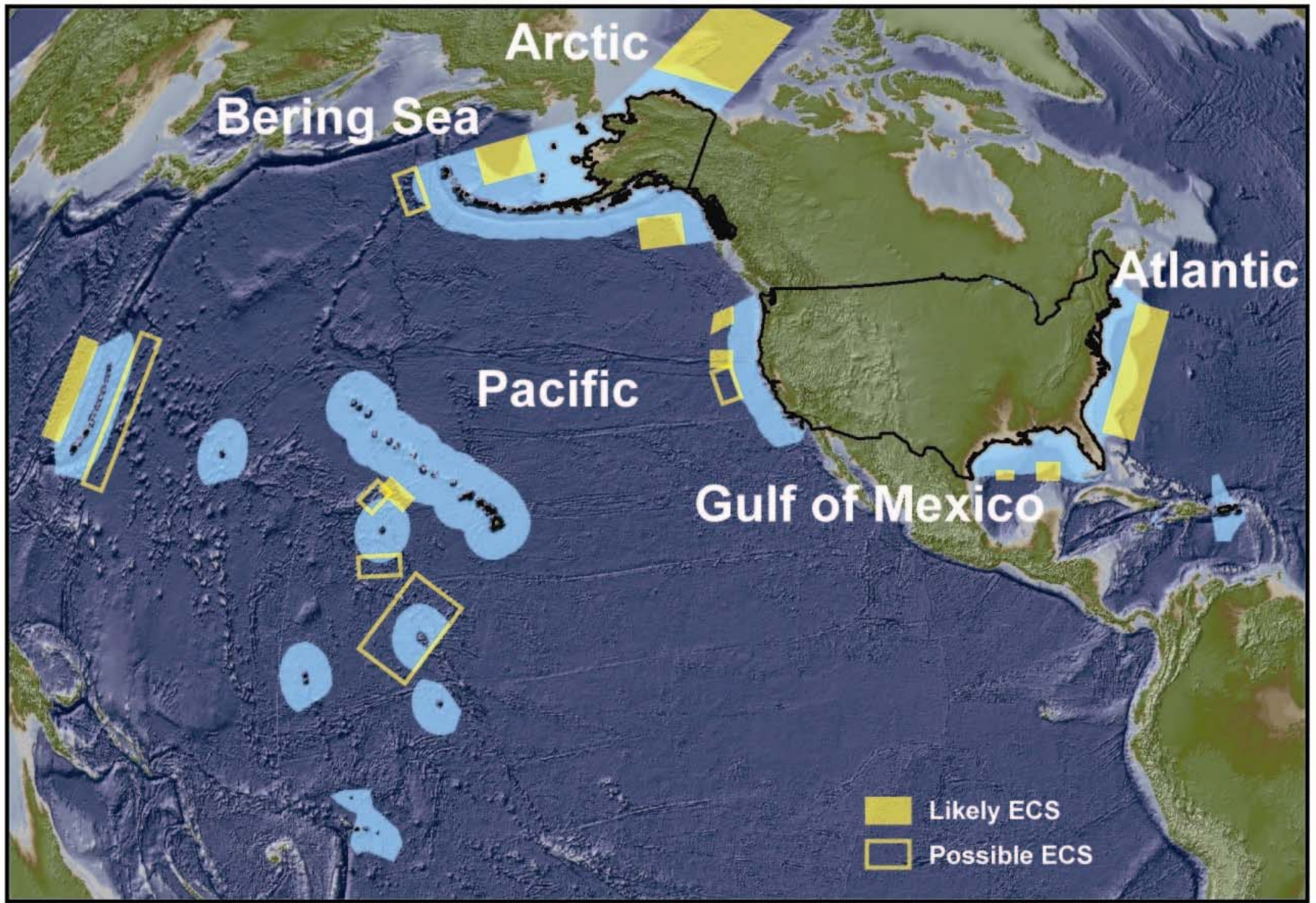
The U.S., like other countries, has an inherent interest in knowing, and declaring to others, the exact extent of our sovereign rights in the seabed.

Sovereign rights over the natural resources of seabed and subsoil:

- mineral resources (manganese nodules, ferromanganese crusts, and polymetallic sulfides, etc)
- petroleum (oil, gas, and gas hydrates)
- “sedentary” species (clams, crabs, scallops, sponges, corals, mollusks, etc)

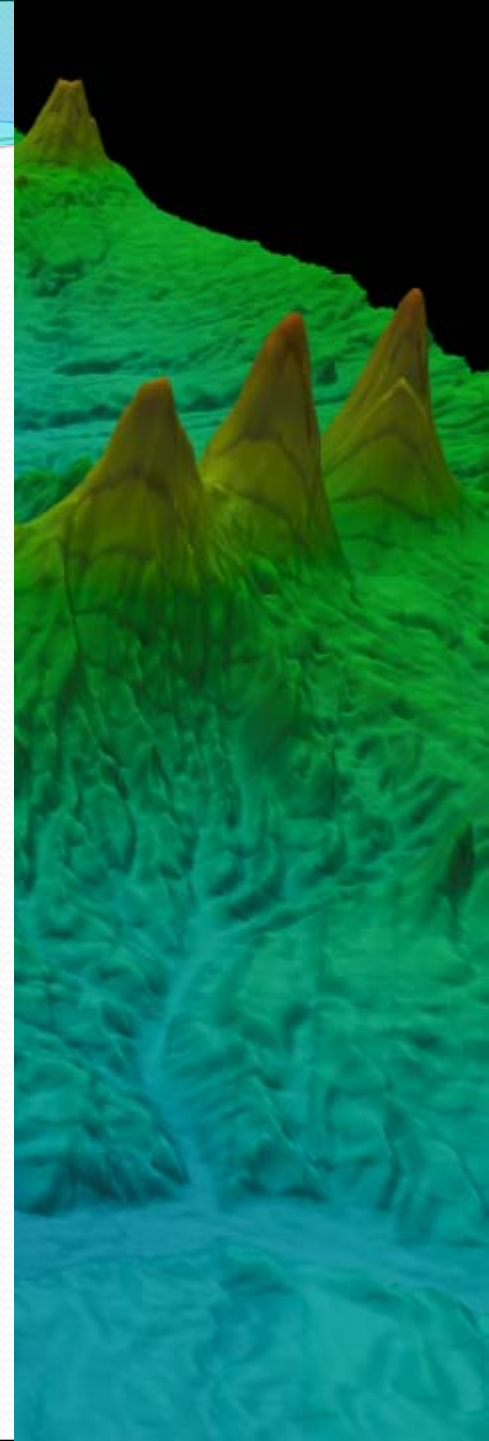
Defining those rights in concrete geographical terms provides the specificity and certainty necessary to protect, manage, and/or use those resources.





What have we done so far?

- **Bathymetric Data Collection (more than 1 million square kilometers from 11 cruises)**
 - Arctic Ocean (2003, 2004, 2007, 2008)
 - Gulf of Alaska (2005)
 - Gulf of Mexico (2007)
 - Atlantic Ocean (2004, 2005, 2008)
 - Northern Mariana Islands & Guam (2006, 2007)
 - Bering Sea (2003)
- **Seismic Data Collection (more than 2,700 linear kilometers)**
 - Arctic Ocean (2008)
- **Data Management**
 - Developing metadata standards for bathymetric and seismic data (2008)
 - Developing a long-term data management and preservation strategy (2008)
- **Planning**
 - Held 4 regional geology workshops with geology experts from industry and academia.



Maximizing the effort (a multi-faceted approach)

Success requires integrating the expertise and resources among multiple federal agencies and across scientific, technical, legal, and policy disciplines.

Incorporating outside expertise from industry and academia ensures success and cost savings.

The ECS Task Force will engage other countries in cooperative efforts, where appropriate. For instance, the U.S. and Canada collected data together in the Arctic in the summer of 2008. This project will continue in 2009.



About the ECS Task Force



In April 2007, the Interagency Committee on Ocean Science and Resource Management Integration (ICOSRMI), co-chaired by the Office of Science and Technology Policy and the Council on Environmental Quality, established the Extended Continental Shelf Task Force. The Task Force is chaired by the Department of State with co-vice chairs from the Department of the Interior and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. The Task Force is to coordinate the collection and analysis of relevant data and prepare the necessary documentation to establish the limits of the U.S. continental shelf in accordance with international law.



The Planning Process

- **ECS Task Force Meetings**
 - Last Tuesday of each month
 - Guest speakers most months
- **Workshops**
 - Data Management
 - Arctic Geology
 - Pacific Islands
 - Atlantic Margin
 - West Coast/Gulf of Alaska/Bering Sea
- **Project Plan, due June 2009**
 - Where does the U.S. have extended continental shelf?
 - What work is left to be done?
 - How much will it cost?



What work is left?

- **Planning**
 - Project Plan, due June 2009
 - Determine priorities
 - Execute remaining work
- **Data Collection**
 - Additional bathymetric data required (Arctic, Gulf of Alaska, Continental West Coast, Pacific Islands)
 - Additional seismic data required (Arctic, Continental East Coast, possibly elsewhere)
- **Analysis and compilation**
 - Construct a Geographic Information System
 - Apply formula and constraint lines
 - Document legal and scientific approaches

Planning

Data
Collection

Analysis and
Compilation





U.S.
Extended Continental Shelf
Project



For Additional Information:

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Backup Slides

What has been done so far?

Year	(\$million)	Activities
2002	0.750	Desktop study
2003	3.2	Bathymetric data (Bering Sea, Arctic)
2004	3.2	Bathymetric data (Arctic, Northeast Atlantic)
2005	2.5	Bathymetric data (Southeast Atlantic, Gulf of Alaska)
2006	1.05	Bathymetric data (Northern Mariana Islands)
2007	2.679	Bathymetric data (Arctic, Gulf of Mex., Northern Mariana Islands)
2008	5.8	Bathymetric data (Arctic, East Coast) Seismic Data (Arctic), and data management efforts
2009	6.4	Bathymetric and seismic Data (Arctic and Gulf of Alaska), data management, and data analysis

Fiscal Year 2009 Budget

	Activity	(\$million)
Data Analysis & Compilation	Project Plan Development	0.1
	Evaluate Foreign Submissions and CLCS Recommendations	0.3
	Analysis, Materials, and Diplomacy to Establish U.S. ECS	0.3
Data Collection	Arctic, Gulf of Alaska	4.7
Infrastructure	Data Management	0.8
	ECS Project Office	0.2
	Technology Development	0

Total:

\$6.4