

United States Senator Lisa Murkowski

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[Murkowski Comment on EPA Issuance of Air Permits for Chukchi Sea Exploration](#)

WASHINGTON, D.C. - U.S. Sen. Lisa Murkowski, R-Alaska, today welcomed the Environmental Protection Agency's proposed approval of air-quality permits for Shell's planned exploration of the Chukchi Sea.

"The EPA's decision to approve an air-quality permit for Shell's Chukchi Sea exploration have been a long time coming," Murkowski said. "Today's decision represents progress. While several additional hurdles remain, the agency's action offers some reassurance that exploration for oil and gas resources off Alaska's coast will be allowed to proceed."

In order for Shell to be able to go ahead with its planned exploration in the Chukchi Sea this summer, the EPA still must finalize its approval of the air quality permit, which must then withstand any legal challenges. Furthermore, the Department of the Interior still must reissue its corrected 5-year offshore oil and gas leasing plan as ordered by the federal court of appeals.

"Now is the time for all parties to keep focused and work together to ensure the continued advancement toward better energy security through a robust, efficient and safe development program for Alaska's offshore oil and gas," Murkowski said. "This permit - once finalized - will bring that worthy goal within reach."

Shell spent more than \$2 billion in 2008 for the right to explore for oil and gas in parts of the Chukchi Sea, which has estimated reserves of 15 billion barrels of oil and 77 trillion cubic feet of natural gas.

"The energy resources in the Chukchi and Beaufort seas are critical for the continued operation of the trans-Alaska oil pipeline and the economic security of the state of Alaska," Murkowski said. "I will continue to fight to ensure that companies that play by the rules and adhere to the strictest environmental standards are treated fairly by regulators and receive all necessary permits in a timely fashion."

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