

continued from front page

The WWF and another group, the International Fund for Animal Welfare (IFAW), also allege that the US Fish and Wildlife Services have delayed its final decision on whether polar bears will be listed as an endangered species to allow the sale to proceed without further controversy.

The listing, which would have had an impact upon the release of the leases, would have recognised the grave threat to polar bears from loss of sea ice and habitats due to global warming.

Brendan Frazier, IFAW's US spokesman, said: "An endangered listing can affect the sell-off of the oil drilling rights.

"The authorities would have to get approval through the Fish and Wildlife Service to conduct drilling if there is an endangered species that inhabits the area."

American legislators have proposed listing the polar bear as "threatened", but that did not go far enough, said IFAW.

"A 'threatened' listing leaves open the possibility for exemptions and doesn't shut loopholes, such as the one that allows Americans to trophy-hunt for polar bears in Canada and bring their heads and hides back to the US," said Mr Frazier.

"Selling off our natural heritage to the highest bidder is a sad spectacle and represents a step backwards in our efforts to save the Arctic and polar bears for future generations," said Carter Roberts, the president and CEO of World Wildlife Fund US.

The MMS announced its intention to sell oil and gas leases in the Chukchi Sea in early January, and bidding opened yesterday.

The highest bid received for the sale was \$105,304,581, submitted by Shell. Other bidding companies included ConocoPhillips, StatoilHydro, NACRA, Repsol, ENI and Iona Energy.

Alaska native groups and environmentalists are already fighting Shell's plans to drill on acreage in the adjacent Beaufort Sea.

Shell had planned to drill four wells on its Sivulliq prospect during the summer of 2007 but was blocked by a court challenge to its environmental permits.

Oil production from the Chukchi sea is at least a decade away, MMS officials said, citing the need for an undersea pipeline to connect the remote area with the Trans Alaska Pipeline.

Jessica Aldred

OTHER NEWS STORIES

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Natives demand environmental assessments

<http://www.nytimes.com/2008/02/01/us/01lease.html?ref=us>

"Licensing of oil rights off Alaska angers activists"

"...oil lease is a disaster waiting to happen"

<http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/136506fd5e9-11dc-bbb2-0000779fd2ac.html>

LINKS & RESOURCES

www.londonrisingtide.org.uk
Battling climate change and fossil fuels

www.indymedia.ie/mayo
Open forum news and analysis

www.shelltosea.com
Campaign website

www.wwf.org.uk
World Wildlife Fund in the UK

Shell To Sea

11 February 2008

Community Information - Erris, County Mayo, Ireland

Polar bears threatened by new drilling rights

www.guardian.co.uk
Thur February 7 2008

The sale of licences to drill for oil and gas rights in Alaska will threaten the future of the region's polar bears, conservationists warned today.

The oil and gas rights to drill in 29.4m acres in the Chukchi sea, which were made available by the US government's Minerals Management Service (MMS) yesterday, have attracted record bids of \$2.66bn from the likes of Shell and ConocoPhillips.

The MMS believes that up to 15bn barrels of recoverable oil and 77 trillion cubic feet of gas reserves lie beneath the Chukchi Sea, which lies between Alaska and Siberia.

But environmentalists say too little is known about the possible impact of drilling on populations of polar bears and walrus in the area.

The WWF says the Chukchi Sea is a critical habitat for polar bears, walrus, whales, seals, and migratory birds, and that the auc-

tioning of the "prime" polar bear habitat will threaten the region's populations. It is also experiencing some of the most rapid loss of sea ice in the world due to climate change.

"The technology to effectively contain and clean up oil spills does not currently exist and this oil lease is a disaster waiting to happen," said James Leaton, the oil and gas policy adviser for WWF UK.

"It's also unacceptable that oil companies and the US government are effectively seeking to make a profit from the potential demise of a species," he added.



The WWF says that the US interior secretary, Dirk Kempthorne, has ignored repeated requests from the American public, Arctic communities and conservation groups to delay or withdraw the lease sale until there is a better understanding of its potential impact on Arctic wildlife and habitats.

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Global warming is now recognised as one of the greatest threats to life on planet Earth, and all nations are moving to combat the problem because there is literally nowhere to hide from it. A century of fossil fuel consumption is largely blamed for the effects now felt by vulnerable species, yet the industry itself is carrying on with business as usual.

Shell are leading the charge to develop the sensitive Arctic waters, desperately searching to replace their oil and gas reserves to satisfy shareholders, regardless of the social and environmental costs.

In Mayo, the vital resource of water is coming under constant pressure from polluting industries and statutory mismanagement, and two years of environmental breaches at Bellanaboy still goes unpunished. **S2S**

The Provision and Quality of Drinking Water in Ireland

A Report for the Years 2006-2007 [extracts]

[PAGE 30] 4.1 Indicator Parameter Quality of Drinking Water

Aluminium

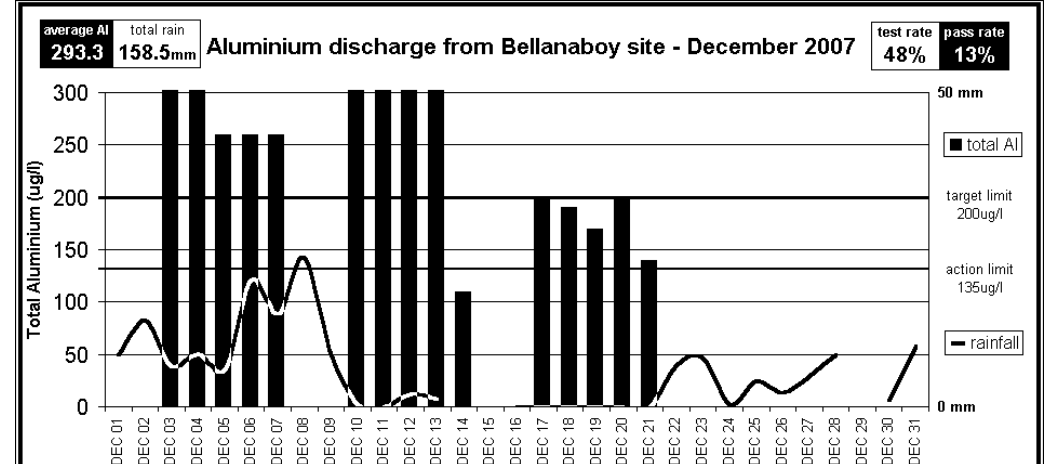
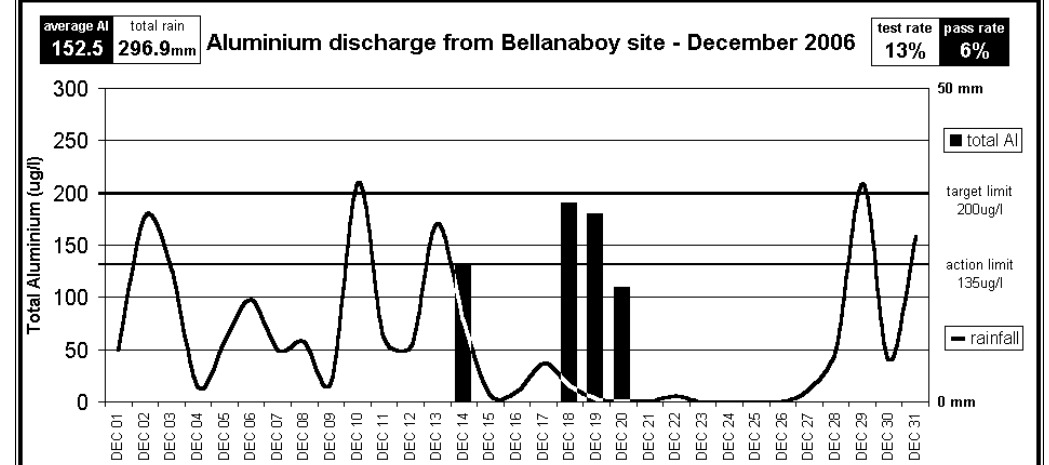
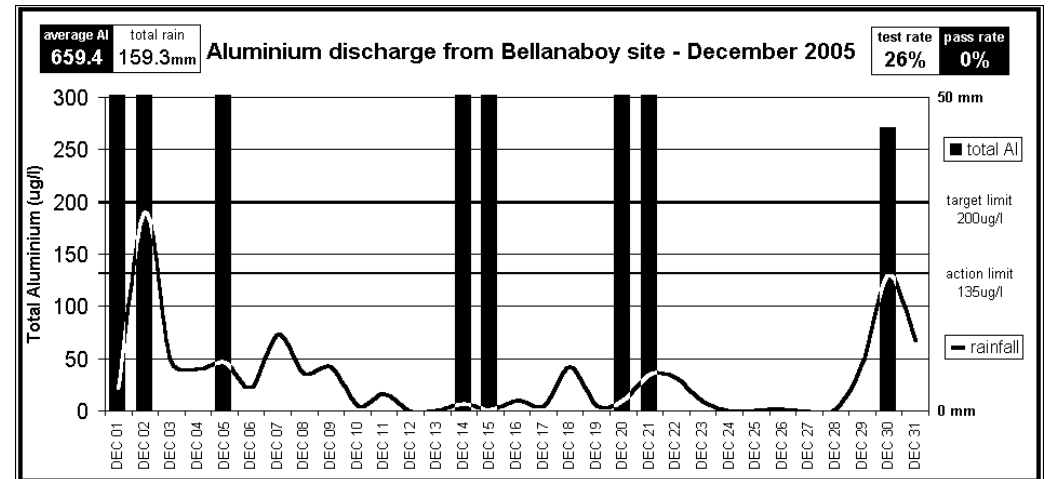
Compliance with the aluminium parametric value has been problematic in a number of supplies in Ireland in the past. Failure to meet the aluminium parametric value can be due to several reasons, including naturally elevated levels of aluminium in the raw water, operation of the treatment plant above design capacity, poor management of the treatment plant or inadequate management of the distribution network. While a small number of water supply zones have naturally elevated levels of aluminium, the majority of aluminium noncompliances in Ireland in 2006 appeared to be due to the latter three causes. The local authority can control all three of these factors. The level of compliance with the aluminium parametric value fell to 92.8% in 2006 from 94.5% in 2005...

The rates of compliance vary significantly from county to county, with 2 local authorities (Galway City and North Tipperary) achieving full compliance with the standard (down from 4 in 2005), while 10 local authorities reported compliance rates of less than 90% (up from 8 in 2005). Particularly poor rates of compliance were reported in public water supplies in Limerick City (64%), Mayo (73%) and Longford (73%).

[PAGE 65 - Mayo County Council]

Compliance with the Chemical and Indicator Parametric Values

Compliance with the aluminium parametric value was problematic in Mayo (73% compliance). Of concern was the failure of all samples tested to comply with the aluminium standard in the Mulranny (all 3 samples analysed exceeded) and the Shrule (all 5 samples analysed exceeded) supplies while high levels of aluminium (up to 8 times the standard) were detected in the Westport supply (8 of 10 samples analysed exceeded).



All data from Mayo County Council