



Conserving Coastal Georgia's Natural Heritage, Investing in Our Children's Future

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Secretary of Interior
Department of Interior
1849 C Street, N.W.
Washington DC 20240

Submitted via <https://www.regulations.gov/comment?D=BOEM-2017-0050-0001&p=1> on July 20, 2017

Docket No. BOEM-2017-0050, Requests for Information: Preparation of 2019-2024 National Outer Continental Shelf Oil and Gas Leasing Program

Secretary Zinke:

I strongly oppose efforts to develop a new five-year Outer Continental Shelf (OCS) program that would open additional planning areas to new offshore oil and gas leasing. Such activities are not justified by domestic energy demand or national-interest priorities, and any economic benefit (short-term) would be greatly outweighed by both short and long-term risks, which should be accurately represented as a significant public cost.

There is no need to expand the scope of offshore oil and gas leasing or expose more areas of the U.S. coast to the risks of offshore oil and gas operations—especially when there are better and cleaner ways to meet the energy needs of our country.

The record clearly indicates that offshore oil drilling is hazardous to the public, especially the millions who depend on coastal resources and live in coastal communities. Damage caused by an offshore drilling catastrophe could lead to a massive oil spill that would cause prolonged and pernicious harm to marine and onshore resources - including private property and local businesses. Billions of dollars of annual income and thousands of jobs in tourism, fisheries, and recreation would be put in jeopardy.

A spill from an offshore oil well could cause severely adverse impacts to the economies of coastal communities, shut down or impair commercial and recreational fisheries, degrade beaches and shorelines, and injure or kill birds, fish and marine mammals. Impacts from offshore oil spills can last for decades. There's ample evidence that residents of many coastal states and communities oppose oil development off of their beaches and coastlines. In Georgia, for example, about 20% of the coastal economy would be threatened by needless offshore fossil-fuel development, and numerous local government along the Southeast coastline have passed resolutions against offshore drilling and geophysical surveying - which is inconclusive and destructive.

Moreover, because the U.S. now exports some million barrels of oil daily, offshore oil produced in the areas of the proposed lease-sale would be used primarily for export. That means that corporate profits would be gained with no net benefit to the American public, and - to the contrary - at significant, unjustifiable risk to coastal residents and businesses. The proposed offshore leasing and energy development represents a transfer of wealth and opportunity to a few private companies at the expense of a host of individual residents and small-business owners who derive income and quality-of-life from the appeal and environmental health of coastal areas.



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The existing five-year OCS oil and gas program was only finalized last year. It was developed with the benefit of an extensive public process, and the program as approved runs through 2022. Therefore, there's no justification for replacing the existing five-year OCS oil and gas program at this time.

I strongly advise against putting America's coasts at risk by including additional planning areas in any proposed program. This advice is further substantiated by the realities of the energy market (including a global oil glut combined with rapid growth in clean-energy sources), an urgent need to reduce the emission of greenhouse gases (to avert enormous future costs of climate disruption), and the critical priority of conserving America's fossil fuel resources as a strategic reserve for future generations.

Sincerely,

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*Advocating responsible decisions that sustain
Coastal Georgia's environment and quality of life.*