

Chairman Alan S. Lowenthal
Energy and Mineral Resources Subcommittee Legislative Hearing:
H.R. 1941, H.R. 205, and H.R. 1149

Protecting Coastal Communities from Offshore Drilling
April 2, 2019

The Subcommittee on Energy and Mineral Resources will come to order.

The Subcommittee is meeting today to hear testimony on three bills that would protect America's coastal communities from offshore oil and gas drilling and protect marine mammals from seismic airgun blasting.

Under Committee Rule 4(f), any oral opening statements at hearings are limited to the Chairman and the Ranking Minority Member or their designees.

I ask unanimous consent that all other Members' opening statements be made part of the hearing record if they are submitted to the Subcommittee Clerk by 5:00 pm today. Hearing no objection, so ordered.

I would first like to welcome the witnesses and thank them for traveling great distances to testify before the subcommittee this morning.

Our oceans sustain a rich diversity of marine life and provide immense value to America's coastal communities by helping generate billions of dollars in economic output and by supporting millions of jobs.

Shoreline counties are home to over 125 million citizens – nearly 40 percent of the U.S. population – and the ocean economy employs more people than the telecommunications, crop production, and building construction industries combined.

In my home state of California, close to half a million people are employed in the fishing, seafood, aquaculture, coastal tourism, and recreation industries and these jobs generate over \$12 billion in annual wages.

My state and many other coastal states that are represented by members of this committee understand that our existing economies are incompatible with more offshore oil and gas development.

Thriving fish stocks and healthy marine mammals off the coast of Oregon, New Jersey, Maryland, and Florida support tackle shops, whale watching tours, and seafood markets.

And oil-free beaches and bays in California, Virginia, and the Carolinas drive business for local restaurants, vacation rentals, and outfitters.

But coastal residents are not the only ones who will benefit from protecting these areas.

Some of our nation's most majestic National Park units – belonging to all Americans – are along our coasts, including Acadia, Biscayne, Cape Hatteras, and Assateague.

People from all walks of life, from diverse backgrounds, and both political parties cherish these special places and rely on healthy oceans, clean beaches, and the abundant fish and wildlife that come with them.

The Trump administration couldn't care less about coastal communities and has decided to risk the livelihoods of millions to further pad the pockets of a handful of oil and gas industry executives.

The Interior Department has proposed opening more than 90 percent of the OCS to oil and gas development, including the entirety of America's Atlantic, Pacific, and Gulf coasts.

Under this plan, the risks from offshore drilling would extend from the rocky shores of Maine down to the Florida Everglades, and from California's sunny beaches to fishing and native communities in Washington State and Alaska.

In total, President Trump wants to satisfy Big Oil's insatiable appetite with over 1.6 billion acres of America's oceans, all while rolling back the safety and environmental protections developed in response to the 2010 *Deepwater Horizon* disaster.

But I have news for the President: Americans have zero interest in handing more of our oceans over to oil and gas corporations.

As Congressman Cunningham has so eloquently said time and again, when you drill you spill.

The inevitable spills and the variety of other onshore and offshore impacts from oil and gas drilling have no place along our east and west coasts or in the eastern Gulf.

Over 1 million people are employed by the tourism and recreation industries along the East coast.

Those are real jobs that exist now and will only grow if we continue to treat our oceans and our coasts with care.

That's over four times as many jobs as the industry-generated fantasies that come with opening the entire Atlantic seaboard was open to drilling rigs.

Four times as many jobs would be at risk from the industrial facilities that would be built along the coast.

Four times as many jobs would be at risk from the chronic pollution and pipeline spills that are widespread with offshore oil and gas.

And four times as many jobs would be at risk from a catastrophic blowout like the one we saw in the Gulf of Mexico only nine years ago.

Despite the administration's attempts to hand all our oceans over to the oil and gas industry, last Friday a Federal Judge in Alaska ruled that the Trump administration was violating the law in the process.

The judge struck down President Trump's attempt to reverse President Obama's permanent protection for most of the U.S. Arctic.

Yet again, this administration is discovering that facts and reasoning actually matter in our system of government, and that despite their best efforts, the rule of law still holds sway in this country.

But this ruling has done nothing protect the thousands of homes, beaches, wildlife refuges, surf spots, restaurants, biking trails, and fishing alcoves that dot thousands of miles of U.S. coastline. This is Congress' job.

I am grateful that Congressmen Cunningham and Rooney have authored legislation to do just that, and I wholeheartedly support these bills.

With that, I look forward to the testimony from our witnesses, and I now recognize Ranking Member Gosar for his opening statement.