

WRITTEN TESTIMONY OF DR. CLIFF KAPONO
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U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES
SUBCOMMITTEE ON ENERGY AND MINERAL RESOURCES
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Mr. Chairman, Members of the Subcommittee,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide written testimony on the importance of protecting our coastlines from offshore oil and gas development. As a Native Hawaiian, professional surfer and marine scientist. I would like to address how new offshore drilling would threaten coastal and ocean recreation and the considerable benefits these activities provide to our nation.

Coastal and ocean recreation, including beach going, swimming, surfing, paddling, wildlife viewing and photography, is practiced by hundreds of millions of people across the U.S. each year. These activities are an indelible part of the American experience and generate nearly \$130 billion dollars annually for coastal communities and the nation as a whole (National Ocean Economics Program, 2020). Yet, these activities are directly dependent on healthy coastal ecosystems, which are threatened by potential oil and gas drilling

Offshore oil and gas development negatively impacts the environment through every stage of the drilling process. During the exploration phase, noise pollution from seismic surveys infiltrates the ocean and causes major impacts to marine wildlife such as whales, sea turtles, fish populations and zooplankton (McCauley et al., 2017). During routine drilling operations, thousands of gallons of polluted water are released by drilling rigs into the ocean harming water quality (Committee on Oil in the Sea, 2003). Finally, offshore drilling can result in catastrophic oil spills, causing major environmental and socioeconomic damage to communities (U.S. National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration & Deep Water Horizon Natural Resources Trustees, 2016).

New offshore drilling would also increase greenhouse gas emissions and exacerbate the climate emergency facing our planet. Climate change is already causing our ocean waters to become warmer and more acidic. These environmental changes present a fundamental threat to the future survival of marine ecosystems, including coral reefs which are a haven for biodiversity and a popular attraction for divers, surfers and other recreational users (Mollica et al., 2018).

Climate change is also accelerating sea level rise and the loss of beaches and natural shorelines. According to the U.S. Geological Survey, over 50% of surveyed US coastline is at high risk for beach loss due to coastal erosion (USGS. 2000). Such loss of natural shorelines can severely affect coastal recreation by reducing beach area and access, and create unsafe beach conditions for users, local residents and businesses.

For these and other reasons, new offshore drilling is widely opposed by communities and businesses across the United States. This includes opposition from the Surf Industry Manufacturers Association and many individual surf and outdoor industry brands in the U.S. More broadly, this includes opposition from over 390 communities, 55,000 businesses and 500,000 fishing families (Oceana, 2021).

On behalf of the surfing community and millions of coastal enthusiasts, I thank Members of Congress who are working to protect our oceans and coasts from expanded offshore drilling through their leadership on the COAST Anti-Drilling Act, the Florida Coastal Protection Act, the West Coast Protection Act, the American Coasts and Oceans Protection Act and the North Pacific Ocean Protection Act.

Again, I thank you for the opportunity to testify and submit written comments.

Dr. Cliff Kapon

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