

**Testimony of Diane Hoskins
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before the
House Committee on Appropriations
Subcommittee on Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies
February 26, 2019**

Good afternoon. Thank you, Chairwoman McCollum, Ranking Member Joyce, and members of the committee for the opportunity to testify as a public witness. My name is Diane Hoskins, and I am a campaign director with Oceana, which is the largest international advocacy organization dedicated solely to ocean conservation. I am here to speak in opposition to expanded offshore oil and gas leasing drilling, and specifically in opposition to the [new five-year program](#) for offshore oil and gas leasing that is currently under development by the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (BOEM) in the Department of the Interior.

As you know, the five-year program governs when and where the BOEM can offer offshore drilling leases to the oil and gas industry. The current 2017-2022 five-year program, which was finalized by the previous administration in 2016, protected the Atlantic, Pacific, Eastern Gulf of Mexico and Arctic Oceans from new offshore drilling.

Under President Trump's direction, the Administration is developing a radical plan to undo these protections for coastal communities and ocean wildlife. The draft 2019-2024 National Outer Continental Shelf (OCS) Oil and Gas Leasing Program, released in January 2018, proposes to expand future oil and gas leasing to the Atlantic, Pacific and Arctic oceans, as well as off Florida's Gulf Coast. The draft plan proposes the largest number of potential offshore leases ever offered by any president, including more than 90 percent of the acreage of the Outer Continental Shelf, 25 out of 26 OCS planning areas, and 47 lease sales.¹

Communities up and down our coasts strongly oppose offshore oil and gas drilling and exploration, including seismic airgun blasting. Offshore drilling threatens the continued prosperity of coastal communities and states whose economies are inextricably linked to clean, oil-free shorelines and waters.

As of today, opposition and concern over offshore drilling activities has been expressed by:

- Every East and West Coast governor, including Florida, Georgia, South Carolina, North Carolina, Virginia, Maryland, Delaware, New Jersey, New York, Connecticut, Rhode Island, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Maine, California, Oregon and Washington;
- More than 330 municipalities;
- Over 2,100 local, state and federal elected officials, including Democrats and Republicans;

¹ BOEM, *2019–2024 National Outer Continental Shelf Oil and Gas Leasing Draft Proposed Program* (January 2018), available at <https://www.boem.gov/NP-Draft-Proposed-Program-2019-2024/>.

- Alliances along the Pacific, Atlantic and Florida’s Gulf coast representing more than 46,000 businesses and 500,000 fishing families;
- The Department of Defense, the Air Force, NASA and the Florida Defense Support Task Force;
- The New England, South Atlantic, Mid-Atlantic and Pacific regional fishery management councils; and
- Numerous commercial and recreational fishing interests such as Southeastern Fisheries Association, Snook and Gamefish Foundation, Fisheries Survival Fund, Southern Shrimp Alliance, North Atlantic Marine Alliance, Billfish Foundation and International Game Fish Association.²

New offshore drilling and exploration proposals pose a direct threat to coastal tourism and other local businesses that depend on a healthy and clean marine environment. Oceana found that fishing, tourism, and recreation along the Atlantic, Pacific and Gulf coast of Florida support over 2.6 million American jobs and roughly \$180 billion in GDP. Oceana’s estimates of ocean dependent tourism, fishing and recreation draw upon National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) ocean economy data and incorporate the latest economic multipliers to estimate the broader impacts of those jobs and revenue on the U.S. economy.³

Tourism, recreation and fishing, as well as the associated markets they support, are major drivers of coastal economies. If fisheries are properly managed and coastlines are continuously protected, these jobs can be sustained for generations to come. This stands in stark contrast to offshore drilling for oil and gas resources, which are extremely limited and finite, especially in the newly proposed new areas.

Offshore drilling proposals threaten the continued prosperity of coastal communities and states whose economies are inextricably linked to clean, oil-free beaches and shorelines. In fact, from Florida to Maine and California to Washington, more than 42,000 miles of shoreline have been untainted by new offshore drilling leasing for decades.

Risking our clean coast economy for very little offshore oil and gas would be a shortsighted and permanent mistake. At current national consumption rates, the supply of undiscovered economically recoverable offshore oil and gas in the Atlantic, Pacific and Gulf coast of Florida would only meet domestic oil demand for roughly two years and gas demand for just over one year. Estimates of oil and gas resource potential are based on recent economic factors and BOEM resource assessments.⁴

² Oceana, *Grassroots Opposition to Offshore Drilling and Exploration in the Atlantic and Eastern Gulf of Mexico*, <http://usa.oceana.org/climate-and-energy/grassroots-opposition-offshore-drilling-and-exploration-atlantic-ocean-and> (last visited Feb. 20, 2019); *see also* Oceana, *Opposition to New Offshore Drilling in the Pacific Ocean*, <http://usa.oceana.org/pacific-drilling> (last visited Feb. 20, 2019).

³ Oceana, Clean Coast Economy Report, <https://usa.oceana.org/publications/reports/clean-coast-economy> (last visited Feb. 20, 2019); *see also* Oceana, *Clean Coast Economy Methodology*, <https://usa.oceana.org/sites/default/files/4046/methodology.pdf> (last visited Feb. 20, 2019).

⁴ Oceana, Clean Coast Economy Report, <https://usa.oceana.org/publications/reports/clean-coast-economy> (last visited Feb. 20, 2019); *see also* Oceana, *Clean Coast Economy Methodology*, <https://usa.oceana.org/sites/default/files/4046/methodology.pdf> (last visited Feb. 20, 2019).

Offshore oil and gas exploration and development inevitably lead to oil spills that are incredibly toxic to living organisms, both physically and biochemically.⁵ Oil spills include large-scale disasters, such as the *BP Deepwater Horizon*, but also smaller spills that happen often, or even routinely, during exploration, production, and transportation.⁶ The threat of another catastrophic disaster like the 1969 Santa Barbara blowout or the 2010 *Deepwater Horizon* disaster is too great to risk thriving coastal economies and healthy ocean resources.

Oil spills have far reaching consequences, including enormous economic losses, human health impacts and disturbing effects on marine ecosystems. There were nearly 2,900 violations of environmental or safety regulations in federal waters on the OCS between 2013 and 2017, causing fatalities, injuries, losses of well control, fires, explosions, collisions, and spills of over 50 barrels.⁷ BOEM also reports that in the Gulf from 1964 to 2015 there were over 2,400 reported oil spills, and in 2016 alone, there were nearly 500 accidents involving offshore oil rigs.⁸

The *Deepwater Horizon* spill highlights how a single accident can lead to the loss of human life, devastate marine ecosystems, and cause tens of billions of dollars in economic damage. The *Deepwater Horizon* disaster killed eleven rig workers, spilled over 200 million gallons of oil, fouled thousands of miles of coastline, endangered public health, and killed thousands of birds, dolphins, and fish.⁹ Oil spills also significantly harm coastal economies: seaside communities on the Gulf are still recovering, physically and economically, from the estimated \$36.9 billion in damages caused by the *Deepwater Horizon* spill.¹⁰ Moreover, many of the impacts from this disaster are still being studied, and the long-term ramifications remain unknown.¹¹

Oil spills do not recognize state boundaries and can spread slicks far beyond the location of the initial incident wreaking havoc on our marine environment and all the industries that rely on a healthy ocean like tourism, fishing and recreation. Worse, the industrialization required to move, pump and process oil from new offshore drilling would dramatically alter the character of America's coasts.

⁵ NOAA, Office of Response and Restoration, *The Toxicity of Oil: What's the Big Deal?* (Aug. 27, 2012), <https://response.restoration.noaa.gov/about/media/toxicity-oil-whats-big-deal.html>.

⁶ Cheryl McMahon Anderson et al., BOEM, *Update of Occurrence Rates for Offshore Oil Spills* (2012), available at https://www.boem.gov/uploadedFiles/BOEM/Environmental_Stewardship/Environmental_Assessment/Oil_Spill_Modeling/AndersonMavesLabelle2012.pdf.

⁷ BSEE, *OCS Incidents/Spills by Category: CY 2007–2013* (2014), available at <http://www.bsee.gov/Inspection-and-Enforcement/Accidents-and-Incidents/Listing-and-Status-of-Accident-Investigations>.

⁸ BSEE, *OCS Incident Statistics*, <https://www.bsee.gov/stats-facts/offshore-incident-statistics> (last visited August 3, 2018).

⁹ National Wildlife Federation, *Four Years into the Gulf Oil Disaster: Still Waiting for Restoration* (2014), http://www.nwf.org/~media/PDFs/water/2014/FINAL_NWF_deepwater_horizon_report_web.pdf.

¹⁰ Lawrence C. Smith et al., *Analysis of Environmental and Economic Damages from British Petroleum's Deepwater Horizon oil spill*, 74 Albany L. Rev. 563, 563–85 (2011).

¹¹ Jeffrey Chanton et al., *Using Natural Abundance Radiocarbon To Trace the Flux of Petrocarbon to the Seafloor Following the Deepwater Horizon Spill* (2015), <https://pubs.acs.org/doi/abs/10.1021/es5046524>; A Bonisoli-Alquati et al., *Incorporation of Deepwater Horizon oil in a terrestrial bird* (2016), <http://iopscience.iop.org/article/10.1088/1748-9326/11/11/114023/pdf>; Anthony Knap et al., *Short-term toxicity of 1-methylnaphthalene to *Americamysis bahia* and 5 deep-sea crustaceans* (2017), <https://setac.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1002/etc.3926>; S. Venn-Watson et al., *Adrenal Gland and Lung Lesions in Gulf of Mexico Common Bottlenose Dolphins (*Tursiops truncatus*) Found Dead following the Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill*, PLoS One 10(5) (2015).

Adding large scale oil refineries and associated pipelines would transform our beach towns into places forever changed and scattered with drilling infrastructure. Offshore drilling for oil and gas is a dirty and dangerous venture that would threaten our abundant ocean resources, which bring in consistent revenue year after year. Oil and gas are finite resources; when the oil runs out, so do the jobs.

Worse yet, the harm begins before offshore drilling commences. Offshore oil and gas exploration activities—such as high-intensity geophysical seismic surveys, drilling operations, and increased ship traffic—threaten marine and coastal wildlife, including endangered and protected species, as well as coastal communities. Developing oil and gas in new marine areas would require the construction of platforms, offshore and onshore pipelines, and other support infrastructure likely to significantly harm coastal resources.

The North Atlantic right whale, one of the most endangered marine mammal species in the world, is of particular concern as its only known calving grounds are located in coastal and offshore waters from the Carolinas through northern Florida. Experts say seismic airgun blasting for oil and gas exploration may well represent a tipping point for the survival of this critically endangered whale.

As the Committee considers priorities for the FY2020 Interior-Environment Appropriations Act, we encourage Members to ensure limited resources for the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management are not wasted on attempts to expand offshore oil and gas drilling. Thank you again for the opportunity to testify.