

Submitted via email and regulations.gov

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Re: Request to remove all proposed lease sales — Alaska and Gulf of Mexico — from the 2017-2022 Outer Continental Shelf Oil and Gas Leasing Program [BOEM-2016-0003]

On behalf of our 79 organizations and the millions of people that we represent, we call on you to remove all offshore oil and gas lease sales from the final leasing program. We appreciate the removal of the Atlantic from availability for offshore oil and gas leasing through 2022. But the federal proposal to lease vast areas of the Gulf of Mexico, the Arctic and Cook Inlet for the development of up to 18 billion barrels of oil equivalent over the next 70 years will deepen the climate crisis and is inconsistent with President Obama’s commitment to combat climate change. We urge you to halt all new oil and gas lease sales in federal waters, and keep these dirty fossil fuels in the ground.

The Bureau’s proposed program runs counter to the administration’s commitment to take robust action on climate change. The Paris Agreement, signed by 197 countries, commits the signatories to hold global average temperature “to well below 2°C above pre-industrial levels and to pursue efforts to limit the temperature increase to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels.” This requires rapid and significant emissions reductions. Halting new oil and gas leases off all U.S. coasts would keep fossil fuels in the ground that could release up to 62 billion tons of carbon emissions — the pollution equivalent of more than 16,000 coal-fired power plants. Additionally, the Bureau’s refusal to disclose impacts from consuming the oil and gas extracted under its proposal in its draft environmental review is untenable and must be corrected. The serious harmful climate effects of expanding offshore oil and gas leasing and development must not be ignored.

Additionally, offering new offshore oil and gas leases puts our beautiful and productive oceans and coasts at risk of oil spills and other damage. The Gulf of Mexico and Prince William Sound are still reeling from the continuing damage from the devastating Deepwater Horizon and Exxon Valdez spills, respectively. Weathered oil still turns up on beaches and rocks. Wildlife impacts from the oil spill on dolphins and sea turtles are still observed. Key fishing grounds have not recovered. Meanwhile the new frontiers of offshore oil development will accelerate deepwater drilling and fracking, dangerous practices that increase the risk of accidents and oil spills.

The Bureau's proposal to vastly expand offshore oil leasing also unjustly exposes frontline communities to the harmful effects of dirty fossil fuel development. Oil spills and air pollution from offshore drilling and industrial facilities that support the industry make people sick and disproportionately harm low-income neighborhoods and communities of color. These communities are also on the frontlines of climate change, with severe storms like Hurricane Katrina displacing people in the Gulf of Mexico and the melting Arctic forcing Native Alaskan villages to relocate. The Gulf Coast states and Alaska need a rapid and just transition away from the oil economy.

By removing all oil and gas lease sales from the 2017-2022 leasing program, the U.S. can provide clear climate leadership and live up to its international promises. Conserving our nation's natural heritage should be of paramount concern to our government. While removing the Atlantic lease sale was a step in the right direction, we must go further. We urge you to remove all new oil and gas lease sales from the final program.

Sincerely,

350.org
350 Louisiana - New Orleans
Alaska Climate Action Network
Alaska Inter-Tribal Council
Animal Welfare Institute
Atchafalaya Basinkeeper
Athens County Fracking Action
Network
Berks Gas Truth
Beyond Extreme Energy
Blue Frontier
Bold Louisiana

Center for Biological Diversity
Christians Caring for Creation
Citizens Coalition for a Safe
Community
Clean Ocean Action
Cook Inletkeeper
Cry of the Water
Crystal Coast Waterkeeper
Daily Kos
Earth Ethics, Inc.
Endangered Habitats League

Environment America
Environment California
Environment North Carolina
Environmental Action
Environmental Protection Information
Center (EPIC)
Eyak Preservation Council
Fairbanks Climate Action Coalition
Food & Water Watch
Fractivist.org
Friends of the Earth
Friends of the Tampa Bay National
Wildlife Refuges
Gas Free Seneca
Great Old Broads for Wilderness
Green America
Greenpeace
Gulf Restoration Network
Hands Across the Sand
Indigenous Environmental Network
Klamath Forest Alliance
League of Conservation Voters
Louisiana Bucket Brigade
Matanzas Riverkeeper
Miami Waterkeeper
Natural Resources Defense Council
(NRDC)
Nature Abounds
Northern Alaska Environmental Center
Nuclear Information and Resource
Service
Ocean Conservation Research
Office of Social Justice, CRCNA
Pacific Coast Federation of Fishermen's
Associations
Palm Beach County Reef Rescue
Pennsylvania Alliance for Clean Water
and Air

Public Citizen's Climate and Energy
Program
Radical Arts and Healing Collective
Rainforest Action Network
Rootskeeper
SandyHook SeaLife Foundation (SSF)
Science & Environmental Health
Network
Seneca Lake Guardian, a Waterkeeper
Affiliate
Sierra Club
South Florida Wildlands Association
Southern Oregon Climate Action
Steps Coalition
Students for a Just and Stable Future
Suncoast Waterkeeper
Surfrider Foundation Georgia Chapter
SustainUS
The Safina Center
The Story of Stuff Project
The Whaleman Foundation
Turtle Island Restoration Network
Unitarian Universalist Legislative
Ministry of Maryland
Unitarian Universalist Young Adults for
Climate Justice
Vanishing Earth
Waterkeeper Alliance
Whale and Dolphin Conservation
WILDCOAST
WildEarth Guardians