

Trump Administration Proposes Offshore Drilling in Nearly All U.S. Waters

Overview of Draft “2019-2024 National Outer Continental Shelf Oil and Gas Leasing Program”

In January 2018, the Department of the Interior (DOI) released its draft [2019-2024 National Outer Continental Shelf \(OCS\) Oil and Gas Leasing Program](#). The five-year program governs when and where the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (BOEM) can offer offshore drilling leases to the oil and gas industry.

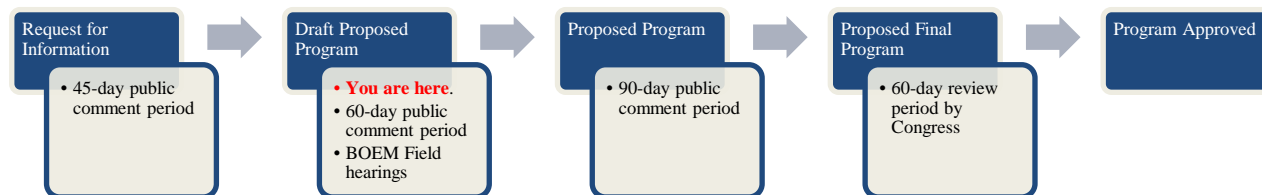
President Obama finalized the current 2017-2022 five-year program in, which protected the Atlantic and Pacific from new offshore drilling, but the Trump administration has fast-tracked the process to undo those protections. The Trump administration’s new 2019-2024 Draft Proposed Program (DPP) outlines radical plans to expand future oil and gas leasing to the Atlantic, Pacific and Arctic Oceans, as well as off Florida’s Gulf Coast.

The plan proposes the largest number of potential offshore leases ever offered by any president, including:

- 90 percent of total OCS acreage
- 25 out of 26 OCS planning areas
- Offering leases as close as three miles from shore
- 47 lease sales:
 - 9 in the Atlantic
 - 7 in the Pacific
 - 19 in Alaska and the Arctic
 - 12 in the Gulf of Mexico, including one off Florida’s Gulf Coast

Five-Year Program Process

The process to develop the five-year program is well-defined and has a number of legally-required opportunities for the public to provide input.



Protect our Coast and Stop Radical Expansion of Offshore Drilling

- Offshore drilling is a forever decision. If we don’t act now, the fate of our coast could be sealed by the oil industry instead of all the businesses that rely on healthy oceans.

- This proposal is dangerous, unnecessary, and fails to acknowledge the devastating social, economic and environmental consequences associated with radically expanding offshore drilling. Opening nearly all U.S. waters to offshore drilling is a direct threat to marine resources and local communities that depend on a clean coast for their way of life and livelihoods.

Economic Impacts

- Oil and gas development poses a real threat to the fishing, tourism, and recreation-based businesses along the East Coast that each year generate around \$95 billion in gross domestic product and support nearly 1.4 million jobs.
- Each year, healthy ocean economies along the West Coast generate around \$56 billion in gross domestic product and support more than 500,000 jobs. New offshore development poses significant threats to these thriving coastal businesses.

Opposition

- Bringing offshore drilling to shores where Americans have already spoken vehemently against it, this plan undermines Congress' commitment to local and state decision-making.
- The Governors of Washington, Oregon, California, New Hampshire, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Connecticut, New York, New Jersey, Maryland, Delaware, Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, and Florida are opposed to/expressed concerns about offshore drilling in the Atlantic.
- More than 175 municipalities along the East and West Coasts have passed resolutions opposing offshore oil and gas drilling and exploration.
- More than 41,000 businesses and 500,000 fishing families have also joined this overwhelming chorus of voices.

Defense

- The Department of Defense, Air Force, Florida Defense Support Task Force, and NASA have all weighed in to express serious concerns or opposition to these activities.
- This new National OCS Program proposes to offer leases in areas that have extensive military operations, thus risking our national security training and readiness. The draft plan deviates from the longstanding tradition of deference to the Department of Defense (DoD) when offering offshore drilling leases in federal waters.
- Critical coastal military facilities, including Naval Station Norfolk - the largest naval station in the world – rely on ocean areas free from dangerous offshore oil rigs. In the Atlantic Ocean, DoD conducts extensive readiness operations such as live fire tests, air-to-surface bombing exercises, torpedo testing, supersonic test flights, laser targeting operations, and both Naval Air and Sea Systems Commands.

Seismic Airgun Blasting

- Seismic airgun blasting is a controversial technique used by oil and gas exploration companies. Ships tow airguns which release incredibly loud blasts of compressed air, creating one of the loudest manmade sounds in the ocean. These powerful sound waves travel through the water column and down miles below the seafloor, providing information about the properties of geologic formations, which exploration companies use to map oil and natural gas deposits. Blasts are repeated every 10-12 seconds, 24 hours a day, for weeks to months on end.¹ Seismic airgun sounds can be heard up to 2,500 miles away, approximately the distance from Washington, D.C. to Las Vegas.²
- The largest towed seismic array covered a surface area 21 times greater than the National Mall in Washington, D.C.³ There are approximately 12-48 individual airguns in one array.
- A multitude of recent scientific studies show noise from seismic airgun blasting to have negative impacts on marine life, since marine life—from fish and turtles to crabs and whale—rely on sound for navigation, communication, and other survival behaviors.
 - Seismic airgun noise can cause alarm responses,⁴ hearing structure damage,⁵ and reduced catch rates⁶ in fish.
 - Seismic airgun noise produces startle or stress responses in bivalves,⁷ crabs,⁸ and squid⁹ as well as developmental delays in scallops.¹⁰
 - Seismic airgun noise has caused whales to temporarily avoid habitat areas, reduce feeding call rates, sing fewer mating songs, silence their calls altogether, and change their surface breathing patterns.¹¹
 - Seismic airgun noise can produce avoidance or alarm responses in turtles.¹²
- According to the government’s own estimates, proposed seismic blasting in the Atlantic could injure as many as 138,000 marine mammals and disrupt the feeding, breeding, calving, and other vital activities of millions more.¹³

¹ National Research Council. (2003). “Ocean Noise and Marine Mammals.” Washington, DC: The National Academies Press.

² Nieuwkirk, S. L., Mellinger, D. K., Moore, S. E., Klinck, K., Dziak, R. P., & Goslin, J. (2012). Sounds from airguns and fins whales recorded in the mid-Atlantic Ocean, 1999-2009. *The Journal of the Acoustical Society of America*, 131(2), 1102-1112.

³ Schuler, M. (2015). MV Sanco Sword Tows Record-Setting Seismic Streamer Spread. gCaptain. <http://gcaptain.com/mv-sanco-sword-tows-record-setting-seismic-streamer-spread/#.VoGysZIH1YA>

⁴ McCauley, R., Fewtrell, J., Duncan, A., Jenner, C., Jenner, M., Penrose, J., Prince, R., Adhitya, A., Murdoch, J., & McCabe, K. (2000). Marine seismic surveys: Analysis of airgun signals; and effects of air gun exposure on humpback whales, sea turtles, fishes and squid. *Rep. from Centre for Marine Science and Technology, Curtin Univ., Perth, WA, for Austral. Petrol. Prod. Assoc., Sydney, NSW*, 8-5.

⁵ McCauley, R., Fewtrell, J. & Popper, A. (2003). High intensity anthropogenic sound damages fish ears. *The Journal of the Acoustical Society of America*, 113(1), 638-642.

⁶ Engas, A., Lokkeborg, S., Ona, E., & Soldal, A.V. (1996). Effects of seismic shooting on local abundance and catch rates of cod (*Gadus morhua*) and haddock (*Melanogrammus aeglefinus*). *Canadian Journal of Fisheries and Aquatic Sciences*, 53(10), 2238-2249. doi: 10.1139/cjfas-53-10-2238.

⁷ Moriyasu, M., et al. 2004. Effects of seismic and marine noise on invertebrates: A literature review. Canadian Science Advisory Secretariat. Research document 2004/126.

⁸ DFO (Department of Fisheries and Oceans). 2004. Potential impacts of seismic energy on snow crab. DFO Can. Sci. Advis. Sec. Habitat Status report No. 2004/003.

⁹ McCauley, R. D., et al. (2000)

¹⁰ Aguilar de Soto, N., Delorme, N., Atkins, J., Howard, S., Williams, J. and Johnson, M. 2013. Anthropogenic noise causes body malformations and delays development in marine larvae. *Scientific Reports* 3: 283 DOI:10.1038/srep02831.

¹¹ Gordon, J., Gillespie, D., Potter, J., Frantzi, A., Simmonds, M. P., Swift, R., and Thompson, D. 2004. A review of the effects of seismic surveys on marine mammals. *Mar. Technol. Soc. J.* 37(4):16 – 34.

¹² McCauley, R. D., et al. (2000)

¹³ Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (BOEM). (2012). Atlantic OCS Proposed Geological and Geophysical Activities Mid and South Atlantic Planning Areas Draft Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement (DPEIS), Vol II Figures, Tables and Appendices. Table 4-10. pg. 101. Annual Level A Takes Estimates from Seismic Airgun Sources Using 180-dB Criteria for Marine Mammal Species during the Project Period (2012-2020)