

County of Monroe

The Florida Keys



BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

Mayor George Neugent, District 2
Mayor Pro Tem David Rice, District 4
Heather Carruthers, District 3
Danny L. Kolhage, District 1
Sylvia J. Murphy, District 5

George Neugent, Mayor
Monroe County Board of County Commissioners
The Historic Gato Building
1100 Simonton Street
Key West, Florida 33040

August 15, 2017

Ms. Kelly Hammerle
National Program Manager, BOEM
45600 Woodland Road
Mailstop VAM-LD
Sterling, VA 20166

Re: Request for Information and Comments on the Preparation of the 2019-2024 National Outer Continental Shelf Oil and Gas Leasing Program MAA 104000

Dear Ms. Hammerle:

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the preparation of the 2019-2024 National Outer Continental Shelf Oil and Gas Leasing Program. On behalf of the Monroe County Board of County Commissioners, I write in strong opposition to any expansion of offshore drilling off the coast of Florida. Monroe County, Florida encompasses the Florida Keys and is situated between the waters of the Gulf of Mexico and the Atlantic Ocean. Our shoreline includes the Florida Keys Marine Sanctuary and Everglades National Park.

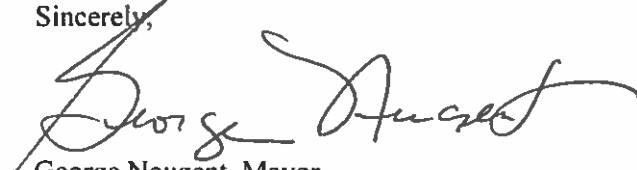
We strongly support the extension of the moratorium on drilling in the Eastern Gulf beyond 2022 and remain strongly opposed to any expansion of drilling in the Gulf of Mexico, the Straits of Florida, or off the Atlantic Coast of Florida. Monroe County has a longstanding opposition to offshore drilling and has passed several resolutions on the issue dating back to 1987, and as recently as April of 2017.

Monroe County's waters are environmentally sensitive and home to a unique ecosystem. The waters of the Florida Key's support more than 6,000 species of fish, invertebrates, and plants, are home to the only living coral reef in the continental United States, and are home to the largest documented seagrass bed in the world. Approximately 70 percent of the fish caught recreationally and commercially in Florida spend part of their lives in the seagrasses and Monroe County's near shore waters provide habitat for 80 percent of all fish species in the United States, making the health of our waters both an economic and environmental priority. Tourism, as well as recreational and commercial fishing, form the backbone of Monroe County's economy and both industries are dependent on clean waters and a functioning ecosystem. These industries generate more than \$6 billion annually and directly support the creation of over 70,000 jobs.

The County support of the moratorium in the Eastern Gulf and opposition to expanded drilling in the Gulf of Mexico is underscored by our experience with the Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill in 2010. Given the known circulation pattern in the Gulf of Mexico, oil released into Gulf water, particularly the Eastern Gulf, can easily travel several hundred miles under the loop current and be deposited on Monroe County's shoreline.

The Monroe County Board of County Commissioners is opposed to all oil and gas exploration off the coast of Florida. Thank you again for the opportunity to provide comments on this important issue.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "George Neugent". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "G" and a long, sweeping underline.

George Neugent, Mayor
Monroe County

cc: Governor Rick Scott
Representative Carlos Curbelo
Senator Bill Nelson
Senator Marco Rubio

Attachment: Monroe County Resolution Number 111-2017

RESOLUTION NO. 111 - 2017

A RESOLUTION OF THE BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS OF MONROE COUNTY, FLORIDA OPPOSING OFFSHORE OIL DRILLING IN THE EASTERN GULF OF MEXICO AND SUPPORTING THE CURRENT MORATORIUM ON DRILLING IN THE EASTERN GULF.

WHEREAS, Monroe County, aka "The Florida Keys," is a series of islands nestled between the waters of the Gulf of Mexico and the Atlantic Ocean, and whose coastline encompasses the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary ("FKNMS") and Everglades National Park; and

WHEREAS, the unique marine ecosystem of the Florida Keys is home to the only living coral reef in the continental United States and the largest documented sea grass bed in the world, and supports more than 6,000 species of fishes, invertebrates, and plants; and

WHEREAS, the Gulf waters surrounding the Florida Keys provide critical spawning habitats to a multitude of recreational and commercial migratory, endemic, coastal and pelagic finfish and shellfish, and unparalleled support to fisheries of the entire Gulf of Mexico; and

WHEREAS, Monroe County's near shore waters alone provide habitat for 80 percent of the fish species in the United States; and

WHEREAS, the Gulf's marine environment provides the foundation for robust local and regional economic activity, primarily tourism and recreational and commercial fishery industries that generate more than 70,000 jobs and more than \$6 billion annually; and

WHEREAS, the 2010 the Deepwater Horizon Oil rig explosion in the Gulf of Mexico killed 11 people and caused the largest marine oil spill in U.S. history, spilling almost 5 million barrels of oil over 84 straight days, and oiling more than 1,000 linear miles of shoreline and habitat, killing an estimated 1 million birds and thousands of sea turtles and dolphins, extensively damaging deep sea coral communities, and killing and contaminating untold numbers of fish, shrimp and oysters; and

WHEREAS, oil drilling activity in the Gulf of Mexico and accidents such as the Deepwater Horizon oil spill are incompatible with protecting the Gulf's environmental resources and clean and healthy waters that the State of Florida and its coastal communities such as the Florida Keys are so economically dependent upon; and

WHEREAS, located in the eastern Gulf of Mexico is the Joint Gulf Range Complex, a critical military testing and training zone, whose national defense activities are incompatible with drilling activity; and

WHEREAS in 2006 Congress passed the Gulf of Mexico Energy and Security Act (P.L. 109-432) creating a moratorium on drilling in most of the Eastern Gulf of Mexico; and

WHEREAS, the US Department of the Interior has announced its intention to lift the moratorium and open up for sale for oil and gas drilling 73 million acres in the federal waters of the Gulf of Mexico; and

WHEREAS, Monroe County's citizens have on numerous previous occasions expressed opposition to offshore oil drilling in waters in and about the Florida Keys with Resolutions 203-1987, 178-1988, 223-2008, 130-2006, and 136-2010; and

WHEREAS, Monroe County's citizens remain strongly opposed to the lifting of the moratorium and any new offshore oil and gas leasing, exploration, drilling activity and seismic inventories affecting Florida's coast, and continue to support the strongest possible protections for Florida and its invaluable environmental resources from the impacts of offshore oil and gas exploration; and

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Monroe County Board of County Commissioners that:

1. The above recitals are hereby incorporated into this resolution as restated herein constitute the legislative findings and intent of the Board of County Commissioners of Monroe County, Florida.
2. The Clerk for this Board shall furnish copies of this resolution to:
 - U.S. Senator Bill Nelson, 716 Senate Hart Office Building, United States Senate, Washington, DC 20510
 - U.S. Senator Marco Rubio, 284 Russell Senate Office Building, United States Senate, Washington, DC 20510
 - U.S. Representative Carlos Curbelo, District 26, 1404 Longworth House Office Building, United States House of Representatives, Washington, DC 20515
 - Florida Governor Rick Scott, State of Florida, The Capitol, 400 S. Monroe St., Tallahassee, FL 32399-0001
 - Florida Senate President Joe Negron, 305 Senate Office Building, 404 South Monroe Street, Tallahassee, FL 32399-1100
 - Florida House Speaker Richard Corcoran, 420 The Capitol, 402 South Monroe Street, Tallahassee, FL 32399-1300
 - State Senator Anitere Flores, District 39, 404 Senate Office Building, 404 South Monroe Street, Tallahassee, FL 32399-1100
 - State Representative Holly Raschein, District 120, 209 House Office Building, 402 South Monroe Street, Tallahassee, FL 32399-1300
 - Secretary of the Interior Ryan Zinke, U.S. Department of the Interior, 1849 C Street NW, Washington, DC 20240.
 - Secretary Ryan Matthews, Florida DEP, Office of the Secretary, 3900 Commonwealth Boulevard, Tallahassee, FL 32399

5. This resolution shall take effect immediately upon adoption.

PASSED AND ADOPTED by the Board of County Commissioners of Monroe County Florida, at a regular meeting of said Board held on the 12th day of April, 2017.

Mayor George Neugent	<u>Yes</u>
Mayor Pro Tem David Rice	<u>Yes</u>
Commissioner Danny Kolhage	<u>Yes</u>
Commissioner Heather Carruthers	<u>Yes</u>
Commissioner Sylvia Murphy	<u>Yes</u>



Attest: Kevin Madok, Clerk

By: *James Stovall*
Deputy Clerk

**BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
OF MONROE COUNTY, FLORIDA**

By: *George L. Neugent*
Mayor

MONROE COUNTY
APPROVED AS TO FORM
Edna M. ...
PEDRO J. ...
ASSISTANT COUNTY ATTORNEY
Date: 3/30/17

FILED FOR RECORD
2017 APR 18 AM 11:09
CLK. CLK. ...
MONROE COUNTY FLA