

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

February 22, 2018

The Honorable Ryan Zinke
Secretary
Department of the Interior
1849 C Street NW
Washington, DC 20240

Dear Secretary Zinke,

We write today to request that the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (BOEM) extend the public comment period for the 2019-2024 National Outer Continental Shelf Oil and Gas Leasing Program Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). We ask that BOEM extend the deadline for written comments an additional 60 days for consideration in the development of the scope of the Programmatic EIS to May 8, 2018.

We understand that under Executive Order 13795 you have been instructed to expand opportunities for oil and natural gas drilling in the West Coast Outer Continental Shelf. West Coast shores are pristine habitats, economic drivers for our states, and most importantly, they are home to our citizens. Issuing oil and natural gas leases in these areas would encumber enormously valuable fishery waters, dealing a crushing blow to local industry and tourism. Offshore drilling is also inherently risky under the best circumstances. On the West Coast, drilling platforms and underwater pipelines will be subject to extreme environmental conditions during an average winter, and their presence would surely exacerbate any crisis created by a Cascadia Subduction Zone event in the region. Considering the fact that under a best-case scenario, oil and natural gas drilling would be a detriment to our traditional, sustainable economies, and under a worst-case scenario it could create an unprecedented environmental and humanitarian crisis, we believe that our stakeholders should have an appropriate amount of time to provide comment.

Our joint request to extend the public comment period by 60 days will allow for a more full and fair consideration of the Programmatic EIS, and offer the public further opportunity to share how they will be affected by this plan. Given the incredible number of stakeholders in this process, it is critical that each one of them is given a voice so they can speak for their future.

Please give our request your serious consideration, and please do not hesitate to contact us or our staff at any time.

Sincerely,



KURT SCHRADER
Member of Congress



RON WYDEN
U.S. Senator

PETER DeFAZIO
Member of Congress

JEFFREY MERKLEY
U.S. Senator

EARL BLUMENAUER
Member of Congress

SUZANNE BONAMICI
Member of Congress