

RESOLUTION 18- 115

A RESOLUTION OF THE BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS OF OKALOOSA COUNTY, FLORIDA OPPOSING THE OPENING OF AREAS WITHIN THE GULF OF MEXICO TO OIL EXPLORATION AND RELATED ACTIVITIES THAT WOULD THREATEN THE ECOLOGY AND ECONOMY OF OKALOOSA COUNTY AND THE GULF REGION, AND THAT WOULD NEGATIVELY IMPACT THE UTILITY OF THE MILITARY'S GULF OF MEXICO RANGE COMPLEX AND THREATEN THE VIABILITY OF EGLIN AIR FORCE BASE, HURLBURT FIELD, AND OTHER MILITARY INSTALLATIONS IN THE GULF REGION.

WHEREAS, Florida is known worldwide as a place for clean beaches and wonderful natural resources which annually draw tens of millions of visitors; and

WHEREAS, tourism has historically been and continues to be the foundation of much of Florida's and Okaloosa County's economy; and

WHEREAS, the Gulf of Mexico is a major natural resource which provides local residents as well as tourists abundant opportunities for swimming, fishing, surfing, sailing, diving, snorkeling, boating, and other diverse recreational opportunities; and

WHEREAS, the commercial, sport, and recreational finfish and shellfish fisheries provide thousands of jobs across Florida and they are vital elements of the State's economy, earning Florida the moniker "Fishing Capital of the World"; and

WHEREAS, the degradation and pollution of the Gulf of Mexico, as evidenced by the Deepwater Horizon catastrophe, cause tremendous damage to the ecology and economy of not only Okaloosa County and State of Florida, but the entire Gulf Coastal region and the nation as a whole; and

WHEREAS, in addition to its ecological significance and value for tourism, the Gulf of Mexico plays a vital role in the United States' national defense, hosting several military operating areas collectively known as the Eastern Gulf of Mexico Test & Training Range Complex-- providing the critical space required to safely and effectively test and evaluate technologically advanced weapons systems and undertake the training missions necessary to ensure that the United States' Armed Forces remain the best equipped and most well-trained in the world; and

WHEREAS, the encroachment of oil structures, production, and related activities into, or proximate to, the Eastern Gulf of Mexico Test & Training Range Complex conflicts with the training and other missions currently performed by all military services across the nation to include local military installations such as Eglin Air Force Base, Hurlburt Field, Tyndall Air Force Base, NSA Panama City, NAS Pensacola and other facilities, thereby degrading its usefulness as a national defense asset and compromising its long term viability which could lead to loss of missions and other impacts that would have a significant negative effect on national defense as well as the local and regional economies; and


WHEREAS, the Gulf of Mexico Energy Security Act of 2006 establishes a protective zone within the eastern Gulf of Mexico via the Military Mission Line within which oil exploration and related activities are prohibited in order to protect the natural environment and military missions crucial to the economy of Okaloosa County and numerous other communities along the Gulf Coast; and

WHEREAS, the 2019-2024 National Outer Continental Shelf Oil and Gas Leasing Draft Proposed Program presented by the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management includes the Eastern Gulf of Mexico Planning Area and portions of the Central Gulf of Mexico Planning Area currently under the Congressional Military Mission Line Moratorium that could, under the proposed program, become available to lease for exploration and drilling, thereby threatening the viability of military activities within the Gulf as well as the ecological health and productivity of the Gulf of Mexico upon which the tourism and fishery industries are founded.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Board of County Commissioners of Okaloosa County, Florida strongly opposes the reduction of the protections of the State of Florida and military operating areas and opposes the opening of additional areas of the Gulf of Mexico, particularly the Eastern Gulf of Mexico Program Area and portions of the Central Gulf of Mexico Program Area currently subject to a Congressional Moratorium, to oil exploration, production, and related activities that would threaten the economy and environment of Florida, or that would in any way degrade the usefulness of the Gulf of Mexico Test & Training Range complex to the Armed Forces of the United States of America.

DULY PASSED ADOPTED this 15th day of May, 2018.

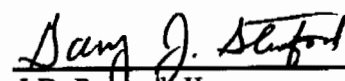
BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS OF
OKALOOSA COUNTY, FLORIDA



Graham W. Fountain, Chairman



ATTEST:



J.D. Peacock II
Clerk of Circuit Court

