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Valerie Termini, Executive Director
1416 Ninth Street, Room 1320
Sacramento, CA 95814
(916) 653-4899
www.fgc.ca.gov

Fish and Game Commission



Wildlife Heritage and Conservation
Since 1870

August 3, 2017

The California Fish and Game Commission (Commission) unanimously passed the attached resolution at its June 22, 2017 meeting. The resolution supports the federal prohibition on new offshore oil and gas leasing in federal waters offshore California.

Further, the Commission unequivocally supports maintaining such protections for the overall health of California's ocean and coastal environment, including the State network of marine protected areas and the four California national marine sanctuaries.

The Commission will continue to oppose any attempt to modify the existing prohibition, and will consider any appropriate actions to maintain the prohibition on future oil or gas development off our coast.

Thank you,

Valerie Termini
Executive Director

CALIFORNIA FISH AND GAME COMMISSION

Resolution Supporting the Federal Prohibition on New Offshore Oil and Gas Leasing in Federal Waters Offshore California

WHEREAS, the mission of the California Fish and Game Commission is, on behalf of California citizens, to ensure the long-term sustainability of California's fish and wildlife resources; and

WHEREAS, the California coast and its waters is home to an abundance of diverse fish and wildlife, including numerous rare, threatened and endangered species, as well as sensitive habitats upon which they depend; and

WHEREAS, the California Fish and Game Commission adopted the nation's first scientifically based network of marine protected areas along the California coastline, which was created to help ensure that the natural resources, marine ecosystem functions, and marine natural heritage of the state are protected for current and future generations; and

WHEREAS, California's four national marine sanctuaries—the Channel Islands, Cordell Bank, Greater Farallones, and Monterey Bay—are held in the public trust for current and future Californians, and were designated and are managed with extensive input and participation of state, local, and tribal governments, members of the public, and other stakeholders;

WHEREAS, hundreds of millions of California residents and visitors appreciate the state's ocean and coast for a myriad of reasons, including supporting commercial and recreational fishing, recreation, exploration, relaxation, sustenance, and enjoyment of its iconic natural beauty; and

WHEREAS, there has been no new offshore oil and gas lease in California since the 1969 blowout of a well in federal waters, offshore Santa Barbara County, that spilled millions of gallons of crude oil into the ocean and onto the beaches, fouling the coastline and representing the largest oil spill in waters offshore California; and

WHEREAS, as recently as May 2015, California experienced another oil spill during which a pipeline ruptured near Refugio State Beach in Santa Barbara County, releasing thousands of gallons of crude oil into the Pacific Ocean and creating a nine-mile oil slick along the coast; and

WHEREAS, beginning in 1921, and many times since, the California State Legislature enacted laws that withdrew certain offshore areas from oil and gas leasing, and by 1989 the state's offshore oil and gas leasing moratorium was in place; and

WHEREAS, in 1994, the California State Legislature made findings in Assembly Bill 2444 (Chapter 970, Statutes of 1994) that offshore oil and gas production in certain areas of state waters poses an unacceptably high risk of damage and disruption to the marine environment; and

WHEREAS, with passage of the same bill, the California State Legislature and governor created the California Coastal Sanctuary for all of the state's unleased waters subject to tidal influence, where new oil and gas leases are prohibited unless specific conditions are met during an energy crisis

WHEREAS, Section 18 of the Outer Continental Shelf Lands Act (43 U.S. Code [U.S.C.] 1331 et seq.) requires the preparation of a nationwide offshore oil and gas leasing program that sets a five-year schedule of lease sales implemented by the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management within the U.S. Department of the Interior; and

WHEREAS, consistent with the principles of Section 18 and the resulting, regionally-tailored leasing strategy, the current exclusion of the Pacific Outer Continental Shelf from new oil and gas development is consistent with the long-standing interests of Pacific Coast states, as framed in the 2006 Agreement on Ocean Health adopted by the governors of California, Washington, and Oregon; and

WHEREAS, the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management recently released a final 2017-2022 leasing program that continues the moratorium on oil and gas leasing in the undeveloped areas of the Pacific Outer Continental Shelf; and

WHEREAS, Governor Jerry Brown, along with previous California governors, has united with the governors of Oregon and Washington in a commitment to develop robust renewable energy sources to reduce dependence on fossil fuel and help reach carbon emission goals; and

WHEREAS, burning fossil fuels exacerbates global climate change, which increasingly impacts the sustainability of marine and terrestrial ecosystems, including fish and wildlife, in California and beyond; and

WHEREAS, there are renewed calls for opening offshore areas to drilling and for lifting moratoriums on energy production in federal areas, which could lead to more oil spills and increased dependence of fossil fuels; and

WHEREAS, the California Fish and Game Commission considers new oil and gas development offshore California to be a threat to environmental health, including our marine ecosystems, fisheries and wildlife; and

WHEREAS, the California Fish and Game Commission also considers new oil and gas development offshore California to be a threat to the economy, given that California sustains more than \$18 billion in recreation and tourism that depends upon a healthy ocean and coast; now, therefore,

NOW, BE IT RESOLVED, that the California Fish and Game Commission supports the existing four California national marine sanctuaries, their boundaries, and legal protections; strongly and unequivocally supports the current federal prohibition on new oil or gas drilling in federal waters offshore California, opposes attempts to modify the prohibition, and will consider any appropriate actions to maintain the prohibition; and, finally,

BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED, that the California Fish and Game Commission will transmit copies of this resolution to the president and vice president of the United States, to the governor of California, to the majority and minority leaders of the United States Senate, to the speaker and minority leader of the United States House of Representatives, to each senator and representative from California in the Congress of the United States, to the secretary of the United States Department of the Interior, to the secretary of Commerce, to the director of the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management, and to each member of the California State Legislature.

Dated June 22, 2017


Eric Sklar, President


Anthony C. Williams, Member


Peter S. Silva, Member


Jacqueline Hostler-Carmesin, Vice President


Russell E. Burns, Member


Valerie Termini, Executive Director