



DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

TASKING PROFILE

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MIKE THOMPSON

5TH DISTRICT, CALIFORNIA

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January 22, 2018

The Honorable Ryan Zinke
Secretary
U.S. Department of the Interior
1849 C Street NW
Washington, D.C. 20240

Secretary Zinke:

I am writing to respectfully request that the State of California be exempted from the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management's (BOEM) recently released proposal to expand offshore drilling operations along the Pacific Coast.

The proposal, formally entitled the "National Outer Continental Shelf Oil and Gas Leasing Draft Proposed Program," would open California's waters to expanded offshore drilling for the first time in more than thirty years. As a lifelong hunter, angler, and Californian, I know firsthand how devastating BOEM's proposal would be to communities up and down the Pacific shoreline.

Northern California is home to one of the world's four most vital upwellings; currents of cold, nutrient-rich water that rise upwards from the ocean depths, combining with sunlight to enhance seaweed and phytoplankton growth. It is this upwelling that enables the presence of abundant marine life in the region, and it is this upwelling that underpins state and local economies along the length of the Pacific. Among other industries, California's seafood sector is the strongest of any state, generating more than 145,000 jobs in communities with few other viable options.

As an avid hunter, angler and outdoorsman, I am especially troubled by the impact BOEM's proposal would have on the region's robust sporting community. An estimated four million anglers travel to Northern California each year to fish, supporting an additional 12,000 jobs, while the region's countless species of migratory birds draw hunters from around the country. In the spring, Humboldt, Tomales and Bodega Bays are home to the largest population of Pacific Black Brant, a species known to be especially vulnerable to habitat fluctuations. Without a thriving marine ecosystem, these species could not survive in the region - meaning that expanded drilling operations would not only threaten jobs and communities, but would imperil one of our nation's most pristine and cherished sporting destinations.

Any offshore drilling operation carries risks. But those risks are exponentially greater in Northern California, which remains one of the most earthquake-prone regions on the planet: just five months ago, the U.S. Geological Survey recorded a magnitude 5.7 quake off the coast of Humboldt Bay. And, not only do these frequent quakes increase the likelihood of spills or other disasters, but other features of the region – including rocky shorelines, cold, choppy water, and remote, difficult-to-access communities – make the daunting work of spill cleanup virtually impossible.

Mr. Secretary, you and I share a deep appreciation for the sporting heritage that defines our respective communities. I respectfully ask that you draw upon that appreciation to stand with hunters and anglers around our country, and withdraw the California coast from its inclusion in the BOEM proposal.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Mike Thompson", with a stylized flourish at the end.

MIKE THOMPSON
Member of Congress