

Hello,

I am writing on behalf of Russian Riverkeeper (RRK) and in response to the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management's (BOEM) Request for Information and Comments on the Preparation of the 11th National Outer Continental Shelf Oil and Gas Leasing Program. RRK is an environmental nonprofit that has been successfully protecting the Russian River watershed, from its upper most tributaries to the Sonoma County coastline, since 1993. We actively pursue the protections and restoration of the river's mainstem, tributaries, groundwater, and watershed through focused advocacy, public outreach, and direct engagement with the Russian River community. Our mission is to protect and restore our watershed environment for the benefit of current and future generations.

The California coast in Sonoma County is a pristine coastline long protected by state legislation, the CA Coastal Act, Marine Protected Area designations and legislative priorities from projects such as offshore drilling and mining. We must continue to protect oceans and coasts and their marine habitats from negative impacts associated with oil and gas exploration and lease sales to allow current and future generations to continue to enjoy unsullied public access to clean oceans and coastlines. I oppose new oil and gas exploration and lease sales in all federal waters and urge that BOEM keep the Pacific and Atlantic planning areas off limits in any new Five-Year Program. We are all aware of the potential for a catastrophic oil spill like the 2010 Deepwater Horizon disaster, and the Pacific Ocean is home to numerous fault lines and unpredictable earthquakes that increase that risk exponentially. But the threats from offshore drilling itself extend beyond that—there are a plethora of known harms that occur to marine mammals from seismic blasting, leaks from pipelines and tankers, and industrialization of sensitive environmental areas that often provide important functional benefits. These activities also trigger cascading food web disruptions, inflict lasting damage on public beaches and recreation areas, and harm tourism and local economies. The oil industry treats these harms to vital public resources as the cost of doing business—expecting the public to bear the burden while they profit, leaving taxpayers to fund the costly cleanup and restoration.

The health of our oceans is a legacy we should all care about—regardless of whether we live on a coast—and a clear majority of the American public agrees. This is not a partisan issue—there is significant and widespread bipartisan opposition to expanded offshore drilling off our coasts, from Florida to Maine, and from southern California to Washington. We urge BOEM to listen to this widespread opposition and not to proceed with any lease sales in those areas of the coast where local opposition has consistently made clear that drilling is incompatible with local ecosystems, economies, and ways of life.

Thank you