City of Fort Walton Beach

Treasure of the Emerald Coast

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December 17, 2025

11th National OCS Oil and Gas Leasing Program
Ms. Kelly Hammerle
Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (VAM-LD)
U.S. Department of Interior
45600 Woodland Road
Sterling, VA 20166-9216

RE: Opposition to New Lease Sales in the Draft Proposed 5-Year OCS Oil & Gas Leasing Program

Dear Secretary,

On behalf of the Fort Walton Beach City Council and the many businesses, residents, and visitors who rely on a healthy Gulf Coast, I am writing to convey the City's strong support for securing long-term protection of the Eastern Gulf Test & Training Range (EGTTR) from oil drilling and related energy-exploration activities. Few assets are as essential to both our national defense and our regional economy as the EGTTR, and its continued preservation is a matter of the highest importance.

The Eastern Gulf hosts the most expansive military test and training range in the continental United States. Its unique air, surface, and subsurface environments provide irreplaceable training opportunities for every branch of our armed forces. From advanced weapons testing to complex water-to-land exercises, the missions conducted in the EGTTR directly support military readiness and ensure that the United States can maintain the capabilities required to meet evolving national security challenges. There simply is no substitute for this range.

Fort Walton Beach's connection to the EGTTR extends far beyond military operations. Our community's economic vitality is tied to both the military presence and the pristine waters and beaches that draw millions of visitors to Northwest Florida each year. The Gulf's environmental health is a central pillar of our tourism sector, and the EGTTR plays a critical role in safeguarding the conditions that make this region so remarkable.

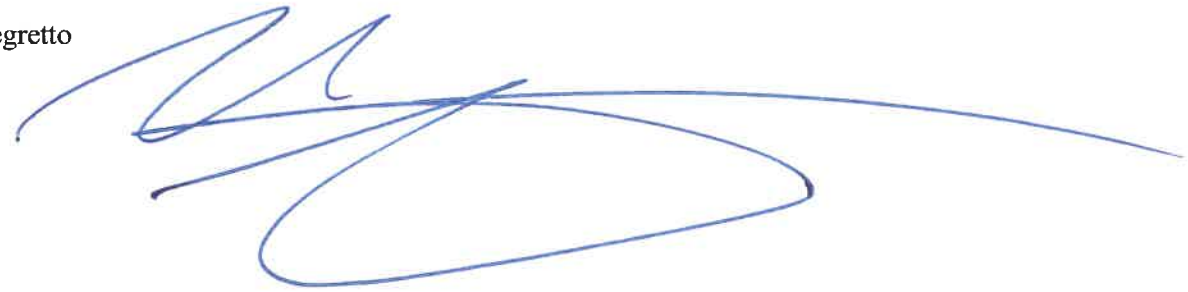
Tourism is one of the primary economic drivers for our city and surrounding areas, generating billions in revenue and supporting thousands of jobs. People come here because they expect clear waters, clean beaches, and a protected coastal environment. Introducing oil drilling

or exploration into the EGTTR would introduce unacceptable environmental risks—risks that could erode visitor confidence, threaten local businesses, and undermine livelihoods across the region.

Oil exploration is fundamentally incompatible with the sensitive and strategically vital nature of the EGTTR. The potential hazards extend not only to fragile ecosystems and coastal economies, but to the nation's ability to conduct the full spectrum of military training this range uniquely supports.

For these reasons, the City of Fort Walton Beach respectfully urges your full support for establishing permanent protections for the Eastern Gulf Test & Training Range. Doing so will safeguard a mission-critical defense asset while also preserving the environmental and economic foundation that allows our community—and all of Northwest Florida—to thrive.

Thank you for your attention to this issue and for your consideration of the military and tourism communities that depend on a protected Gulf.

Sincerely,

Nic Allegretto
Mayor