County of Monterey

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December 8, 2025

Ms. Kelly Hammerle
Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (VAM-LD)
45600 Woodland Road
Sterling, VA 20166-9216

Re: Letter Opposing the Draft Proposed Program (DPP) for the 11th National Outer Continental Shelf (OCS) Oil and Gas Leasing Program.

Dear Ms. Hammerle:

On behalf of the County of Monterey I am writing to express the County's opposition to the Draft Proposed Program (DPP) for the 11th Outer Continental Shelf (OCS) Oil and Gas Leasing Program. We are strongly opposed to the inclusion of the Northern California OCS Planning Area, the Central California OCS Planning Area, and the Southern California OCS Planning Area in the DPP for oil and gas leasing disposition. This proposal, along with reductions in federal resources for safety and oil spill response, is dangerous and reckless. Any expansion of offshore drilling off the coast of California will inevitably lead to oil spills which will devastate our communities.

California has a long history of efforts to block offshore drilling dating back to 1969 when an oil rig off the coast of Santa Barbara leaked 3 million gallons of crude oil into the ocean, blanketing beaches with a thick layer of oil and killing thousands of marine mammals and birds. It was the largest oil spill in U.S. history until the Exxon Valdez spill 20 years later. After the 1969 Santa Barbara spill, California blocked all new offshore oil drilling in state waters, protecting our coastal waters up to three miles from the shore. The state reinforced that ban in 1994 by passing the California Coastal Sanctuary Act, which prohibited new leasing in state waters. Additionally, in 2015 a pipeline servicing offshore oil platforms burst and fouled the same coastal areas affected by the 1969 oil spill.

Further, in October 2021, a ruptured pipeline from an existing oil well spilled more than 25,000 gallons of crude oil into the ocean and onto the beaches of Orange County. Despite numerous alarms, operators allowed oil to flow from the leak for over 14 hours. The spill covered more than 8,000 acres of the ocean's surface and required more than a week of cleanup while local businesses and fisheries suffered. The County of Monterey has seen these devastating impacts to the California coast and has historically been concerned with this program, passing a 2018 resolution which supported a ban on new oil and gas drilling in federal waters offshore California.

Today, the County is concerned not only with the potential environmental disaster but on the potential economic consequences for our communities. The California economy includes sectors of tourism, recreation, fisheries, deepwater port commerce, and Department of Defense infrastructure. According to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), California's marine economy alone accounted for $51.3 billion in GDP and $26.7 billion in wages in 2021.1 The economic well-being of these sectors is dependent upon a healthy and clean coastline. Further industrialization off our coast will inevitably pollute our beaches, spelling disaster for California's economy and detrimentally impacting the rest of the country, which relies on California as an economic engine.

[1] https://coast.noaa.gov/data/digitalcoast/pdf/marine-economy-california.pdf

On behalf of the County of Monterey, we write in strong opposition to the DPP for the 11th National OCS Oil and Gas Leasing Program. We specifically want to express our strongest opposition to the inclusion of the Northern California OCS Planning Area, the Central California OCS Planning Area, and the Southern California OCS Planning Area in the DPP for oil and gas leasing disposition. We urge you to join with us and hundreds of thousands of citizens who are working to ensure the protection of our beautiful, valuable, and important ecological and economic resources.

Sincerely,

Chris M. Lopez, Chair
Board of Supervisors

cc: The Honorable Alex Padilla, U.S. Senator for California
The Honorable Adam Schiff, U.S. Senator for California
The Honorable Zoe Lofgren, 18th Congressional District
The Honorable Jimmy Panetta, 19th Congressional District