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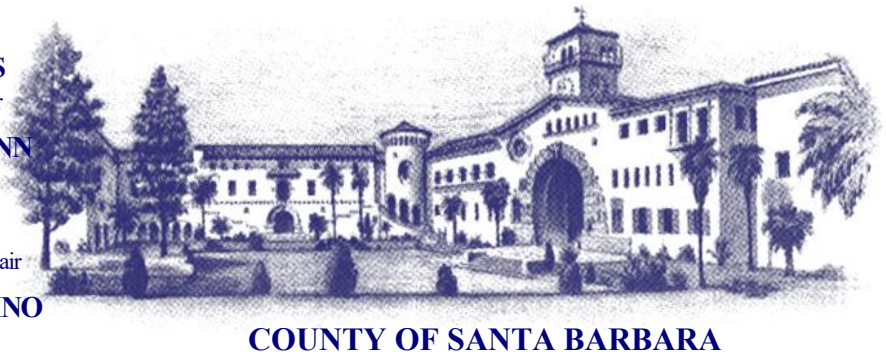

COUNTY OF SANTA BARBARA

BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
County Administration Building
105 East Anapamu Street
Santa Barbara, CA 93101
Telephone: (805) 568-2190
www.countyofsb.org

December 16, 2025

Re: Resolution of the Board of Supervisors of the County of Santa Barbara Opposing U.S. Department of Interior's Newly Released Offshore Oil and Gas Leasing Draft Program

To Whom It May Concern:

On behalf of the Santa Barbara County Board of Supervisors, I submit the County's strong opposition to the inclusion of Pacific federal waters—including the Southern California Planning Area—in the Draft Proposed Program for the 2025–2030 National Outer Continental Shelf Leasing Plan.

The federal government is proposing to issue new offshore oil and gas leases off the California coast, which has not been done in four decades. This reversal of long-standing protections places one of the most ecologically rich and economically valuable marine regions in the world at renewed and unacceptable risk.

Santa Barbara County has lived the consequences of offshore oil development.

The 1969 Santa Barbara oil spill helped spur the modern environmental movement and led to landmark bipartisan federal reforms—including the National Environmental Policy Act, the Clean Water Act, and the creation of the EPA—that established enduring protections for our air, water, and coastline.

Offshore blowouts and pipeline failures in our region have released millions of gallons of crude oil, killing marine wildlife, closing fisheries, damaging coastal tourism, and contaminating beaches. These events have shown that offshore oil and gas operations carry unavoidable risk: spills, gas leaks, infrastructure failures, vessel traffic impacts, and long-term ecological harm. Even small operational releases can injure or kill marine mammals and seabirds, impair fish reproduction, and introduce toxins into the food chain.

There is no way to drill without risking catastrophic impacts on coastal communities and ecosystems.

Federal waters offshore California encompass the California Current upwelling system, one of the top five most biodiverse marine ecosystems on Earth. This region includes the Channel Islands National Marine Sanctuary, the newly established Chumash Heritage National Marine Sanctuary, and numerous state and federal Marine Protected Areas. It serves as a critical migratory corridor and feeding area for endangered blue, humpback, and fin whales—species that are highly vulnerable to seismic exploration, vessel strikes, noise pollution, and oil spills.

(over)

California's coastal economy relies heavily on these resources. Ocean-related tourism and recreation contributed $28 billion to California's GDP in 2019, a significant increase from 2016. Sightseeing along scenic coastal highways remains one of the most common visitor activities, supporting a broad network of local businesses. Commercial and recreational fisheries depend on the California Current's unparalleled productivity.

New offshore leasing threatens the economic foundation of coastal communities. Past spills—whether in California or other coastal regions—have led to major losses in tourism revenue, fishery closures, and large-scale claims for economic damages.

The climate impacts associated with expanded offshore oil production further exacerbate national costs. While oil company profits remain high, extreme weather disasters—driven by fossil fuel emissions—cost the United States tens of billions of dollars per year, with climate-related health damages estimated at more than $800 billion annually. Expanding offshore drilling directly undermines the nation's climate resilience and economic stability.

Opposition to new offshore drilling in California is strong, consistent, and bipartisan. Coastal cities and counties, Tribal governments, commercial fishing groups, small businesses, and residents across the political spectrum have made clear that protecting our coastline is a shared priority. Californians value clean beaches, healthy fisheries, and resilient local economies over the short-term gains of expanded offshore extraction.

For all these reasons—local experience, ecological significance, economic reliance, public health considerations, climate impacts, and bipartisan public sentiment—Santa Barbara County reaffirms its unwavering opposition to any new federal offshore oil and gas leasing. We urge BOEM to fully remove all Pacific planning areas from the 2025–2030 Leasing Program.

Our coastline is a national treasure. It deserves permanent protection—not renewed threats. Thank you for the opportunity to comment

Sincerely,

Laura Capps
Chair
Santa Barbara County Board of Supervisors

cc:
State of California:
- Governor: Gavin Newsom
- U.S. Senator: Alex Padilla
- U.S. Senator: Adam Schiff
- Congressmember: Salud Carbajal
- State Senator: Monique Limón
- State Assemblymember: Gregg Hart

Congressional Committees:
House Committee on Natural Resources:
- Ranking Member: Rep. Jared Huffman

Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (BOEM):
-Kelly Hammerle, Bureau of Ocean Energy Management