FLORIDA DEPARTMENT of STATE

RON DESANTIS
Governor

CORD BYRD
Secretary of State

State Clearinghouse
Florida Department of Environmental Protection
3900 Commonwealth Boulevard
Tallahassee, Florida 32399-3000

January 22, 2026

RE: 11th National OCS Oil and Gas Leasing Program to Replace Five-Year Program for 2024-2029

To Whom It May Concern:

Thank you for providing our office with the opportunity to comment on the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management's (BOEM) Draft Proposed Program (DPP) for the 11th National Outer Continental Shelf Oil and Gas Leasing Program. The Florida Department of State's Division of Historical Resources (DHR) is responsible for preserving and promoting Florida's historical and archaeological resources and regularly consults with federal agencies pursuant to Section 106 of the *National Historic Preservation Act* (54 U.S.C. § 306108).

The expansion of oil and gas exploration and extraction activities within the Gulf region poses a substantial risk to the preservation and integrity of historically and culturally significant resources. With the longest coastline in the continental United States, Florida has a broad range of underwater archaeological sites that represent thousands of years of human history. From prehistoric habitations and cemeteries to colonial Spanish shipwrecks, to World War II sites, the preservation and study of these non-renewable archaeological resources is vital to our understanding of Florida's rich and unique past. Seismic surveys, drilling operations, anchoring, pipeline installation, and the potential for accidental discharges or spills will physically damage these resources. Once compromised, historically significant resources cannot be restored or replaced, resulting in permanent loss of historical context and collective heritage.

Portions of the Gulf and the South Atlantic were previously withdrawn from disposition unleased for the purposes of exploration, development, or production through June 30, 2032, by Presidential memorandum. This restriction is especially appropriate given the presence of known submerged archaeological sites and historic shipwrecks in these areas and underscores the importance of ensuring the long-term protection of these non-renewable maritime resources in Florida.

The State's policy relating to historic properties notes that the rich and unique heritage in Florida is an important legacy to be valued and conserved for present and future generations and recognizes that the destruction of these nonrenewable historical resources will engender a significant loss to the state's quality of life, economy, and cultural environment. Since there are numerous historic properties within the Gulf of America and oil and gas exploration and drilling activities have the potential to adversely impact historic properties, the State of Florida opposes the Department of the Interior's plan to replace the

2024-2029 National Outer Continental Shelf Oil and Gas Leasing Program with a new expansive program which includes "Gulf of America Program Area B" which includes a large swath of the area currently protected from drilling.

Our office is available to provide additional information and to consult with BOEM regarding historic and cultural resources as the 11th National OCS Oil and Gas Leasing Program continues to develop.

Sincerely,

Alissa Lotane
Director, Division of Historical Resources &
State Historic Preservation Officer