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Managing fish and wildlife resources for their long-term well-being and the benefit of people.

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January 22, 2026

Ms. Lindsay Weaver
Director of Intergovernmental Programs
Florida State Clearinghouse Coordinator
Florida Department of Environmental Protection
Lindsay.Weaver@FloridaDEP.gov

RE: Bureau of Ocean Energy Management - Request for Comments Draft Proposed Program (DPP) for the 11th National Outer Continental Shelf (OCS) Oil and Gas Leasing Program

Dear Ms. Weaver:

The U.S. Department of the Interior, Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (BOEM) has requested review and comment on the Draft Proposed Program (DPP) for the 11th National Outer Continental Shelf (OCS) Oil and Gas Leasing Program. Upon completion, the 11th National OCS Program will replace the current National Program for 2024-2029, which went into effect on July 1, 2024.

The DPP includes an analysis of all 27 OCS Planning Areas under Section 18, called the 1st Analysis, and the Secretary's 1st Proposal of lease sales on the OCS for the 11th Program. This 1st Proposal provides the basis for gathering information and conducting analyses to inform the Secretary on which areas to include in the 2nd Proposal for further leasing consideration in the 11th Program.

The three current OCS planning areas located offshore Florida are the Eastern Gulf of America (wholly included), Straits of Florida (wholly included), and South Atlantic (partially included). These three planning areas span all of Florida's 35 coastal counties and 8,400-mile coastline, and are currently under a leasing moratorium.

The DPP proposes creation of a new planning area off Florida that is carved out of the current Eastern Gulf of America Planning Area. This new area is proposed as Gulf of America (GOA) Program Area B or South-Central GOA Planning Area, and directly contradicts President Trump's existing 2020 "Memorandum on the Withdrawal of Certain Areas of the United States Outer Continental Shelf from Leasing Disposition" that prohibits oil and gas lease sales within the majority of the Eastern GOA Planning Area until June 30, 2032.

Due to prevailing water currents, any oil and gas incident that might occur within the proposed GOA Program Area B would significantly impact all of Florida's coastal and offshore resources within all three OCS planning areas off Florida. These resources include but are not limited to:

- The only coral reef system within the continental United States
- Designated Essential Fish Habitat for hundreds of species

- **Designated Critical Habitat for state and federally listed species (e.g., fish, birds, corals, crocodiles, manatees, sea turtles, sharks, whales)**
- **Over 5,000 artificial reefs**
- **Countless numbers of boat ramps, fishing piers, paddle craft launches, and coastal paddling trails**
- **The Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary**
- **The Great Florida Birding Trail**
- **Aquatic Preserves, State Parks, Wildlife Management Areas**
- **Protected fisheries areas in the Gulf of America such as The Edges, Florida Middle Grounds, Steamboat Lumps MPA, Madison-Swanson Marine Reserve, Pulley Ridge**
- **Migratory corridors for species like bluefin tuna, sailfish and marlin**
- **Fish spawning aggregations**

Florida's coastal and offshore resources are the backbone of Florida's economy, providing conservation benefits for fish and wildlife and strongly supporting the state's tourism industry. These highly valued resources are why Florida is known as "The Fishing Capital of the World" and include fishing industries providing ~160,000 jobs and contributing $11.4 billion to Florida's economy[1]. These highly valued resources also sustain a thriving wildlife viewing industry providing ~45,000 jobs and contributing $4.9 billion to Florida's economy[2].

In order to convey to BOEM the scope of Florida's coastal and offshore resources that are vital to Florida's economy and could be severely impacted by OCS oil and gas activities anywhere off Florida, enclosed is a series of 158 GIS-based maps that identify many (but not all) of these resources. Each map is identified by the current OCS planning area and economic, social, and environmental values associated with the mapped resource.

FWC staff appreciate the opportunity to provide information that will assist BOEM with their planning efforts for the 11th National OCS Oil and Gas Leasing Program. If you need any further assistance, please contact our office by email at: ConservationPlanningServices@MyFWC.com. If you have specific technical questions, please contact Lisa Gregg at (850) 617-9621 or by email at Lisa.Gregg@MyFWC.com.

Sincerely,

Roger Young
Executive Director

ry/jc/jm/lg

Enclosures:
Eastern Gulf of America (EGOA) Planning Area Resource Maps
Straits of Florida (SOF) Planning Area Resource Maps
South Atlantic (SA) Planning Area Resource Maps

Literature Cited

1. **National Marine Fisheries Service. 2024. Fisheries Economics of the United States, 2022. U.S. Dept. of Commerce, NOAA Tech. Memo. NMFS-F/SPO-248B, 28 p.**
2. **Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission. 2013. The 2011 Economic Benefits of Wildlife Viewing in Florida. https://myfwc.com/viewing/business-and-tourism/**