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Comment from Chaney, Representative Linda

Posted by the **Bureau of Ocean Energy Management** on Jan 11, 2026

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To whom it may concern,

I am writing in opposition to the 11th National OCS Oil and Gas Leasing Draft Proposed Program. Specifically, I write in opposition to the issuance of new oil and gas leases in the Eastern Gulf's "Program Area B."

First, I do not support such plans due to the questionable extent of compliance of the 11th National OCS Oil and Gas Leasing Draft Proposed Program with the National Environmental Policy Act. The National Environmental Policy Act was signed into law in 1970 and requires federal agencies to evaluate the environmental effects of their actions. Depending upon the extent of a proposed action's impact on the environment, federal agencies may be required to prepare an environmental assessment and/or environmental impact statement. The issuance of new leases for oil and gas harvesting would assuredly trigger some level of review under NEPA, if not the most burdensome level of review in the form of an environmental impact statement, given that "all prior five-year offshore drilling plans — dating back to 1980 — reference NEPA analyses (https://www.eenews.net/articles/interior-skips-nepa-analysis-for-offshore-drilling-expansion/)." Yet the Department of the Interior has decided to disregard NEPA at this time when offering this plan, a clear departure from historical precedent. NEPA exists for a reason: to prevent the environmental degradation that accompanied American progress in the early 20th century. How will Floridians know what harm could be wreaked on our environment by this proposed plan without NEPA compliance?

Second, I am opposed to the opening of lease sales for the Eastern Gulf's 'Program Area B' because it opens leasing only 100 miles from the
coast of Florida, reducing the previous boundary of 250 miles, and furthermore opens leasing only 3 nautical miles outside state jurisdiction. As a result of a ballot initiative passed in the 2018 General Election, Article II, Section 7 of the FL Constitution reads thus: "To protect the people of Florida and their environment, drilling for exploration or extraction of oil or natural gas is prohibited on lands beneath all state

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waters which have not been alienated and that lie between the mean high water line and the outermost boundaries of the state's territorial seas." This language in FL's Constitution is self-evident; the people of FL do not want new drilling for oil and gas within our waters. Potential drilling within 3 nautical miles of Florida's natural waters is an affront to the will of our people in the 2018 election, who ratified that ballot initiative with roughly 69% of the vote in 2018.

Third, I note that I am accompanied in my opposition to this proposed plan by eight of Florida's Republican members of Congress, who sent President Trump a letter saying drilling in accordance with this plan would be "incompatible with military operations and recreational uses (https://www.npr.org/2025/12/16/nx-s1-5628976/florida-republicans-push-back-against-trumps-plan-to-expand-offshore-oil-drilling)." Furthermore, both of our Republican US Senators cosponsored a bill, the American Shores Protection Act, to codify President Biden's moratorium (now repealed by President Trump) on the issuance of new oil and gas leases off of the coast of Florida (https://www.wusf.org/environment/2025-11-05/congressional-bill-ban-offshore-oil-drilling-florida-another-seven-years). My position is therefore not a fringe one: Florida's elected officials wish to protect our environment and citizens from potentially devastating effects of new oil and gas drilling.

Fourth, I oppose this proposed plan because we have a clear and tangible example of how offshore drilling off the coast of Florida can go awry. Although Florida was more than 100 miles to the east of the Deepwater Horizon oil spill in 2010 in the Gulf Coast, oil washed up on our state beaches in Escambia, Santa Rosa, Okaloosa, Walton, Bay, Gulf, and Franklin counties. A study commissioned by the Florida Legislature concluded that "...1.88 million planned visitor-trips to the region were cancelled up to a year after the incident, resulting in a loss of $1.30 billion in visitor spending" for the Northwest Florida region -- a crippling impact for Florida's Panhandle and state economy overall (https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S1757780223003050). Why would we want to risk replicating these events with a foolhardy plan that does not comply with NEPA?

Overall, I am opposed to the 11th National OCS Oil and Gas Leasing Draft Proposed Program, particularly with regard to its potential effects on Florida.

Cordially,
Florida Representative Linda Chaney
House District 61

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