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Comment from Monterey Bay Fisheries Trust

Posted by the **Bureau of Ocean Energy Management** on Dec 31, 2025

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I am writing to respectfully urge the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (BOEM) to reject any new offshore oil and gas leases off the coast of California. Expanding offshore drilling in this region would impose unnecessary and unacceptable risks to coastal communities, local economies, marine ecosystems, and the food systems that depend on a clean and productive ocean.

California's coastal economy generates tens of billions of dollars annually through tourism, outdoor recreation, commercial and recreational fisheries, ports, and research institutions. In particular, California's commercial fisheries provide a vital source of locally produced, sustainable protein, supporting food security, cultural heritage, and year-round employment in coastal communities. These sectors depend fundamentally on clean waters and healthy marine ecosystems. Past spill events—including the 1969 Santa Barbara blowout and the 2015 Refugio pipeline spill—demonstrate that even a single incident can cause long-term economic harm, disrupt fishing activity, contaminate seafood supplies, and impose costly cleanup burdens on the public.

The ecological stakes are equally significant. The California Current Large Marine Ecosystem is one of the most productive and biodiverse marine regions in the world, sustaining whales, sea lions, seabirds, kelp forests, cold-water reefs, and numerous threatened and endangered species. This productivity underpins sustainable fisheries that feed communities locally and nationally. Offshore oil and gas development introduces heightened risks of catastrophic spills, chronic pollution, increased vessel traffic, underwater noise, and long-term habitat degradation—pressures that compound existing stressors from climate change, ocean warming, and acidification.

Protecting California's coast is also a matter of safeguarding resilient, place-based food systems. Healthy fisheries are not easily replaced once damaged; contamination events can shut down fishing grounds for months or years, erode consumer trust in seafood, and permanently displace fishing families and small businesses. At a time when supply chains are increasingly fragile, protecting domestic seafood production should be viewed as a strategic priority. Indeed, the Trump Administration's Executive Order 14276 on

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Restoring Seafood Competitiveness attempts to do just that.

Importantly, opposition to new offshore drilling in California is strongly bipartisan. Coastal cities and counties, Tribal governments, fishing organizations, small businesses, and residents across the political spectrum have consistently affirmed that protecting the coastline is a shared value. Californians prioritize clean beaches, healthy fisheries, food security, and resilient coastal economies over expanded fossil fuel development.

For these reasons, I urge BOEM to adopt a leasing program that includes no new offshore oil and gas leases off California's coast. Protecting this region is essential to sustaining sustainable fisheries, strengthening food security, preserving marine biodiversity, and honoring the broad public consensus that California's coastline should remain clean, productive, and thriving.

Attachments 2

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