January 16, 2026

Ms. Kelly Hammerle, Chief
National OCS Oil and Gas Leasing Program Development and Coordination Branch
Bureau of Ocean Energy Management, U.S. Department of Interior
45600 Woodland Road, Sterling, VA 20166-9216

RE: Mid-Atlantic Surfrider Foundation Opposition to New Lease Sales in the Draft 5-Year OCS Oil and Gas Leasing Program

Dear Chief Hammerle,

Because Surfrider Foundation members and our country's coastal economy both depend on a clean and healthy coastal environment, we write to express our strong opposition to new oil and gas lease sales in the next 5-Year OCS Oil and Gas Leasing Program. Specifically, we ask that you protect all U.S. waters from new oil and gas development.

The expansion of offshore oil and gas development would cause significant and unnecessary negative impacts to marine ecosystems, wildlife, coastal communities, and vital recreation and tourism industries. Instead of approving new oil and gas leasing in U.S. waters, our nation should prioritize clean energy by investing in renewable energy development.

Offshore oil and gas development in new areas would require seismic surveys, drilling operations, oil transport by tankers, and the installation of platforms, pipelines, and other infrastructure. Collectively these activities would significantly damage the environment, marine wildlife, coastal economies and ways of life. New offshore drilling would also expose the marine environment and coastal communities to the risks of

another catastrophic oil spill. Finally, new offshore oil and gas leasing would exacerbate the climate crisis as our nation and world struggle to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

An overwhelming majority of the public is opposed to new offshore oil and gas drilling. To date, nearly 400 municipalities, 2,500 elected officials, 59,000 businesses and 500,000 fishing families across the United States have formally opposed new offshore oil and gas development. Further, according to a national poll, an estimated 64% of registered U.S. voters are opposed to new offshore drilling. The widespread opposition to new offshore drilling in U.S. waters is bipartisan and reflected throughout various regions of the country.

The federal offshore drilling program directly impacts our nation's ocean recreation, tourism, and fisheries industries that generate over $520 billion annually. These industries depend on a clean coastal environment to support a combined 2.5 million jobs across the United States. Allowing new offshore drilling will damage public resources that these industries depend upon by generating harmful impacts through every phase of the drilling process. Such drilling will subject communities to the ever-present risks of oil spills and onshore impacts which can be catastrophic to both the environment and economy.

Coastal businesses depend on clean beaches and waters, abundant wildlife, and scenic viewsheds – all of which would be compromised by the expansion of offshore drilling and an increased risk of spills. A major spill would cause catastrophic impacts to these coastal communities, a truth we should have learned from previous spills that have had long-lasting impacts on local tourism rates.

Finally, oil and gas development disproportionately impacts lower-income and communities of color who, too often, bear the brunt of fossil fuel operations. In the Gulf, the oil and gas industry has contributed to the extensive loss of coastal wetlands, leaving communities more vulnerable to flooding and extreme weather events. Meanwhile, onshore infrastructure associated with offshore leasing pollutes frontline communities and damages public health. The Department must account for these inequities in its analysis of potential new oil and gas lease sales in public waters.

In summary, we ask you to protect all U.S. waters including the Mid-Atlantic from any new oil and gas leasing in the next 5-Year OCS Oil and Gas Program. We appreciate the opportunity to provide these comments to the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management.

Sincerely,

Christine Capelli
Chair, Eastern Long Island Chapter of the Surfrider Foundation

Maggie Turano
Chair, Central Long Island Chapter of the Surfrider Foundation

Emily Bryant-Álvarez
Chair, NYC Chapter of the Surfrider Foundation

Jill Nilson
Chair, Jersey Shore Chapter of the Surfrider Foundation

Margo Pellegrino
South Jersey Chapter of the Surfrider Foundation

Delaware Chapter of the Surfrider Foundation

Camila Hernandez
Chair, Annapolis Chapter of the Surfrider Foundation

Ocean City Chapter of the Surfrider Foundation

Hannah Townley
Chair, DC Chapter of the Surfrider Foundation