

The Honorable Deb Haaland
U.S. Secretary of the Interior
1849 C Street NW, Washington, DC 20240

Dear Madam Secretary,

The Business Alliance for Protecting the Pacific Coast (BAPPC) is the leading business organization working to ensure the long-term health and economic vitality of the Pacific seaboard through responsible stewardship of the coastal and ocean waters. We represent over 7,500 businesses united in opposition to expanded offshore oil and gas drilling in the Pacific. Thank you for taking our input as you prepare your review of the federal oil and gas leasing program, and we hope you consider the extreme threat offshore oil and gas drilling poses to our membership up and down the Pacific Coast.

We appreciate the Department of Interior's efforts to bring in a diverse set of voices at the March 25th forum to help inform the upcoming report on the nation's oil and gas leasing program, but we were disappointed that coastal businesses like ours were not invited to provide testimony. Our businesses are inextricably linked to clean beaches and a healthy ocean. As job creators, we understand that a robust and productive coastal economy is dependent on a clean and healthy ocean; simply put, the threats posed by new offshore drilling are business threats. The oil and gas leasing program on the Outer Continental Shelf has a direct impact on the thousands of business owners and hundreds of thousands of jobs that power our thriving coastal economy. Though we could not give our unique perspective, multiple speakers during the forum made it clear: offshore drilling is far too risky to bring to our coastal economies.

Our beaches and coasts are the backbone of countless small businesses—including in the hospitality, restaurant, real estate, boating, fishing, surfing, and other tourism, and recreation-related industries—and many communities depend on ocean tourism for steady revenue. But for too long, our coast has been vulnerable to expanded offshore oil drilling. By pausing new oil and gas development on our public lands and waters including those offshore, the Biden-Harris administration has already shown its willingness to take the decisive action necessary to protect our coastal economy. This action will protect jobs and preserve our economies. We are optimistic that the bold action taken to date by the administration to rescue the American economy is a sign of further decisive and necessary action to come, and we look forward to working with the administration to ensure our clean coast economy continues to thrive.

Residents and people from all over the world – over 150 million visitors a year to California alone – frequent our coastlines to fish, hike, golf, kayak, surf, wine and dine, and enjoy our beaches.¹ According to the latest government data, the clean coast economy on the Pacific coast supports over 830,000 jobs and nearly \$70 billion in GDP through businesses like hotels, restaurants, charter boats, gas stations, guide businesses, and gear shops.² These long-standing industries continue to make our coastal communities vibrant and prosperous today. Properly managed fisheries and well protected beaches can continue to drive economic activity for years to come. The same cannot be said about the finite resources found miles below our waters.

Time and again, the oil and gas industry has failed to protect us from their dangerous practices, and the time to prioritize our communities is now. As too many families and businesses can attest, when you drill, you spill. Communities in the Gulf of Mexico are still dealing with the impacts of the BP drilling disaster from more than a decade ago.³ The risk of an oil spill off the West Coast would be devastating and it is a risk our economies cannot afford. That is why businesses and bipartisan elected officials nationwide have been vocal in opposing expanded offshore drilling. The pause in leasing to review our oil and gas program is a step in the right direction, but the threat offshore drilling poses to our communities is too great to leave open. It is time to end this practice once and for all by permanently protecting our coasts from new offshore drilling.

The climate crisis is also an economic crisis. Our businesses are facing the impacts of warming oceans, rising seas, and increasingly disastrous weather patterns head on. In the coming decades, the consequences of rising seas will strain many coastal real estate markets, putting nearly 2.5 million properties at risk of chronic flooding.⁴ When enough of those households and communities falter, entire real estate markets may face a tipping point. In just one year, costs incurred from natural disasters *doubled* from the previous year in the United States. In 2020, natural disasters caused \$95 billion in damages.⁵ Imagine the level of destruction we will face if this trend continues and damages double again this year, and then again next year and the year after that, and so on. We cannot afford to wait. Permanently protecting federal waters from drilling will prevent over 19 billion tons of greenhouse gas emissions — the equivalent of taking every car in the nation off the road for 15 years. And it would prevent over \$720 billion in damages to people, property,

¹ Pendleton, L. and Kildow, J. (2006) The Non-Market Value of Beach Recreation in California. *Shore & Beach* 74: 34-37

² Oceana (2021) Clean Coast Economy: Technical Methodology.

³ Oceana (2020) Hindsight 2020: Lessons We Cannot Ignore from the BP Disaster. 1-68p.

⁴ Union of Concerned Scientists (2018) Underwater: Rising Seas, Chronic Floods, and the Implications for US Coastal Real Estate. 1-28p.

⁵ Flavelle, C. (Jan. 7, 2021) U.S. Disaster Costs Doubled in 2020, Reflecting Costs of Climate Change. *The New York Times*. Available: <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/01/07/climate/2020-disaster-costs.html>

and the environment, letting our businesses prosper long into the future.⁶ Decisionmakers still have choices that can help limit threats to coastal cities and towns, and ultimately, to the national economy. Prohibiting new offshore drilling on the Outer Continental Shelf will help our nation address the climate emergency while protecting coastal communities and millions of jobs.

We are very encouraged that your administration has taken temporary action to protect our coastal economy. But this is not enough. Protections from offshore oil drilling enjoy bipartisan and overwhelming support. Across the political spectrum, voters, businesses, military leaders and elected officials oppose these dirty and dangerous practices. Current opposition includes:

- Over 390 East and West Coast municipalities
- More than 2,300 local, state and federal elected officials
- All the governors along the East and West Coasts — Republicans and Democrats alike
- Alliances representing over 55,000 businesses

The Biden administration has shown their commitment to evaluating the federal offshore leasing program and that evaluation will demonstrate what our coastal communities and businesses know at heart: we must permanently protect our coasts from offshore drilling. As your administration completes its review of the oil and gas leasing program, we urge you to consider the disastrous economic impact offshore oil drilling and its associated greenhouse gas emissions has on our businesses and communities, and the wide bipartisan support protecting our coast enjoys. We urge you the Biden-Harris administration to end all further oil and gas leasing and prioritize our oceans as a climate solution by investing in clean energy development, like offshore wind when responsibly sited and developed.

By permanently ending new leasing for offshore drilling and investing in clean renewable offshore energy, we can advance ambitious and durable climate action that protects coastal economies, creates jobs, and benefits everyone. For the sake of our climate and the future of our communities, now is the time for action.

Sincerely,

Vipe Desai

Founding Member, The Business Alliance for Protecting the Pacific Coast

⁶ Oceana (2021) Offshore Drilling Fuels the Climate Crisis and Threatens the Economy. 1-4p.