

December 9, 2021

Dear Mr. President and Members of Congress:

As scientists, we write to you, united in our concern about offshore drilling's impact on marine ecosystems and its contribution to the climate crisis. We urge Congress to pass the existing provisions to permanently ban new offshore oil and gas leasing in the Atlantic, Pacific, and Florida's Gulf Coast in the Build Back Better Act. We also ask President Biden to cancel all future offshore drilling lease sales. Offshore drilling is a threat to marine life and coastal economies that rely on a vibrant ocean. Our health and planet depend on a rapid transition to clean, renewable energy, and we should not be investing in new fossil fuel extraction.

Offshore drilling exacerbates the climate crisis.

Climate change threatens the health of our ocean.¹ If we continue on our current path, the expected increases in temperature, increases in extreme weather, and rising sea levels will wreak havoc on coastal communities and put marine life at risk. These catastrophic impacts will displace people and cause suffering across the planet.^{2,3}

A policy to protect all unleased federal waters from offshore drilling in the United States could prevent over 19 billion tons of greenhouse gas emissions as well as more than \$720 billion in damages to people, property, and the environment.⁴ We cannot afford more drilling and its associated climate pollution if we are to reach our greenhouse gas emission reduction targets.

Our coasts should be protected from another BP *Deepwater Horizon* catastrophe.

In 2010, the BP *Deepwater Horizon* exploded and spewed over 200 million gallons of oil into the Gulf of Mexico.⁵ Fisheries closed, demand for Gulf seafood plummeted, and losses in the seafood industry are estimated at nearly \$1 billion.⁶ After the BP disaster, boating, fishing, and beach visits dropped across the region and the recreation industry lost more than \$500 million in revenue.^{7,8} Toxic oil destroyed wetlands and killed marine wildlife including commercially valuable fish. Lasting impacts from the spill continue to this day.

Just last month, another oil disaster killed birds and fish off California's coast. Fisheries there remain closed in the wake of an offshore pipeline rupture that spread oil across sandy beaches and vibrant wetlands.⁹ We cannot allow private corporations to continue to extract offshore oil and gas and risk the health of our ocean. Simply put, where they drill, they spill.

Offshore oil drilling generates chronic pollution.

Coastal industrialization and pollution from offshore drilling threaten local communities. In addition to hundreds of oil spills each year, standard operating procedures for oil and gas extraction generate radioactive waste, polluted water, and sludge.^{10,11} More than 18 billion barrels of waste fluids from oil and gas production are produced annually in the United States.¹² Moreover, communities of color are often disproportionately impacted by environmental

pollution.¹³ We must transition to clean energy and create a healthier future for ourselves and our oceans.

Preventing new offshore drilling will protect coastal communities from devastating pollution, support healthy marine ecosystems, and move forward our clean energy future. The time for action is now.

Sincerely,

Claire Paris, Ph.D.
Professor, Department of Ocean Sciences
Rosenstiel School of Marine and Atmospheric
Sciences, University of Miami

Tracey Sutton, Ph.D.
Professor, Department of Marine and
Environmental Sciences
Nova Southeastern University

Mark Swingle
Chief of Research & Conservation
Virginia Aquarium & Marine Science Center

Kathryn Matthews, Ph.D.
Chief Scientist
Oceana

Annelisa Moe
Water Quality Scientist
Heal the Bay

Lisa Rodrigues, Ph.D.
Associate Professor
Villanova University

Carol Pride, Ph.D.
Professor, Savannah State University
Climate Reality of Coastal Georgia

Paul Sandifer, Ph.D.
Retired Scientist

Daniel Hayden
President & CEO
Restore America's Estuaries

Ayana Elizabeth Johnson, Ph.D.
Co-Founder
Urban Ocean Lab

Peter Corkeron, Ph.D.
Senior Scientist and Chair
Kraus Marine Mammal Conservation
Program, Anderson Cabot Center for Ocean
Life, New England Aquarium

John Bruno, Ph.D.
Professor, UNC Chapel Hill

John Calambokidis
Research Biologist
Cascadia Research

Sarah Hameed, Ph.D.
Blue Parks Director & Senior Scientist
Marine Conservation Institute

Linda Silversmith, Ph.D.
Biologist & Science writer

Gerry Pinto, Ph.D.
Associate Research Scientist
Jacksonville University
Marine Science Research Institute

Laura Huenneke, Ph.D.
Professor Emeritus
Northern Arizona University

Katherine Pease, Ph.D.
Director of Science & Policy
Heal the Bay

Quincy Gibson, Ph.D.
Associate Professor
University of North Florida

Chelsea Gray
PhD student
George Mason University

Jillian Lucchini
Executive Director and Stranding Coordinator
Marine Mammal Alliance Nantucket

Christopher Malinowski, Ph.D.
Research Scientist
IUCN Groupers & Wrasses Specialist Group

Patrick Drupp, Ph.D.
Deputy Legislative Director
Sierra Club

Katie Day
Environmental Science and Policy Manager
Surfrider Foundation

Adam Rosenblatt, Ph.D.
Assistant Professor
University of North Florida

Francine Kershaw, Ph.D.
Staff Scientist
Natural Resources Defense Council

Adele Roland, Ph.D.
Science Outreach

Stephanie Stack
Chief Biologist
Pacific Whale Foundation

Malachy McCaffrey
Research Technician
University of Texas at Austin
Marine Science Institute

Timothy Donaghy, Ph.D.
Senior Researcher
Greenpeace USA

Nancy Shrodes
Senior Watershed Specialist
Heal the Bay

Naomi Rose, Ph.D.
Marine Mammal Scientist
Animal Welfare Institute

Philip Hamilton
Senior Scientist
New England Aquarium

Sarah Giltz, Ph.D.
Marine Scientist
Oceana

Sarah Cooley, Ph.D.
Director of Climate Science
Ocean Conservancy

Elizabeth Burgess, Ph.D.
Research Scientist
New England Aquarium

George Leonard, Ph.D.
Chief Scientist
Ocean Conservancy

Marie-Céline Piednoir
Growth Consultant
Only One and SeaLegacy

Peter Auster, Ph.D.
Senior Research Scientist & Emeritus
Research Professor
Mystic Aquarium & University of
Connecticut

Merry Camhi, Ph.D.
Director, New York Seascape
New York Aquarium/Wildlife Conservation
Society

Scott Eustis
Community Science Director
Healthy Gulf

Jeremy Stalker, Ph.D.
Professor, Jacksonville University

Matthew King, Ph.D.
President and Chairman
COMMON Foundation

Mark Southerland, Ph.D.
Legislative Director
Safe Skies Maryland

Eleonore Rimbault
PhD Candidate

Erin Pulster, Ph.D.
Scientific Researcher
University of South Florida

A. Quinton White, Ph.D.
Executive Director
Marine Science Research Institute
Jacksonville University

Luke Ginger
Water Quality Scientist
Heal the Bay

Darrin Herbst
Professional Geologist

Kathleen Treseder, Ph.D.
Professor of Biology
University of California Irvine

Russ Clark, Ph.D.
Research Scientist
Georgia Tech

Lyda Harris, Ph.D.
Research Scientist
Seattle Aquarium

Steve Gilbert
Special Project Manager
South Carolina Wildlife Federation

Rosalind Rolland, D.V.M.
Senior Scientist, Emeritus
New England Aquarium

Jacob Kravetz, Ph.D.
Scientist, Johns Hopkins

Katherine Graham
Assistant Scientist
New England Aquarium

Ned Tillman
CEO, Sustainable Growth

David Shiffman, Ph.D.
Faculty Research Associate
Arizona State University

Michael Schram
Doctoral Student, College of Marine Science
University of South Florida

Nigella Hillgarth, Ph.D.
Affiliate Professor
University of Washington

Paul Barber, Ph.D.
Professor, UCLA

Swarna Muthukrishnan, Ph.D.
Staff Scientist
Clean Ocean Action

Robin Perrtree
Marine Science Technician
Savannah State University

Zack Jud, Ph.D.
Director of Education
Florida Oceanographic Society

Emily Klein, Ph.D.
Aquatic Sciences Officer
Pew Charitable Trusts

David Russell
Senior Systems Engineer
University of South Florida

Kimberly Warner, Ph.D.
Senior Scientist
Oceana

Geoffrey Shester, Ph.D.
Senior Scientist
Oceana

Kenneth Lewis, M.D.
Physician
Maryland Conservation Council

Kristina Carroll
Executive Director
Caretta Research Project

Donn Viviani, Ph.D.
President
Climate Protection and Restoration Initiative

Paulette Hammond
President
Maryland Conservation Council

Alina Szmant, Ph.D.
Retired Professor of Marine Science
University of North Carolina Wilmington

Sarah Bedolfe
Marine Scientist
Oceana

Affiliations of signatories are provided for purposes of identification only; signatories sign as individuals, not as representatives of their institutions.

Sources:

1. IPCC (2019) Summary for Policymakers. In: IPCC Special Report on the Ocean and Cryosphere in a Changing Climate [H.-O. Pörtner, D.C. Roberts, V. Masson- Delmotte, P. Zhai, M. Tignor, E. Poloczanska, K. Mintenbeck, M. Nicolai, A. Okem, J. Petzold, B. Rama, N. Weyer (eds.)]. Available: https://report.ipcc.ch/srocc/pdf/SROCC_FinalDraft_FullReport.pdf. Accessed Dec 10, 2019.
2. United States and Army War College (2019) Implications of Climate Change for the U.S. Army. : 52.
3. USGCRP (2016) The Impacts of Climate Change on Human Health in the United States: A Scientific Assessment. A., J. Balbus, J.L. Gamble, C.B. Beard, J.E. Bell, D. Dodgen, R.J. Eisen, N. Fann, M.D. Hawkins, S.C. Herring, L. Jantarasami, D.M. Mills, S. Saha, M.C. Sarofim, J. Trtanj, and L. Ziska, Eds. U.S. Global Change Research Program, Washington, DC. 1-312
<http://dx.doi.org/10.7930/J0R49NQXp>.
4. Oceana (2021) Offshore Drilling Fuels the Climate Crisis and Threatens the Economy. In: *Oceana USA*. Available: <https://usa.oceana.org/publications/reports/offshore-drilling-fuels-climate-crisis-and-threatens-economy>. Accessed Nov 4, 2021.
5. National Commission on the BP Deepwater Horizon and Oil Spill and Offshore Drilling (2011) Deep Water: The Gulf oil disaster and the future of offshore drilling. Report to the President. Washington, D.C.
6. BOEM (2016) Carroll, Michael; Gentner, Brad; Larkin, Sherry; Quigley, Kate; Perlot, Nicole, et al. An Analysis of the Impacts of the Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill on the Gulf of Mexico Seafood Industry.

- U.S. Dept. of the Interior, Bureau of Ocean Energy Management, Gulf of Mexico OCS Region, New Orleans, LA. OCS Study BOEM 2016-020.
7. NOAA Assessing the Impacts from *Deepwater Horizon*. National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration | US Department of Commerce. Available: <https://response.restoration.noaa.gov/about/media/assessing-impacts-deepwater-horizon.html>. Accessed Apr 10, 2019.
 8. NOAA (2016) Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill: Final Programmatic Damage Assessment and Restoration Plan and Final Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement.
 9. -- Southern California Spill Response. Available: <https://socalspillresponse.com/>. Accessed Nov 4, 2021.
 10. US EPA (2018) Radioactive Waste Material from Oil and Gas Drilling. In: *US EPA*. Available: <https://www.epa.gov/radtown/radioactive-waste-material-oil-and-gas-drilling>. Accessed Jan 24, 2020.
 11. BSEE (2019) Aggregated Data of OCS Oil and Gas Industry Activities (e.g. production and drilling levels), Work Hours, Incidents and Compliance: 2008-2018. Available: <https://www.bsee.gov/sites/bsee.gov/files/summary-tables-2018-updated-8-16-2019.pdf>. Accessed Mar 4, 2020.
 12. US EPA (2015) TENORM: Oil and Gas Production Wastes. In: *US EPA*. Available: <https://www.epa.gov/radiation/tenorm-oil-and-gas-production-wastes>. Accessed Jan 23, 2020.
 13. Fleishman L and Franklin M (2017) Fumes Across the Fence-Line: The Health Impacts of Air Pollution from Oil & Gas Facilities on African American Communities. NAACP and Clean Air Task Force. Available: https://www.naacp.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/Fumes-Across-the-Fence-Line_NAACP-and-CATF-Study.pdf. Accessed Jan 29, 2020.
 14. BSEE (2016) Bureau of Safety and Environmental Enforcement Annual Report 2016. Available: https://www.bsee.gov/sites/bsee.gov/files/bsee_2016_annual_report_v6b.pdf. Accessed Nov 4, 2019.