

October 3, 2022

Amanda Lefton, Director
Bureau of Ocean Energy Management
1849 C Street, N.W.
Washington, DC 20240

CC:

Secretary Deb Haaland
President Joe Biden
Tommy Beaudreau
Kelly Hammerle

Re: No new leases in the Five Year Program

Dear Director Lefton:

This letter is submitted on behalf of 193 organizations – including 48 in the Gulf of Mexico and Alaska – urgently calling for no new leases in the Five Year Program for offshore drilling. The undersigned span the U.S. and represent myriad people and interests, including coastal communities and Indigenous peoples; fishermen, farmers, and other food producers; environmental protection and food safety; religion and spiritualism; and science and academia. Offshore drilling is harming our communities, wreaking havoc on the environment, and contributing to the “code red” crisis of global climate change.

The proposal of 95+ million acres for more oil and gas development turns its back on the people who have been living with the effects of the industry for generations. It locks in this pain for generations more. It overlooks the ongoing, unprecedented, and soon irreversible damage from fossil fuels, only to pad the pockets of the industry under the guise of “energy security.” It undermines the broken promise of no new leases. **We maintain our unified demand despite Congress’s recent passage of the Inflation Reduction Act, which contains distressing language concerning offshore drilling. These provisions do not reflect public sentiment or the will of the people, who predominantly oppose continued offshore drilling.**

Of paramount concern is the perpetuation of the Central and Western Gulf of Mexico and Alaska’s Cook Inlet as the nation’s sacrificial zones to offshore drilling. Insultingly, the proposal concludes that cumulative impacts of eleven additional sales will be felt less in these areas due to the very fact that they are already sacrificial zones replete with industrial development. This is akin to telling a cancer patient they do not need treatment, because they are already sick. Moreover, the proposed sale in Lower Cook Inlet is nothing but counterintuitive, as it closely parallels Lease Sale 258 in the former Five Year Program, which your department canceled due to lack of industry interest.

Catastrophic oil spills are one of the many inevitable consequences of offshore drilling, and the communities closest to spills disproportionately suffer. One of the largest spills in U.S. history, Taylor Oil Spill started in 2004 after Hurricane Ivan. It is only now being contained after 15 years of polluting the Gulf with up to 700 gallons of oil and 0.7 tons of methane *daily*. British Petroleum’s 2010 Deepwater Horizon disaster killed eleven workers and spilled more than 210 million gallons of oil and gas into the Gulf. Increases in rare and unusual illnesses and cancers in children and adults, linked with oil-dispersant exposures, have claimed even more lives from the BP oil disaster. In 1989, the Exxon Valdez oil tanker spilled 11 million gallons into Alaska’s waters harming 1,300+ miles of shoreline, killing hundreds of thousands of wildlife, and still causing at least 4 species to remain in imperiled status. The ecological devastation wrought by spills continues to impact fishing communities such as Pointe à la Hache, a primarily African-American fishing village in Louisiana, and Alaska Native communities throughout Cordova, Chenega, Tatitlek, Port Graham, and Nanwalek, who in the face of offshore drilling have reported lower harvests and reduced diversity of species.

When combined with sea level rise and more extreme storms, offshore drilling also places coastal communities at the frontlines of the climate crisis. Communities and Tribes in the area are already climate migrants, having been displaced due to fossil fuels and climate change.

Extractivism perpetuates the ethnocide of Indigenous People that began hundreds of years ago with the first colonists. The history and identity of Indigenous Peoples are tied to their territory through memories, stories, and sacred and cultural sites. Environmental and climate impacts not only affect people's means of sustenance; they also affect people's relationship with their territory and their ability to continue to live as Indigenous People and maintain their own identity and customs. Not only are physical homes and lives being lost, but their entire identity, which is tied into the land, continues to be targeted for erasure. Offshore drilling violates and infringes on the rights of Indigenous People and the federal government must ensure that it has free, prior, and informed consent - meaning consent that is given freely, by people fully informed of the consequences - before development can proceed.

Refineries, storage facilities, toxic waste sites, pipelines, and oil trains are poisoning neighborhoods. Children suffer debilitating asthma, loved ones die painful deaths, land is sinking, coastlines are eroding, and the seas are rising from relentless fossil fuel development. Enough is enough. The Earth is sacred and must be protected. We must reverse course with swift and meaningful action, starting with no new leases in the final Five Year Program, and instead investing resources toward clean, justly-sourced renewable energy. People and ecosystems are enduring tremendous, unnecessary harm while the fossil fuel industry grows wealthier. These injustices must be addressed by issuing a final Five Year Program with no new leases.

Thank you,

1000 Grandmothers for Future Generations
307 Bryn Mawr Ave
350 Bay Area Action
350 Conejo / San Fernando Valley
350 Hawaii
350 Humboldt
350 New Orleans
350 Pensacola
350.org
350Juneau
350Kishwaukee
5 Gyres Institute
A Beautiful Future Climate Healing Chorus
Action Center on Race & the Economy
AFGE Local 704
Alabama Interfaith Power & Light
Alaska Marine Conservation Council
Alliance for Affordable Energy
American Friends Service Committee
Animals Are Sentient Beings Inc
Another Gulf Is Possible Collaborative
Assateague Coastal Trust

Association of Young Americans
Azul
Ban SUP (Single Use Plastics)
Bayou City Waterkeeper
Bergen County Green Party
Berks Gas Truth
Better Path Coalition
Beyond Plastics
Black Warrior Riverkeeper
Blue Ridge Environmental Defense League
Bold Alliance
Boston Catholic Climate Movement
Bronx Climate Justice North
Catalyst Miami
Center for Biological Diversity
Center for Environmental Health
Central Jersey Coalition Against Endless War
Change Begins With ME (Indivisible)
Change the Chamber
Change the Chamber*Lobby for Climate
Chapel Hill Organization for Clean Energy
Chesapeake Climate Action Network
Chispa LCV
Chispa Texas
CLEO Institute
Climate and Community Project
Climate Crisis Policy
Coalition to Protect New York
Common Ground Relief
Cook Inletkeeper
Creation Justice Ministries
Dayenu: A Jewish Call to Climate Action
Democratic Socialists of America - Knoxville, TN
Divest Oregon: Reinvest in a Fossil Free Future
Don't Waste Arizona
Eco-Justice Collaborative
Elders Climate Action
Elected Officials to Protect America
Endangered Species Coalition
Environmental Defense Center
Extinction Rebellion San Francisco Bay Area
Extinction Rebellion, New Orleans
Fairbanks Climate Action Coalition
Family Farm Defenders

Food & Water Watch
Fox Valley Citizens for Peace & Justice
FracTracker Alliance
FreshWater Accountability Project
Fridays For Future Jaffrey, NH
Fridays for Future U.S.
Friends of the Earth U.S.
GASP
Greater New Orleans Interfaith Climate Coalition
Greening Greenfield
Greenpeace USA
Healthy Gulf
Healthy Ocean Coalition
Hispanic Access Foundation
Honor the Earth
Humboldt Unitarian Universalist Fellowship's Climate Action Campaign
Indian Point Safe Energy Coalition
Indigenous Climate Action
Indigenous Lifeways
Indivisible Resistance San Diego
Indivisible Ventura
Inland Ocean Coalition
Interfaith Oceans
International Marine Mammal Project of Earth Island Institute
Iowa CCI
Kachemak Bay Conservation Society
Kentucky interfaith power and light
Lexington Climate Action Network
Long Beach Alliance for Clean Energy
Louisiana Bucket Brigade
Lower Ninth Ward Neighborhood Association
Lower Ninth Ward Street Library
Marine Conservation Institute
Milwaukee Riverkeeper
Ministry for Earth New Orleans
Mission Blue
Mothers Out Front California
Movement Rights
Movement Training Network
MoveOn.org Hoboken
Mystic Aquarium
Native Movement
Native Organizers Alliance
Nature Coast Conservation, Inc

Nicargua Center for Community Action
North Bronx Racial Justice
Nuclear Information and Resource Service
NY4WHALES
Occupy Bergen County
Ocean Alliance
Ocean Conservation Research
Oceanic Preservation Society
Oil and Gas Action Network
Omega and Brenda Wilson
Operation HomeCare, Inc.
Our Revolution Michigan
Our Revolution Ohio
PA Jewish Earth Alliance
Peace Action WI
People for a Healthy Environment
People's Climate Movement-Capital Region
Personal support of community letter
Physicians for Social Responsibility Pennsylvania
Plastic Pollution Coalition
Port Arthur Community Action Network
Progress Florida
Progressive Democrats of America
Protect All Children's Environment
PSR-Arizona Chapter
Putnam Progressives
Resist the Pipeline
Resource Renewal Institute
Revolving Door Project
Rio Mapacho Waterkeeper
RISE St. James
san antonio bay estuarine waterkeeper
Schools for Climate Action
SEED of SW NM
Seven Circles Foundation
Sierra Club Alaska
Sisters of St. Dominic of Blauvelt, New York
SoCal 350 Climate Action
Society of Native Nations
Solar Wind Works
SOMA Action
South Asian Fund For Education Scholarship and Training Inc
Southeast Alaska Conservation Council
SouthWings

Stand.earth
Stop the Algonquin Pipeline Expansion (SAPE)
Sunflower Alliance
Surfrider Foundation
Susitna River Coalition
Sustainable Medina County
Taproot Earth
Terra Advocati
Texas Campaign for the Environment
The ALERT Project
The Consortia
The Enviro Show
The Farmworker Association of Florida
The Last Plastic Straw
The People's Justice Council
The Rachel Carson Council
Three Rivers Waterkeeper
Tidelines Institute
Turtle Island Restoration Network
Turtle Island Restoration Network
Unitarian Universalist Advocacy Network of Illinois
Unitarian Universalists for Social Justice
Unite North Metro Denver
UU FaithAction NJ
Wall of Women
Waterkeepers Chesapeake
Waterspirit
Waterway Advocates
Women's Environment and Development Organization (WEDO)
Yarra Riverkeeper