

Staff Report 107

PROPOSED ACTION:

Consider adopting a resolution to oppose a November 20, 2025, Department of the Interior order titled “[Unleashing American Offshore Energy](#)” that directs the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management to develop a National Outer Continental Shelf Oil and Gas Leasing Program that opens federal waters off the coast of California, and elsewhere, to new offshore oil and gas development.

BACKGROUND:

On November 20, 2025, the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management released its [11th National Outer Continental Shelf Oil and Gas Leasing Program](#), proposing 34 oil and gas lease sales in federal waters. This includes six lease areas that stretch across the entire California coast and over 20 lease sales off the coast of Alaska. The release of this Leasing Program initiates a 60-day public comment period that closes on January 23, 2026. The California Natural Resources Agency is collaborating with departments on a comment letter on behalf of the State of California.

Governor Newsom issued an immediate response to the proposal to open California’s coast to offshore oil drilling, expressing strong opposition and committing to using “every tool at our disposal to protect our coastline.” California congressional leaders held a press conference to oppose opening the California coast to new offshore oil and gas development, emphasizing the catastrophic damage to the economy, environment, and coastal communities. Representative Jared Huffman stated, “This is not just a little bit of offshore drilling. This is the entire California coast, every inch of Alaska, even the Gulf of Mexico. Basically, everywhere Big Oil has been salivating to drill for decades.”

The Commission has exclusive jurisdiction over the use of ungranted tide and submerged lands owned by the state and the beds of navigable rivers, streams, lakes, bays, estuaries, inlets, and straits, and holds these lands in trust for the people of California. This jurisdiction includes leasing authority on tide and submerged lands for improvements that serve Outer Continental Shelf operations.

The Commission's mission is to provide the people of California with effective stewardship of the lands, waterways, and resources entrusted to its care based on the principles of equity, sustainability, and resiliency, through preservation, restoration, enhancement, responsible economic development, and the promotion of public access. The Commission has exercised its stewardship by supporting a ban on new offshore oil and gas leasing in federal waters off the coast of California, Oregon, and Washington for decades. In 2017, the Commission adopted a Resolution [opposing a Presidential Executive Order called "Implementing an America-First Offshore Energy Strategy"](#) that would have opened the California coast to offshore oil development, and, in 2016, [adopted a resolution](#) supporting the federal government's prohibition of new oil and gas leasing in the Outer Continental Shelf offshore California.

Consistent with the Commission's history of opposing new Outer Continental Shelf leasing and consistent with California's commitment to phase out offshore oil and gas development, staff recommends that the Commission oppose the Department of the Interior order titled "Unleashing American Offshore Energy" to reinforce its commitment to transitioning to a clean energy future and to re-express its opposition to new offshore oil and gas development off the California coast.

Further oil and gas development on the Outer Continental Shelf is unnecessary and is incompatible with the state's energy policies, transitioning energy markets, and vision for the future. The Commission has adopted numerous resolutions in past years opposing the resumption or expansion of oil and gas development in the Pacific Outer Continental Shelf area. The resolutions convey the Commission's view that additional offshore oil and gas leasing and development threatens the environment and the economy, prevents the nation from reducing its dependency on fossil fuels, contributes to greenhouse gas emissions, and adversely affects tourism and fisheries. In 1994, California enacted a Coastal Sanctuary Act that bans new offshore oil and gas development in state waters because of the unacceptably high risk of damage and disruption it poses to the marine environment.

The catastrophic harm from an offshore oil spill is well established and universally acknowledged. Even with the newest technology and best safety precautions, the magnitude of the harm is unacceptably high. The 1969 oil spill in Santa Barbara County resulted in devastating economic and environmental consequences to nearby communities and the marine environment. This catastrophe, from an oil and gas lease in the Pacific Outer Continental Shelf, resulted in the death of nearly 4,000 birds and many marine mammals, including sea lions and elephant seals;

suspension of commercial fishing; and a decline in tourism. The Deepwater Horizon spill in 2010 exposed the full force of an oil spill and the devastating effect on people, the ocean, and the coastal communities and their economies that sustained the impacts from the spill.

As a State, California stands to incur significant environmental and economic impacts from new offshore oil and gas development in the Pacific Outer Continental Shelf. What distinguishes California is that it is the fifth-largest economy in the world and home to two of the largest ports in the nation, the Ports of Long Beach and Los Angeles, which are a commercial gateway for the entire United States. California's coastline supports commerce, tourism, recreation, fishing, navigation, marine transportation, public access, and abundant marine life. California's marine transportation and commerce and coastal tourism and recreation support economies across the country. A thematic characteristic of California's economic drivers that contribute to the United States economy is that they are concentrated along the coastline.

OTHER PERTINENT INFORMATION:

In July 2025, the Commission, California Department of Fish and Wildlife, the California Natural Resources Agency, California Coastal Commission, and California Department of Conservation collaborated on a [comment letter](#) in response to a comment request on the preparation of the 11th Outer Continental Shelf Oil and Gas Leasing Program. The state collaboration letter requested that the Outer Continental Shelf planning areas offshore California be excluded from the new leasing program because of the high economic and environmental consequences.

EXHIBIT:

- A. Proposed resolution opposing a November 20, 2025, Department of the Interior order titled "Unleashing American Offshore Energy" that directs the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management to develop a National Outer Continental Shelf Oil and Gas Leasing Program that opens federal waters off the coast of California, and elsewhere, to new offshore oil and gas development.

RECOMMENDED ACTION:

It is recommended that the Commission:

Adopt a resolution in opposition to a November 20, 2025, Department of the Interior order titled "Unleashing American Offshore Energy" that directs the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management to develop a National Outer Continental Shelf Oil and Gas Leasing Program that opens federal waters off the coast of California, and elsewhere, to new offshore oil and gas development.

Exhibit A

RESOLUTION BY THE CALIFORNIA STATE LANDS COMMISSION OPPOSING A NOVEMBER 20, 2025, BUREAU OF OCEAN ENERGY MANAGEMENT NATIONAL OUTER CONTINENTAL SHELF OIL AND GAS LEASING PROGRAM THAT PROPOSES 34 LEASE SALES IN FEDERAL WATERS, INCLUDING SIX AREAS THAT STRETCH ACROSS THE ENTIRE CALIFORNIA COAST

WHEREAS, the California State Lands Commission has exclusive jurisdiction over 4 million acres of tide and submerged lands owned by the state, including approximately 120 navigable rivers and sloughs, 40 navigable lakes, tidal bays, inlets, straits, lagoons and estuaries, and along the state's over 1,100 miles of coastline and offshore islands from the mean high tide line to 3 nautical miles offshore; and

WHEREAS, the California State Lands Commission provides the people of California with effective stewardship of the lands, waterways, and resources entrusted to its care based on the principles of equity, sustainability, and resiliency, through preservation, restoration, enhancement, responsible economic development, and the promotion of public access; and

WHEREAS, California has not issued a new lease for offshore oil or gas development since 1968, and in 1994, enacted the California Coastal Sanctuary Act that bans new oil and gas leasing in state waters; and

WHEREAS, the California State Lands Commission manages oil, gas, and mineral resources in state waters and is leading two seminal offshore oil and gas decommissioning projects, Rincon Island and Platform Holly, that return over 16,000 thousand acres to the coastal sanctuary, and, late last year, facilitated the end of offshore oil and gas production at Platform Esther and its coming decommissioning, leaving only two remaining operational offshore platforms in state waters; and

WHEREAS, on November 20, 2025, the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management released its 11th National Outer Continental Shelf Oil and Gas Leasing Program, which proposes 34 potential lease sales in federal waters, including six lease areas that stretch across the entire California coast, as well as areas of the coast of Alaska and the Gulf; and

WHEREAS, the development of the 11th National Outer Continental Shelf Oil and Gas Leasing Program is a component of the U.S. Department of the Interior's implementation of a federal Executive Order titled *Unleashing American Energy*, which expresses that it is "the policy of the United States...to encourage energy exploration and program on federal lands and waters, including on the Outer Continental Shelf..."; and

WHEREAS, The northern and central California Outer Continental Shelf areas proposed for new oil and gas development lack any infrastructure that would be required for oil and gas development and, primarily in the central California area, contain several marine sanctuaries that encompass many thousands of square miles of marine habitat, submerged lands, and deep seafloor, including the Cordell Bank, Greater Farallones, Monterey Bay, and the Chumash Heritage National Marine Sanctuaries; and

WHEREAS, the state of California is the fifth-largest economy in the world and home to two of the largest ports in the nation, the ports of Long Beach and Los Angeles, which are a commercial gateway for the entire United States; and

WHEREAS, California's coastline supports commerce, tourism, recreation, fishing, navigation, marine transportation, public access, and abundant marine life, with its marine transportation, commerce, and tourism supporting economies across the country and internationally, most of which are key reasons why California is the fifth largest economy in the world; and

WHEREAS, California's coastal and offshore environment supports tourism and recreation that are essential to the state and national economy, and in 2021, California's marine economy supported over 26,000 businesses employing over 511,000 people, which accounted for \$26.7 billion in wages and \$51.3 billion in gross domestic product, and from 2010 to 2016, California's coastal economy gross domestic product outpaced the national average by nearly 2:1; and,

WHEREAS, the proposed 11th National Outer Continental Shelf Oil and Gas Leasing Program would expand offshore oil and gas development in federal waters enormously, including offshore of the entire California coast, on the erroneous basis that offshore oil and gas development will grow the economy, reduce dependence on foreign energy, and keep America as a global energy leader; and

WHEREAS, environmental protection and job creation go hand-in-hand and it is important to pursue clean, affordable, renewable energy development

because it is core and central to protecting against devastating oil spills, achieving energy independence, growing the economy, and enhancing national security; and

WHEREAS, the climate crisis worsens with each passing year, yet the 11th National Outer Continental Shelf Oil and Gas Leasing Program is rooted in an energy approach from a bygone era that would vastly expand the burning of fossil fuels that caused the climate crisis; and,

WHEREAS, the California State Lands Commission, mindful that California is among the most “climate-challenged” regions of North America, is committed to climate leadership and has taken strong stances on moving the state toward the just transition from fossil fuel dependence; and,

WHEREAS, the proposed 11th National Outer Continental Shelf Oil and Gas Leasing Program ignores a large body of scientific evidence showing that burning fossil fuels releases greenhouse gases that drive climate change and that investing in clean, renewable energy benefits the environment, economy, and public health; and

WHEREAS, The California State Lands Commission has adopted numerous resolutions in past years opposing the resumption or expansion of oil and gas development in the Outer Continental Shelf area, conveying the Commission and state of California's contention that additional offshore oil and gas leasing and development in the Pacific Outer Continental Shelf threatens the environment and the economy, prevents the nation from reducing its dependency on harmful fossil fuels, contributes to greenhouse gas emissions, accelerates climate change, and adversely affects tourism, fisheries, and California's ocean and marine environment; and

WHEREAS, on April 30, 2025, as the first step in the 11th National Outer Continental Shelf Oil and Gas Leasing Program development process, the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management published a request for information and comments in the Federal Register; and

WHEREAS, this past July, the California State Lands Commission contributed to a comment letter on behalf of the Governor of California and the Secretary of the Natural Resources Agency that urged the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management to remove the three Outer Continental Shelf planning areas along California's coast from inclusion in the new leasing program owing to a clear and consistent decades long bipartisan consensus, based on data, science,

and experience, against new offshore oil and gas development because of the peril it poses to the economy and environment; now therefore, be it

RESOLVED BY THE CALIFORNIA STATE LANDS COMMISSION that it opposes a November 20, 2025, Bureau of Ocean Energy Management National Outer Continental Shelf Oil and Gas Leasing Program that proposes 34 lease sales in federal waters, including six areas that stretch across the entire California coast; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Commission's Executive Officer transmits copies of this resolution to the President and Vice President of the United States, to the Governor of California, and to each Senator and Representative from California in the United States Congress, and that the Commission's Executive Officer work with the California Natural Resources Agency, and others, as necessary on coordinated comments on behalf of the state of California.