

March 4, 2019

The Honorable Ken Helm
Energy and Environment, Chair
900 Court St. NE, H-490
Salem, OR 97301

RE: Support Senate Bill 256, Offshore Oil and Gas Drilling

Dear Representative Helm and Energy and Environment Committee Members:

On behalf of Oceana and our more than 22,000 Oregon members and supporters, we are writing in support of Senate Bill 256 that will protect coastal communities and ocean resources from the risks of offshore oil and gas development. Oregon's Pacific Ocean is a place of wonder and beauty, and it supports important tourism, fishing, and recreation opportunities that Oregonians want and need. The potentially irreversible effects of oil pollution on marine ecosystems and dependent economies do not warrant the questionable, short-term economic benefits that might be gained from offshore oil and gas development off the Oregon coast.

The State of Oregon has long recognized the importance of our coast, the great value of protecting a healthy ocean ecosystem, and the importance of managing for renewable resources over nonrenewable extraction. To that end, Governor Brown recently issued Executive Order 18-28, making it the state's policy to oppose the exploration and production of oil and gas off the Oregon coast as well as any associated infrastructure that would facilitate oil and gas activities. Current Oregon law prohibiting the exploration, development or production of oil and gas in Oregon's territorial sea is set to expire in January 2020. SB 256 will establish and affirm a durable legal safeguard that protects our coast from risky offshore exploration and drilling.

Over the past year a groundswell of opposition to offshore oil and gas drilling has risen from Oregon coastal communities, businesses¹, ports, and elected officials.² Residents and businesses in Oregon and across the country are speaking up to protect our coast in response to the largest potential number of offshore oil and gas lease sales in U.S. history. In January 2018, the Department of the Interior announced plans to open nearly all U.S. federal waters to offshore drilling activities. The draft five-year program (2019-2024) for oil and gas development on the Outer Continental Shelf (OCS) would open the Pacific Ocean to offshore oil and gas drilling, with lease sales off Oregon and Washington beginning in January 2021.

We cannot overemphasize the risks of offshore oil and gas exploration and development. Offshore oil and gas activities—such as high-intensity seismic airgun surveys, drilling operations, and increased ship traffic—would threaten marine and coastal wildlife, including endangered and

¹ Business Alliance for Protecting the Pacific Coast, see: <https://defendthepacific.org/>

² Resolutions, letters from elected officials, ports, etc. available at: <https://usa.oceana.org/pacific-drilling>.

protected species like Southern Resident killer whales and Chinook salmon that migrate to and feed off our coast. Developing offshore oil and gas would require the construction of platforms, offshore and onshore pipelines, and other support infrastructure likely to significantly harm coastal resources. Development of offshore oil and gas would also contribute to climate change and ocean acidification, further threatening our coastal and marine ecosystems.

Risking Oregon's clean coast economy for very little offshore oil and gas would be a shortsighted and permanent mistake. It is estimated that Oregon's entire supply of undiscovered economically recoverable offshore oil and gas would only meet domestic oil demand for roughly eight days and gas demand for roughly seven days, at current national consumption rates (attached). Whereas, damage from an oil spill could impact communities, the local economy, and ocean wildlife for decades.

Scientists have documented and definitively proven the harmful ecological impacts from disturbances associated with offshore oil and gas development,ⁱ the many chemical compounds associated with drilling operations that exert toxic effects on fish and wildlife,^{ii,iii} the fact that once released, contaminants persist in the environment,^{iv} and that response and mitigation technologies are often inadequate.^v Even beyond catastrophic spills like the *Exxon Valdez* and *Deepwater Horizon*, minor spills can lead to "chronic toxicity" in the marine environment with "sublethal effects" including "[i]mpairment of feeding mechanisms, growth rates, development rates, energetics, reproductive output, recruitment rates, and increased susceptibility to disease."^{vi}

Like many Oregonians, we oppose federal efforts that put Oregon's treasured coastal and marine resources at risk. The environmental risks are far from justified, and local communities will be asked to shoulder the burden. Please pass SB 256 to protect our ocean and communities from offshore oil and gas drilling.

Sincerely,



Ben Enticknap
Pacific Campaign Manager and Senior Scientist



Mariel Combs
Pacific Senior Counsel

Attached: Oceana 2018. Oregon's Clean Coast Economy. National report and methodology available:
<https://usa.oceana.org/publications/reports/clean-coast-economy>

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- ⁱ Peterson, C. H., Rice, S. D., Short, J. W., Esler, D., Bodkin, J. L., Ballachey, B. E., and Irons, D. B. 2003. Emergence of ecosystem based toxicology: Long term consequences of the Exxon Valdez oil spill. *Science*, 302:2082-2086.
- ⁱⁱ Carls, M.C., Rice, S.D., and Hose, J.E. 1999. Sensitivity of fish embryos to weathered crude oil: Part I. Low-level exposure during incubation causes malformations, genetic damage and mortality in larval Pacific herring (*Clupea pallasii*). *Environ. Toxicol Chem* 18: 481-493.
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- ^{iv} Burns, K. A., Garrity, S. D., Jorissen, D., MacPherson, J., Stoelting, M., Tierney, J., and Yelle-Simmons, L. 1994. The Galeta oil spill. II. Unexpected persistence of oil trapped in mangrove sediments. *Estuarine Coast. Shelf Sci.* 38:349-364.
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- ^v Fingas, M. 2004. Dispersants, salinity and Prince William Sound. Prince William Sound Regional Citizens' Advisory Council Report No. 955.431.041201. Prince William Sound Regional Citizens' Advisory Council, Anchorage, Alaska.
- ^{vi} National Research Council, *Oil in the Sea III: Inputs, Fates, and Effects* (2003). The National Academies Press, Washington, D.C., www.nap.edu

Oregon's Clean Coast Economy



Offshore drilling threatens
NEARLY 39,000 JOBS
and roughly
\$1.9 BILLION IN GDP
in Oregon for only

8 DAYS'-WORTH OF OIL
and
7 DAYS'-WORTH OF GAS

The Oregon coast is a major draw for both tourists and locals – lined with rugged bluffs, secluded beaches and scenic towns that offer breathtaking views of the Pacific Ocean. The vibrant coastal environment supports seaside activities with everything from pristine state parks and historic light houses to popular kiting, kayaking and surfing spots. Wildlife sightings are common on the offshore rocks, reefs and islands that dot the Oregon coast, which are important for puffins, harbor seals, California sea lions and pelicans. Gray whales can be seen spouting during their annual migrations. Oregon's clean ocean ecosystem helps drive the coastal economy, in large part through its thriving recreational and commercial fishing industries, which produce substantial catches of Dungeness crab, pink shrimp, Dover sole, rockfish, sablefish and salmon. Not only coastal fishers rely on healthy oceans. Prized recreational fish, like steelhead and salmon, which migrate from the ocean back to freshwater streams need clean waters to survive.

What's at Risk?

New offshore drilling and exploration proposals pose a direct threat to coastal tourism and other local businesses that depend on a healthy and clean marine environment.

FISHING, TOURISM & RECREATION

along Oregon's coast:

SUPPORT

**38,868
JOBS**

GENERATE

**\$1.9 BILLION
IN GDP**



A Bad Deal for Oregon

Risking Oregon's clean coast economy for very little offshore oil and gas would be a shortsighted and permanent mistake. Based on resources that are economically feasible to extract, Oregon's entire supply of undiscovered economically recoverable offshore oil and gas would only meet domestic oil demand for roughly eight days and gas demand for roughly seven days, at current national consumption rates.

A catastrophic spill like the 1969 Santa Barbara blowout off California is too great a risk to Oregon's healthy ocean resources and thriving coastal economies. That disaster, combined with the Refugio Beach spill of 2015 and chronic leaks from decades of everyday oil rig and pipeline activities, have released more than 4 million gallons of oil into the Pacific Ocean. Oil spills in the Pacific have affected at least 935 square miles of ocean, an area over six times the size of Portland. Communities along the Pacific have felt the devastation caused by spreading slicks and the lasting consequences, which include substantial economic hardships from lost fishing and beachgoing opportunities, human health impacts and disturbing effects on marine ecosystems.

Currently, 27 oil platforms stand off the coast of California. The expansion of offshore drilling in the Pacific would further increase the risk of a spill. Offshore drilling for oil and gas is a dirty and dangerous venture that threatens abundant Pacific Ocean resources, which bring in consistent revenue for Oregon year after year. Oil and gas are finite resources; when the oil runs out, so do the jobs.

TAKE ACTION

Oppose New Offshore Drilling

History has taught us — when we drill, we spill. Help protect our oceans by stopping the expansion of offshore drilling and exploration.

The time to act is now. We must protect our coast, living ocean resources and local economies from the threat of expanded offshore drilling.

For sources and methodology, please visit:
[Oceana.org/CleanCoastEconomy](https://oceana.org/CleanCoastEconomy)

[#ProtectOurCoast](https://twitter.com/ProtectOurCoast)

Off Oregon's coast, the economically recoverable

OIL & GAS

resources would only meet demand for roughly

8 DAYS

and

7 DAYS

respectively.

IT'S NOT WORTH IT.

