

\* Alaska Wilderness League \* Greenpeace \* Sierra Club \*

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[Press conference images available here.](#)

**BP Oil Disaster 5 Years Later, Lessons Unheeded**  
***Push for New Offshore Drilling Ignores Risks***

**WASHINGTON, DC--** At an event on Capitol Hill today, Senator Edward J. Markey (D-Mass.), joined offshore drilling experts, scientists and affected locals to highlight the lingering effects of the Gulf oil spill and the looming risks posed by a lack of new safety regulations, plans for new offshore drilling, and the growing threat of climate disruption.

**"The BP spill happened five years ago, but the next offshore oil disaster is still just one mistake away because the oil companies have fought putting the strongest possible protections on the books. We shouldn't even be talking about potentially opening up our East Coast to drilling when oil companies still haven't learned the lessons from the BP spill and when safe, clean energy options like wind and tidal energy could power a new generation of American jobs," said Senator Markey.**

"The BP blowout in 2010 and the ensuing and ongoing devastating impacts are just part of the overall disaster that the oil and gas industry has caused in the Gulf of Mexico region over a period of decades. The industry has destroyed hundreds of square miles of sensitive wetlands, while daily, and often unreported, leaks and spills pose serious threats to our fisheries, wildlife and natural habitat," **said Jonathan Henderson, who documents oil and gas pollution for the Gulf Restoration Network.**

Despite the fact that adequate safety regulations have still not been put in place, the Obama administration is moving ahead with a proposed plan to open significant new expanses of America's coastline to oil and gas drilling. The 2017-2022 Outer Continental Shelf Oil and Gas Leasing Program proposes three areas for leasing in Alaska, including the Beaufort and Chukchi Seas, and two areas in the Atlantic, stretching from Virginia to Georgia.

"If a spill such as the Deepwater Horizon BP spill occurred in the Arctic Ocean, our ability to put food on our tables would be severely impacted. Arctic coastal communities rely heavily on marine mammals to feed our families and we have a spiritual connection with these animals. Our way of life depends on a healthy environment and would be jeopardized by oil

spills in the Arctic Ocean," **said John Chase, a resident of Kotzebue, Alaska and actor in Big Miracle.**

"It would be a tragedy if a spill or blowout happened in the Arctic or Atlantic. But the infrastructure also inflicts daily degradation on lands, waters, and wildlife, from the added roads, bloated ports, and associated mess. This is why the East Coast and the Arctic Ocean should stay off-limits to oil drilling. Let's fossilize fossil fuel; ramping up a clean energy future is where the discussion must center," **said Carl Safina, ecologist, author, founding president of The Safina Center.**

Cleaner energy alternatives, such as offshore wind, have tremendous potential along the Atlantic coast. Developing these resources could provide more energy than offshore oil and gas and create more jobs than offshore drilling, without the risks of oil spills or climate pollution.

"The science is clear that in order to avoid the worst consequences of climate disruption--consequences already being felt by many coastal communities-- we must leave these dirty fuels in the ground," **said Athan Manuel, director of Lands Protection for the Sierra Club's Our Wild America campaign.** "The Obama administration should revise its offshore drilling plans to avoid undermining other climate progress."

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