

For immediate release

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Frontline Communities to Obama: No New Offshore Drilling

Over one million comments delivered against offshore drilling over a 90-day period to the Obama Administration

Washington, DC June 16, 2016 – Today marks the closing of the 90-day comment period for the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (BOEM) proposed 2017-2022 Outer Continental Shelf Oil and Gas Leasing Program. During this time, more than one million comments from frontline communities, concerned citizens, and organizations from all over the United States were collected thanking BOEM for protecting the Atlantic Ocean and calling on it to extend that protection to the Arctic Ocean and the Gulf of Mexico – the two regions left vulnerable to oil and gas drilling in this plan.

Echoing the coastal communities in the affected regions and in those more than one million comments to the proposed offshore leasing program, we call on President Obama to:

- (1) Direct Secretary Jewell to not authorize any new offshore leasing in the Gulf of Mexico or the Arctic Ocean;
- (2) Permanently protect the Arctic and Atlantic Oceans as well as the Gulf of Mexico from any future oil and gas exploration; and,
- (3) Propose and enact a plan to transition coastal communities to a sustainable, renewable energy economy.

Frontline community leaders said:

Cherri Foytlin, Bold Louisiana, Rayne, LA:

"President Barack Obama did not build the altar to which our children are now sacrificed. He did not create the fire that sickens our communities, corrupts our liberties, and denies us the basic authority of self-determination, of the human right to clean water and air, of just economy - no, he did not create it. Yet the remedy falls to him, as to whether the fuel will be provided to maintain these injustices. As mothers, as citizens, as humans, we call upon him now: Remove our chains, Mr. President. End the torment that this destructive industry uses to sear the bones of our future. It is time to break-free. End the leases, invest in our liberation and allow your legacy to ascend the ashes."

Earl Kingik, an Iñupiaq hunter and whaling captain, Point Hope, AK:

“I am a subsistence hunter from Point Hope and have been my whole life. I teach the younger generations that the ocean is our garden and we must respect what it provides for us. I am very concerned about how our whales and walrus and seals will react to oil and gas exploration and development in the Arctic Ocean, in our garden. I fear that if we allow development activities to take place, our animals will be harmed and our future generations will not be able to subsist off of the land. There should be no further lease sales in the Arctic Ocean to protect our garden and our way of life.”

Emilia Aguinaga, Director of Programs, Gulf Coast Center for Law and Policy, New Orleans, LA:

“I oppose the federal government’s 5 year plan for new offshore oil and gas leasing. As written, the plan continues to use the Gulf of Mexico as a human and environmental sacrifice zone, exacerbating social inequity and imperiling the future of the region’s rich cultures and traditions.”

Esau Sinnok, 18-year Old Climate Leader, Shishmaref, AK:

“My home, the island of Shishmaref, Alaska is losing 3-4 meters of land each year from climate change caused by the burning of fossil fuels. At this rate, we will see the island erode completely in 25-30 years if there is no help. I hope that President Obama and other world leaders will hear my message and rise to the challenge to change how we use energy as a nation, because it is not just a political issue to me. It’s my future.”

Jayeeshia Dutta, Radical Arts and Healing Collective, New Orleans, LA:

“We live in one of the most beautiful, culturally rich, historically significant, and ecologically unique regions of not only this country, but the entire world. We are committed to defending the communities, protecting the cultures and restoring the ecosystems of our region. President Obama has a historic opportunity to stand alongside us to ensure the incredible Gulf of Mexico continues to provide life and livelihoods in our coastal communities for generations to come.”

Kyle Horton, Physician, NC:

“As both a proud Atlantic beach community resident and as someone personally connected to the tragic loss of life in the Deepwater Horizon catastrophe, I am proud to speak out alongside friends from the Arctic and Gulf regions to tell the Obama administration to Keep It In the Ground. The simple fact is that if offshore drilling wasn't right for the health, safety and economic development of the Atlantic coast; it's not right for the Gulf and Arctic either.”

Ole Lake, Tribal Liaison, Alaska Wilderness League, Hooper Bay/Anchorage, AK:

“I’m Yupik and the Inupiat culture and traditions in Barrow are similar to the Yupik culture and traditions, as we share the same oceans, seas and natural resources. The sea mammals, fish and birds migrate along the pathways running up north and back south through our great country of Alaska. We all talk to each other about the movement of the animals. Alaska cultures and traditions evolve and sustain themselves with the natural resources all from the air, waters and lands of Alaska. These traditions need healthy environments to sustain healthy people. Oil and gas development in the Arctic Ocean threatens these traditions for coastal residents throughout the state of Alaska.”

Monique Verdin, Citizen of the United Houma Nation, St. Bernard Parish, LA:

"When the oil tides rolled in, back in 2010, coastal communities across the Gulf witnessed the devastating gambles taken to harvest fossil fuels off our shores and in our waters. We are on the front lines, witnessing the side effects of extreme extraction, ranging from rising sea levels to tainted waters to more violent and unpredictable weather. That's why we are calling on President Obama to refuse any new leases in his offshore drilling plan and protect the Alaskan Arctic and Gulf South waters, wildlife and ways of life. It is time we break free from fossil fuels and build the just transition to renewable and sustainable solutions.”

Robert Thompson, Chairman, Resisting Environmental Destruction on Indigenous Lands (REDOIL), Kaktovik, AK:

“I am Iñupiat, my name is Robert Thompson. I live in Kaktovik, Alaska. I am opposed to opening the offshore area of the Arctic to leasing for oil exploitation. There is no ability to clean up oil spills in the Arctic. I have asked if oil can be cleaned up from beneath the ice, in the dark, in blizzards in -40 degree weather; no one has answered in the affirmative. The people of California, Florida, and people on the East Coast are opposed to oil drilling where they live; their areas have been removed from consideration for drilling. I ask that we, the Iñupiat, who live in the proposed leasing area, be given the same consideration.”