

Sanctuary Advisory Council

CHANNEL ISLANDS NATIONAL MARINE SANCTUARY

January 31, 2018

Ms. Kelly Hammerle, Manager
National OCS Oil and Gas Leasing Program
Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (VAM-LD)
45600 Woodland Road
Sterling, VA 20166-9216

Dear Ms. Hammerle:

I write to you on behalf of the Channel Islands National Marine Sanctuary (CINMS) Advisory Council to respond to the call for public comments on the Five-Year Outer Continental Shelf (OCS) Draft Proposed Program (DPP) for 2019 to 2024, as now proposed by the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (BOEM) and referenced in Federal Register Volume 83, Number 5 (Monday, January 8, 2018), Pages 829-834, FR Doc No: 2018-00083. The CINMS Advisory Council's 21-member body brings together community members and representatives from government agencies to advise CINMS and NOAA's Office of National Marine Sanctuaries. **This letter constitutes the CINMS Advisory Council's comments and describes our opposition to the inclusion of any portion of the Pacific Region that could adversely impact national marine sanctuaries in the 2019-2024 DPP, most notably the CINMS and surrounding Santa Barbara Channel Region.**¹ In addition, we request that BOEM provide additional public hearings in coastal areas, where communities will be directly impacted by new oil and gas development, and add an additional 60 days to the comment period.

National marine sanctuaries are designated as special places for species close to extinction, sensitive habitats, shipwrecks, and maritime heritage artifacts. Many valuable commercial and recreational activities, such as fishing, shipping, and tourism occur in the CINMS, the waters of which are also culturally and spiritually significant to indigenous Chumash people. A comprehensive ecosystem-based management approach is used to promote long-term conservation of sanctuary waters, wildlife, habitats, and cultural resources, while allowing compatible human uses. The CINMS's remote, isolated position at the confluence of two major ocean currents creates remarkable biodiversity. The mingling of cool, nutrient-rich waters from the north with warm currents from the south forms a dynamic transition zone that is home to a myriad of sea life from

Members/Alternates

Tourism

Andrea Mills / <vacant>

Business

Michael Cohen / Capt. Kip Louttit

Non-Consumptive Recreation

Ben Pitterle / Tony Knight

Commercial Fishing

Stephanie Mutz / John Hoadley

Recreational Fishing

Capt. David Bacon / Merit McCrea

Education

<vacant> / Cliff Rodrigues

Research

Dr. Robert Warner / Dr. Mark Steele

Conservation

Kristen Hislop / Greg Helms

Public At-Large 1

Phyllis Grifman / Judy Willens

Public At-Large 2

Rich Block / Eric Kett

Chumash Community

Luhui Isha Ward / Alicia Cordero

National Marine Fisheries Service

<vacant>

National Park Service

Russell Galipeau / <vacant>

U.S. Coast Guard

CDR Lushan Hannah / CDR Jason Brand

Bureau of Ocean Energy Management

Donna Schroeder / <vacant>

U.S. Department of Defense

Walter Schobel / Claudia Makeyev

California Department of Fish & Game

Dr. Julia Coates / John Ugoretz

California Resources Agency

Jenn Eckerle / Paige Berube

California Coastal Commission

Dr. Jonna Engel / Molly Troup

County of Santa Barbara

Dianne Black / Errin Briggs

County of Ventura

Danielle Tarr / <vacant>

Channel Islands National Marine Sanctuary

Chris Mobley / Mike Murray [non-voting]

Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary

Paul Michel / Karen Grimmer [non-voting]

Greater Farallones National Marine Sanctuary

Maria Brown / Brian Johnson [non-voting]

Chair: Phyllis Grifman

Vice Chair: Dianne Black

Secretary: Michael Cohen

¹ The opinions expressed in this letter do not reflect the views of Federal agencies represented on the sanctuary advisory council. Additionally, the council is an advisory body to the sanctuary superintendent, and as such the opinions and findings of this letter do not necessarily reflect the position of the sanctuary and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration".

microscopic plankton to blue whales. Additionally, the area to the north of the Channel Islands that extends to the mainland supports high biodiversity and is considered an important ecosystem.²

The last new oil and gas leases in California waters were issued in 1984. Since that time, the intensity of use in the Santa Barbara Channel has shifted away from new oil and gas development, with the area now utilized by increased commercial shipping, tourism and recreation, and a thriving marine environment that includes an increased population of endangered whales. New leases would inevitably lead to conflicts. For example, the seismic impacts from oil and gas exploration and development can harm marine life, and routine operations can lead to ship strikes on whales and impacts to fishing, recreation, and tourism.

National marine sanctuaries and adjacent waters provide benefits to our local communities and economies, including fishing, whale watching, boating, and diving. These activities have a significant, positive socio-economic impact on our region. A NOAA study of the economic impacts of recreational fishing in the CINMS revealed that from 2010-2012, the three-year average economic impact just from marine recreational fishing in the CINMS amounted to "more than \$31.4 million in output, \$18.7 million in value added, \$11.0 million in income and more than 200 jobs."³ Similarly, a NOAA economic study of commercial fishing found that "landings from CINMS generated \$27,275,539 in harvest revenue, \$45,396,225 in output, \$30,894,393 in value added, \$27,836,552 in total income, and 659 full and part-time jobs across five counties."⁴ Furthermore, the CINMS benefits businesses that offer visitor opportunities for non-consumptive enjoyment, such as sailing, kayaking, sightseeing, and diving. As a driver for tourism in our area, the CINMS also supports businesses such as hotels and restaurants, transportation and other tourism amenities in Santa Barbara and Ventura counties. Additionally, the Channel Islands National Park contributes \$31.9 million and 315 jobs annually to the local economy.⁵

The 1969 Santa Barbara Channel oil spill, and the more recent 2015 Refugio Beach oil spill, had devastating impacts on the marine environment, tourism and recreation, and the economy of the Santa Barbara Channel Region. While the Refugio Beach oil spill originated on the Gaviota Coast, oil traveled throughout the Santa Barbara Channel and south along the California coast, negatively impacting marine protected areas and causing beach closures in multiple counties.⁶ As we respond to the DPP, the Natural Resources Damage Assessment and restoration efforts are still underway. The Refugio Beach oil spill reminded us of the potential for oil spills that originate outside of the CINMS to enter its boundaries. In addition, spills that do not reach the CINMS may still cause injury to mobile marine species that freely travel across the sanctuary's boundary, such as fishes, birds, and marine mammals.

² NOAA. 2005. A biogeographic assessment of the Channel Islands National Marine Sanctuary: a review of boundary expansion concepts for NOAA's National Marine Sanctuary Program. NOAA Technical Memorandum NOS NCCOS 21.

³ Leeworthy, V.R. and D. Schwarzmann. 2015. Economic impact of the recreational fisheries in local county economies in the Channel Islands National Marine Sanctuary 2010, 2011, 2012. NOAA's Office of National Marine Sanctuaries Conservation Science Division. Available at: <http://sanctuaries.noaa.gov/science/socioeconomic/channelislands/pdfs/cinms-rec-report.pdf>

⁴ Leeworthy, V.R., D. Jerome, K. Schueler. 2014. Economic impact of the commercial fisheries in local county economies from catch in the Channel Islands National Marine Sanctuary 2010, 2011, 2012. NOAA's Office of National Marine Sanctuaries Conservation Science Division. Available at: http://sanctuaries.noaa.gov/science/socioeconomic/channelislands/pdfs/cinms_fishing_report.pdf

⁵ 2016 National Park Visitor Spending Effects. *Economic Contributions to Local Communities, States, and the Nation*. Natural Resource Report NPS/NRSS/EQD/NRR—2017/1421. Catherine Cullinane Thomas and Lynne Koontz.

⁶ Refugio Beach Oil Spill Natural Resource Damage Assessment Update. November 2015.

The CINMS Advisory Council understands that national marine sanctuary regulations prohibit oil and gas development within the CINMS.⁷ However, we remain concerned about the potential for leases to be issued and development to occur in waters surrounding the CINMS and other sanctuaries because, again as we saw with the Refugio Beach oil spill, oil can enter and injure sanctuary resources. As the DPP recognizes (Ch. 7.1.2), species listed under the Endangered Species Act in and near the Pacific OCS “could be impacted by potential oil- and gas-related activities.” Exclusion of the Pacific Region is consistent with several federal and state actions taken to protect this ecologically important and sensitive region, such as the creation of national marine sanctuaries and monuments, federal and state marine protected areas, and state and local resolutions opposing offshore oil. The 2017-2022 Proposed Final Program appropriately excluded the Pacific OCS.⁸

In addition to the direct impact of oil spills on the CINMS, our Advisory Council has also expressed great concern for the impacts that fossil fuels have on our climate and oceans, such as ocean acidification and sea level rise.⁹ Increased fossil fuel production will exacerbate these issues that are already greatly impacting marine resources along the West Coast and in sanctuaries.¹⁰ Additionally, the expansion of offshore oil and gas production will deepen our dependence on fossil fuels and delay efforts to transition towards alternative, clean energy sources.

On behalf of the CINMS Advisory Council, I submit these comments in response to BOEM’s call for comments on the 5-year OCS DPP.

Sincerely,



Phyllis Grifman, Chair
Sanctuary Advisory Council

enclosure: Council voting record on adoption of this letter and approval for its submittal.

⁷ 15 CFR Part 922 – National Marine Sanctuary Program Regulations, § 922.72.

⁸ 2017-2022 Outer Continental Shelf Oil and Gas Leasing Proposed Final Program. November 2016. Bureau of Ocean Energy Management.

⁹ Conservation Working Group, Channel Islands National Marine Sanctuary Advisory Council. Ocean acidification and the Channel Islands National Marine Sanctuary: Cause, effect, and response. Adopted by the CINMS Advisory Council September 19, 2008. Prepared by S. Polefka and J. Forgie, Environmental Defense Center, Santa Barbara, California.

¹⁰ McCoy, S.J., N.A. Kamenos, P. Cheng, T.J. Wootton, and C.A. Pfister. 2018. A mineralogical record of ocean change: Decadal and centennial patterns in the California mussel. *Global Change Biology*. 10.1111/gcb.14013

ENCLOSURE: CINMS Advisory Council voting record for this letter, adopted January 26, 2018.

<u>Council Seat</u>	<u>Name of voting representative</u>	<u>Vote</u> <i>(or Absent)</i>
Tourism	Andrea Mills (member)	YES
Business	Michael Cohen (member)	YES
Non-Consumptive Recreation	Ben Pitterle (member)	YES
Commercial Fishing	John Hoadley (alternate)	ABSTAIN
Recreational Fishing	Capt. David Bacon (member)	NO
Education	Cliff Rodrigues (alternate)	YES
Research	Dr. Robert Warner (member)	YES
Conservation	Kristen Hislop (member)	YES
Public At-Large1	Phyllis Grifman (member)	YES
Public At-Large2	Rich Block (member)	YES
Chumash Community	Alicia Cordero (alternate)	YES
National Marine Fisheries Service	<i>Vacant</i>	<i>Absent</i>
National Park Service	Russell Galipeau (member)	ABSTAIN
U.S. Coast Guard	CDR Lushan Hannah (member) CDR Jason Brand (alternate)	<i>Absent</i>
Bureau of Ocean Energy Management	Donna Schroeder (member)	<i>Absent</i>
U.S. Department of Defense	Walter Schobel (member)	ABSTAIN
California Dept. of Fish & Wildlife	Dr. Julia Coates (member) John Ugoretz (alternate)	<i>Absent</i>
California Resources Agency	Jenn Eckerle (member)	YES
California Coastal Commission	Dr. Jonna Engel (member) Molly Troup (alternate)	<i>Absent</i>
County of Santa Barbara	Errin Briggs (alternate)	YES
County of Ventura	Danielle Tarr (member)	<i>Absent</i>

TOTALS: YES: 11 NO: 1 ABSTAIN: 3