

Protect our Coasts

Ban Oil and Gas Drilling— Support AJR 3



In August, President Bush removed the federal legislative moratorium of 1981 that has been crucial to protecting California's most treasured beaches and coastal waters from offshore oil and gas drilling. Today, our beautiful coasts and beaches are in danger



Chronicle / Kurt Rogers

In 1982, after an oil spill in Santa Barbara that covered 800 square miles of oceans and 150 miles of coastline with oil, Congress instituted an offshore drilling moratorium for California and beyond. Congress has voted to reauthorize this moratorium as part of the Interior Appropriations Bill every year since then. However during the summer of 2008, oil companies used the high cost of oil to pressure Congress into repealing the 27-year old moratorium. In January 2009, President Bush went further, and proposed opening up six million acres of California's coast to drilling, including areas from Mendocino Counties and from San Luis Obispo south to San Diego.

Offshore Drilling Damages the Environment and Wildlife

Despite safety valves designed to prevent blowouts like the one in Santa Barbara forty years ago, offshore drilling continues to cause significant environmental damage. Between 1981 and 2005 there have been 187 large oil spills on the Outer Continental shelf. Numerous studies confirm that oil in the environment can cause death in the short-term as well as impair the feeding mechanisms, growth rates, development rates, and reproductive rates of wildlife and increase their susceptibility to disease in the long-term. The 1969 spill in Santa Barbara killed over 3,600 seabirds, and covered innumerable marine animals.

Oil spills are not the only source of environmental damage from offshore drilling. The sound waves from specialized air guns used to map geological formations under the ocean floor in the search for oil can kill whales and other marine mammals and rupture the swim bladders of fish. Oil exploration and drilling also releases tons of toxins—180,000 gallons per well on average—such as benzene and arsenic and heavy metals such as mercury and lead that can poison fish, coral, and marine plants. Above the water, an average exploration well releases 50 tons of nitrogen oxides, 13 tons of carbon monoxide, 6 tons of sulfur dioxide, and 5 tons of volatile organic compounds into the air per year, causing air pollution and contributing to global warming.

Oil companies say drilling is safer and more advanced than in the past, and that big spills today are unlikely. But in 2007, 58,000 gallons of oil spilled along the San Francisco Bay. It hurt and killed hundreds of birds and sea creatures, disrupted the delicate coastal ecosystem, and shut down fisheries for weeks. It cost between \$60-70 million to clean up.

Offshore Drilling Damages Coastal Economies

The pollution from offshore drilling damages not just our health and environment but can also hurt the economy. For a state with a tourism industry that is heavily reliant on our postcard perfect coastlines, this is no small matter. In 2006, the tourism industry drove \$93.8 billion and 928,700 jobs of business in California. Commercial fishing brought in almost \$130 million, and recreational fishing brought over \$2 billion and 19,903 jobs. A spill during the tourism season could have economic repercussions that far outweigh any economic benefits of more oil. Offshore drilling targets in California include coastal areas like Santa Monica, Pt. Reyes, Monterey and Santa Barbara, all hot tourist spots.

Reinstate the federal moratorium – sign AJR 3

We need to reinstate the federal moratorium on offshore drilling, and immediately pass a state resolution that will protect California's coasts. Right now, Secretary of the Interior Ken Salazar has delayed former President Bush's proposal to sell leases in areas that have been off limits, and has ordered for more research to be done on any areas being considered for oil leases. However, both Secretary Salazar and President Obama have said they are open to increased offshore drilling.

AJR 3 (Nava) is a joint resolution that requests Congress to reinstate the federal offshore oil and gas leasing moratorium for the 2009 fiscal year and beyond. It also resolves that the Legislature of the State of California oppose the proposed expansion of oil and gas drilling off the Pacific Coast, and any federal energy policies and legislation that would weaken California's legitimate role in energy sitting decisions due to the threat posed by these policies to California's coastal and ocean dependent tourism and fishing economies. **Vote "yes" on AJR 3.**

Additionally, Secretary Salazar will be holding four public hearings on offshore drilling, one of which will be in San Francisco on April 16th. We are asking you to **attend the public hearing on offshore drilling, and say "no" to expanded drilling off the coast of California.**

Please contact Gina Goodhill at Environment California for more information on the public hearing, or the AJR 3.