



STATE OF WASHINGTON  
Office of the Governor

February 5, 2018

The Honorable Ryan Zinke, Secretary  
U.S. Department of the Interior  
1849 C Street NW  
Washington, DC 20240

Dear Secretary Zinke:

On behalf of the State of Washington, I write today to formally express my opposition to the proposed oil and gas leasing off our state's coast, and the Pacific Coast more broadly, as part of the *2019-2024 Draft Proposed National Outer Continental Shelf Oil and Gas Leasing Program* issued by your department last month. Although I oppose the totality of this proposal, which exacerbates our nation's carbon pollution at a time when we should be developing and deploying 21<sup>st</sup> century clean energy technologies, I implore you to at least exclude the waters off Washington's coasts to protect the thousands of American workers and multi-billion dollar industries dependent on the health of our coastal economy.

As you know, I have previously registered my strong opposition to this dangerous and misguided proposal in letters dated January 11, 2018, and August 17, 2017, as well as during our phone conversation on January 12, 2018. In each of those communications, I have stated unequivocally that opening the Pacific Coast to new oil and gas drilling for the first time in decades poses grave danger to our state's unique recreation, tourism, shipping, military and fishing industries, threatening thousands of jobs and billions of dollars in revenue generated each year. Since your draft proposal was released, local, state and federal leaders from across our state — including both Democrats and Republicans — have raised their voices in unified opposition to this ill-conceived proposal, which carries untold environmental and economic risks. Further, Washington state law clearly prohibits oil and gas exploration, production and drilling in our state's marine waters.<sup>1</sup> I urge you in no uncertain terms to respect our local voices, our state's laws, and our hard-working families by removing Washington's coasts from any subsequent plan your department may propose to expand oil and gas leasing in this country.

I would like to take this opportunity to reiterate my request to meet with you in-person to discuss this important topic, and to again extend an invitation for you to visit Washington state and the Pacific Coast, where you will see firsthand how critical our coastlines are to the economic security and vitality of Washington's industries, ports, tribes, fisheries and military communities.

It is imperative that you understand exactly what is at stake in Washington state should your department fail to respect our local voices. Washington is home to one of the most robust tourism and recreation economic sectors in the country, which is highly dependent on healthy marine and coastal ecosystems. Our coastal recreation industry alone generates over \$480 million annually and

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<sup>1</sup> Revised Code of Washington (RCW) 43.143.010 and RCE 90.58.160.



The Honorable Ryan Zinke

February 5, 2018

Page 2


supports nearly 5,000 jobs, with Washington residents making more than 4 million trips to the Pacific Coast each year. We also have one of the country's largest fishing and shellfishing industries, which have an annual economic impact of \$1.5 billion and directly support thousands of jobs in seafood processing and commercial, recreational and tribal fishing. It is these workers, their families and their businesses who would be most at-risk financially should an explosion or catastrophic spill — such as the 2010 Deepwater Horizon blowout in the Gulf of Mexico — take place in Washington's coastal waters.

As I have already communicated to you, our state is all too familiar with the significant adverse environmental impacts that arise from oil spills. In 1988, the *Nestucca* oil barge accident near Grays Harbor resulted in the pollution of 225,000 gallons of oil 110 miles off Washington's coastline, while the 1991 *Tenyo Maru* collision with a freighter vessel resulted in a devastating oil spill 20 miles west of Washington's Cape Flattery, affecting the coastal waters of Washington state, Canada and our tribal communities. As a result of the serious environmental and economic impacts of oil spills, the federal government canceled a pending lease sale in 1990 and subsequently designated the Olympic Coast National Marine Sanctuary in 1994, which prohibited leasing and development for oil and gas extraction. Now is not the time to turn back the clock on our state's exemption from new federal oil and gas lease sales.

During our phone conversation last month, you shared that your decision to remove Florida's coastlines from the draft proposal had been informed, in part, by bipartisan opposition from that state's congressional delegation. As a former member of Congress, I appreciate your commitment to heeding the recommendations of a state's federal representatives. That is why I am enclosing a similar letter signed by every member of Washington's congressional delegation representing our coastal communities, urging on a bipartisan basis the removal of Washington's coasts from the draft proposal. In the interest of treating every state equally, I hope you will afford our federal representatives — along with those of Oregon and California — the same deference as you did the Florida delegation.

Given the serious risks it poses to our state's economy, the lack of interest among oil and gas companies to even pursue new leasing off our coasts, and the tremendous level of local opposition that has arisen to our inclusion in your draft proposal, it would be both reckless and disrespectful for the federal government to now unilaterally put our coastal waters at risk. I respectfully request that these areas be removed from any subsequent proposal your department issues. I appreciate your consideration of our state's views, and I ask again that you afford our state, and all states, an equitable opportunity to have our voices heard. Thank you.

Very truly yours,



Jay Inslee  
Governor

Enclosure

cc: Members of the Washington State Congressional Delegation  
Dr. Walter Cruickshank, Acting Director, Bureau of Ocean Energy Management