

**Resolution of the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary Advisory Council
in Response to the Call for Comments on the Draft Proposed Five-Year Outer Continental
Shelf Offshore Oil and Gas Leasing Program for 2019 through 2024**

Motion passed unanimously – February 20, 2018

1. Whereas, the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary harbors a tropical marine ecosystem unique in the continental United States, including one of the world’s largest barrier coral reefs,
2. Whereas, this State and National environmental treasure is widely enjoyed and relied upon by residents and three million annual visitors to the region including recreational divers and dive tourism operators, recreational and commercial fishers and boaters of all kinds,
3. Whereas, these natural resources are the marine equivalent of tropical rain forests in that they support high levels of biological diversity, are fragile and easily susceptible to damage from human activities, and possess high value to human beings if properly conserved,
4. Whereas, more than 33,000 jobs in the Florida Keys are supported by ocean recreation and tourism, accounting for 58% of the local economy and \$2.3 billion in annual sales,
5. Whereas, ongoing degradation of coral reefs and other marine habitats threatens to undermine the Florida Keys ecosystem and the economy which it supports,
6. Whereas, the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary was established in 1990 by an act of Congress which expressly prohibited mineral and hydrocarbon leasing, exploration, development, and production in the Sanctuary’s waters,
7. Whereas, offshore oil and gas development can cause substantial environmental impacts, including: (a) onshore damage to infrastructure, (b) water pollution from drilling muds and the water brought up from a well with oil and gas (called “produced waters”), (c) noise from seismic surveys, (d) air pollution, and (e) oil spills,
8. Whereas, the BP Deepwater Horizon disaster in the Gulf of Mexico in 2010 is clear evidence of the threats associated with offshore drilling, including costing the lives of 11 people, devastating coastal economies and local livelihoods, and killing countless marine animals, as well as continuing to harm marine life,
9. Whereas, even without direct impacts the threat of the Deepwater Horizon oil spill impacting the marine and coastal environment of the Florida Keys was grave enough to drive a significant amount of tourism and related business away from the region,
10. Whereas, the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary Advisory Council is hereby responding to the call for comments on the Draft Proposed Five-Year Outer Continental Shelf (OCS) Leasing Program (DPP) for 2019 through 2024 as now proposed by the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (BOEM) as referenced in Federal Register Volume 83, Number 5 (Monday, January 8, 2018) Notices, Pages 829-834, FR Doc No: 2018-00083, and

11. Whereas, the proposed offshore drilling plan threatens the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary and the entire Florida coastal economy, which relies on healthy ecosystems, fisheries, and tourism, and feeds myriad industries that depend on a clean coastline.

Now, therefore, be it resolved that the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary Advisory Council opposes the inclusion of any portion of the Eastern Gulf of Mexico OCS Planning Area in BOEM's Draft Proposed Five-Year OCS Leasing Program for 2019 through 2024 and requests additional public comment opportunities and hearings, including one in the Florida Keys, for community input given that the existing opportunities are inadequate.

The council is an advisory body to the sanctuary superintendent. The opinions and finding of this publication do not necessarily reflect the position of the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, the Florida Department of Environmental Protection, or the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission