



OFFSHORE DRILLING TALKING POINTS

In 1981, Congress protected America's coasts, beaches, and marine ecosystems from the threats of oil and gas development when they adopted the Outer Continental Shelf (OCS) Moratorium. The moratorium prevents the leasing of coastal waters for the purpose of fossil fuel development. Every year since then Congress has renewed the moratorium on new oil and gas development off the Atlantic and Pacific coasts as well as Bristol Bay Alaska. In 1990, President George H.W. Bush authored an additional level of protection which deferred new leasing until 2002 which Bill Clinton then extended in 1998.

On July 14th, 2008, President George Bush lifted the White House ban on offshore drilling, citing a need to wean America off its dependence on foreign oil. Bush was then joined by several notable members of congress to lift federal moratorium on offshore drilling.

The Surfrider Foundation is opposed to any such action, either as its own initiative or as part of a larger energy package, and has issued the following statement:

“The Surfrider Foundation is opposed to any attempt to lift the federal moratorium on offshore oil drilling. Our nation’s oceans, waves and beaches are vital recreational, economic and ecological treasures that will be polluted by an increase in offshore oil drilling. Instead of advocating for transient and environmentally harmful ways to meet America’s oil needs, we should seek a comprehensive and environmentally sustainable energy plan that includes energy conservation.”

Whereas the general population has historically been opposed to offshore drilling, recent increases in the cost of crude oil and gasoline has resulted in a corresponding increase in public support for the issue.

According to a July 2008 poll conducted by CNN, approximately 70% of Americans are now in favor of expanding offshore drilling. [1]

Even in California, a state which is renowned for leading the country in environmentalism, a recent poll found that support for offshore drilling increased from 39% in 2003 to 51% in 2008. [2]

It is widely thought that the increase in public support for offshore drilling is due largely to the belief that expanded offshore drilling will result in, a) a reduction in America's reliance on foreign oil, and b) reduction in the cost of gas and oil.

In order to better educate both our members and the general public on some of the misconceptions relating to these beliefs, the Surfrider Foundation has gathered the following messaging points to help clarify the issue, and hopefully drive support for maintaining the federal moratorium on offshore drilling.

MYTH: By expanding offshore drilling, America will be able to wean itself off foreign oil.

- The United States is far and away the world's largest consumer of oil, churning through 20.7 million barrels a day [3]. By contrast, the United States only produces 8.3 million barrels a day [4]. According to Robert Kaufmann, Director of the Center for Energy and Environmental Studies at Boston University, even under the most optimistic scenario, the United States would only produce an additional 2 and 4 million barrels a day [5], leaving an import deficit of approximately 8.4 million barrels a day. As such, ***even after lifting the federal moratorium on offshore drilling, the United States would still need to import 40% of its daily oil consumption.***
- According to a 2003 Congressional report, increasing offshore production would not displace enough imports to reduce U.S. reliance on foreign oil. A decline in oil imports overall would take drastic reductions in the demand for oil, particularly in the U.S. transportation system, or much more U.S. production than projected [6].
- The term "foreign oil" typically conjures up oil that is sourced from Middle East or OPEC nations. In actuality, ***the United States imports nearly half its oil from non-OPEC nations.*** Many people are surprised to find out that ***America's derives approximately 35% of its oil from North America.*** In fact ***last year, the United States' two largest oil suppliers were Canada and Mexico.***

MYTH: By lifting the federal moratorium on offshore drilling, Americans will finally get some relief at the pump.

- According to a February 2007 report by the U.S. Department of Energy, ***any effect on prices or supplies from drilling on the OCS would not be seen for at least 10 years, if ever.*** According the report, in all likelihood, it simply is not economically feasible to drill on the OCS [7].
- This finding was corroborated by a June 2008 report by the Washington DC based think tank Center for Economic and Policy Research, which found: ***"In conclusion, if Congress had continued to increase fuel efficiency standards over the last 22 years, we would currently have more than sixteen times the savings in oil consumption than what Senator McCain's plan promises to accomplish in 20 years by drilling offshore in protected areas— and a proportionately larger impact on gas prices"*** [8]

MYTH: Lifting the federal moratorium on offshore drilling is critical in order to ensure our nation's long-term energy needs.

- ***Even under the best case scenario, America's offshore oil reserves would provide us only 920 days, or 18 months, supply of oil at our current rate of consumption*** [9].

MYTH: Advances in drilling technology has made offshore drilling safer for the environment.

- Should the federal moratorium on new offshore drilling be lifted, one of the first areas to be targeted would be along the U.S. Gulf Coast and up the Atlantic seaboard, which are both highly prone to powerful tropical storms and hurricanes. ***This was illustrated in 2005 when Hurricane Katrina roared through the Gulf of Mexico, destroying over 100 platforms and causing the largest oil spill in the United States since the Exxon Valdez.*** [10].
- ***Shortly after Katrina roared through, Hurricane Rita rolled through the Gulf of Mexico destroying an additional 11 platforms – bringing a combined total (between Katrina and Rita) 124 platforms and 741,400 gallons of oil spilled*** directly into the waters of the Gulf of Mexico[11].
- Despite the above information, on July 30, 2008, ***Secretary of Energy Samuel Bodman*** went on the national television and lied, saying ***“When we had Katrina and Rita, the two worst hurricanes in recent memory, we didn’t have one case where oil or gas was spilled into the environment”*** [12] [13]

MYTH: Offshore drilling only poses a threat to the environment if there is a spill.

- Offshore drilling poses a significant threat to marine environments in many ways, including the introduction of drilling fluid additives into the environment, which harm or kill fish and other marine life [14].
- **Drilling muds routinely discharge toxic metals such as lead, mercury and cadmium. Produced water contains dangerous levels of radioactive materials and carcinogens such as benzene, toluene and arsenic [15].**
- **Marine researchers believe that the sonar used in offshore oil exploration has caused injury and death to whales [16].**

MYTH: The economic impacts of offshore drilling outweigh the risks

- In most instances, risk assessments of offshore drilling fail to take into consideration the potential risk to our beaches and coastlines in terms of their functioning as economic engines. In California alone, beaches contributed an estimated \$14 billion in direct revenue to the state. When extrapolated out to include indirect or induced benefits, **California beaches contributed \$73 billion dollars to the federal economy in 1998 [17].**
- According to a 2005 study conducted by Florida Atlantic University and the Florida Department of Environmental Protection, Bureau of Beach, **beach tourism contributed \$37.2 billion in revenue to the state of Florida in 2004 [18].**

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