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July 31, 2014

Ms. Kelly Hammerle,
Five Year Program Manager
Bureau of Ocean Energy Management
381 Elden Street - HM-3120
Herndon, Virginia 20170

Re: 2017–2022 OCS Oil & Gas Leasing Program

Ms. Hammerle,

The Surfrider Foundation is a grassroots environmental organization dedicated to the protection and enjoyment of the world's oceans, waves, and beaches for all people. On behalf of our 90 chapters and 250,000 supporters, activists, and members in the United States, the Surfrider Foundation submits the following comments on the 2017–2022 OCS Oil & Gas Leasing Program.

The Surfrider Foundation supports the protection of the Atlantic Coast, Pacific Coast, Eastern Gulf of Mexico, and Alaska from any oil & gas lease sales in the 2017 – 2022 OCS Oil & Gas Program.

The expansion of offshore drilling in U.S. waters would cause enormous impacts to our nation's coastal and marine ecosystems. Oil and gas development in new areas would require seismic surveys, drilling operations, oil transport by tankers, and the installation of platforms, pipelines, and other infrastructure. Collectively these activities would significantly damage both the environment and related economies and ways of life. Such offshore drilling expansion would also expose new regions of the country to the risk of a catastrophic oil spill.

A recent report by the National Ocean Economics Program concluded that recreation, coastal tourism, and commercial fishing – sectors that rely directly on the health of ocean ecosystems – generate billions of dollars for coastal states such as Florida, North Carolina, New Jersey, Massachusetts, California, Oregon, and Washington¹. Additional studies by the Surfrider Foundation and our partners to inform ocean planning efforts in Oregon² and Mid-Atlantic³ have documented the extensive public participation and economic impacts of non-

¹ <http://oceanomics.org/Market/ocean/oceanEcon.asp>

² http://www.surfrider.org/images/uploads/publications/OR_rec_study.pdf

³ http://midatlantic.surfrider.org/?page_id=39

consumptive ocean and coastal recreation. These uses depend on clean beaches and waters, abundant wildlife, and scenic viewsheds – all of which could be compromised by the expansion of offshore drilling. Accordingly, Surfrider urges you to protect regions of the U.S. that have not been exposed to offshore oil and gas development.

The Surfrider Foundation also believes that the development of the Five-Year Plan must include a comprehensive review and analysis of potential impacts to both the environment and coastal communities from drilling operations and large oil spills. This analysis should incorporate a cradle to grave assessment of the environmental impacts resulting from exploration, development, production, transportation, and end use of offshore oil and gas. Fully understanding the range of potential impacts of offshore oil and gas development is essential to making informed decisions concerning the future of our ocean and coastal ecosystems.

Finally, the Surfrider Foundation believes that the 2017–2022 OCS Oil and Gas Program needs to substantively consider the role that renewable energy and conservation can play meeting our nation’s future energy needs. Even under the best-case scenario, America’s offshore oil reserves would provide us only 18 months supply of oil at our current rate of consumption, underscoring the fact that we simply cannot drill our way to energy independence. For this reason, as well as the environmental and economic risks discussed above, our nation must seek a comprehensive and environmentally sustainable energy plan that prioritizes conservation and support for renewable energy technologies.

In summary, when preparing the 2017–2022 OCS Oil and Gas Program, we ask that you protect the Atlantic Coast, Pacific Coast, Eastern Gulf of Mexico and Alaska from any oil and gas exploration and development activities. We also ask that you undertake a robust analysis that adequately analyzes the cumulative impacts to both the environment and coastal communities from drilling operations and large oil spills, and considers alternatives to offshore drilling.

The Surfrider Foundation appreciates the opportunity to provide these comments on behalf of our 90 chapters our 250,000 supporters, activists, and members in the United States.

Sincerely,

Pete Stauffer
Ocean Program Manager
Surfrider Foundation