



# Offshore Oil Drilling

City Council  
January 22, 2026





# BOEM's Proposed 11<sup>th</sup> Program

In 2025, Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (BOEM) proposed six offshore lease sales for oil & gas exploration off the coast of California.



**November 13, 2025 City Council Meeting:**  
Council directed staff to bring a future agenda item for discussion.



# Capitola Municipal Code 17.96.090

- Onshore support facilities for offshore oil development are prohibited in Capitola.
- There is no approval pathway — voter or otherwise — for these facilities.
- Seabed mining is not explicitly addressed in current code.



# Commission on the Environment

- On January 21, Commission received a presentation from Save Our Shores.
- Presentation covered:
  - BOEM's current offshore oil and gas leasing program, and
  - Status of 27 coastal ordinances regulating or prohibiting onshore oil support facilities ("The Blue Wall").



# Regional Coordination

**November 18, 2025**

- Santa Cruz County and City of Santa Cruz executed an MOU and PSA with Save Our Shores.
- Purpose: coordinate and strengthen regional opposition to offshore drilling and seabed mining.





# SAVE OUR SHORES

## Guest Presentation

**Katie Thompson**, Executive Director  
(Aug 2024 – Present)

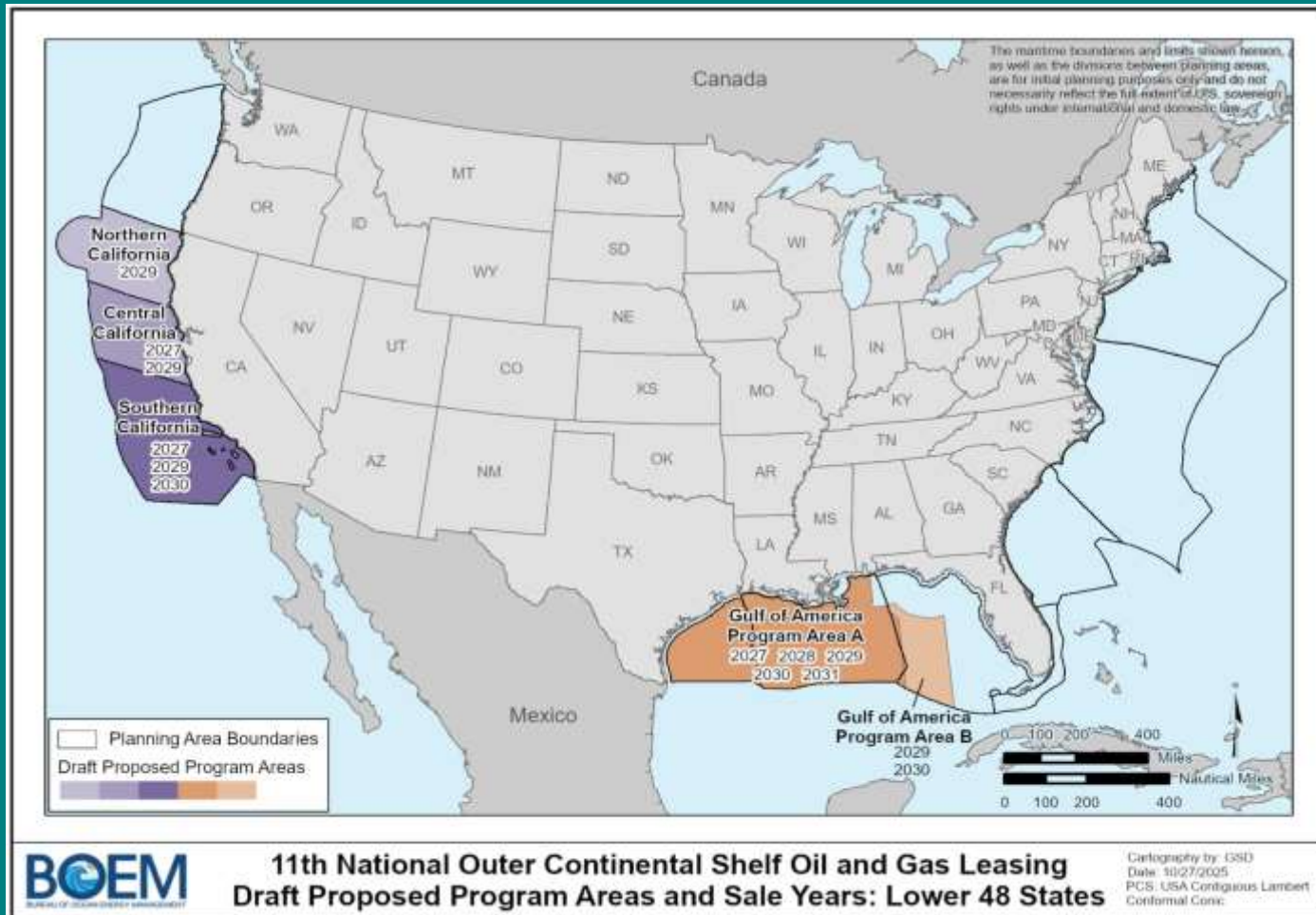
**Dan Haifley**, Former Director  
(Feb 1986 – Jan 1993)



# *The Blue Wall: onshore facilities for offshore oil ordinances*



Bureau of Ocean Energy Management has proposed six offshore oil lease sales off California, two off the Central Coast (Sonoma – Monterey Counties) in 2027 and 2029.





# *Plan contemplates potential drilling in national marine sanctuaries*

The 2025 [Federal Register Notice](#) for plan contains a link to a list of west coast areas excluded from consideration which says:

*“Pursuant to the July 14, 2008, Presidential Memorandum issued ...any national marine sanctuary that was designated as of July 14, 2008, is withdrawn from oil and gas leasing for a time without specific expiration.*

*Any NMS created or expanded after that date is not withdrawn from oil and gas leasing per se. Rules and regulations governing the designation and management of a specific national marine sanctuary may also restrict or prohibit certain activities within that sanctuary.”*

Monterey Bay NMS was expanded in November, 2008, and Greater Farallones and Cordell Bank NMSs were expanded in 2015.

## *Plan inconsistent with federal, state law*

### Federal:

- National Marine Sanctuaries Act
- Endangered Species Act
- Marine Mammal Protection Act
- National Environmental Quality Act
- Coastal Zone Management Act
- Clean Water Act
- Clean Air Act

### State:

- California Coastal Act
- Marine Life Protection Act
- SB 32, requiring statewide greenhouse gas emissions be cut to 40% below 1990 levels by 2030

# *Environmental impacts*

- Oil exploration/ seismic
- Drilling & processing
- Oil spills
- Onshore impacts
- Environmental justice
- Climate change



1969 Santa Barbara oil spill

*Public comments now being accepted on  
plan through January 23, 8:59 PM PST*

Go to [regulations.gov](https://www.regulations.gov)

Search BOEM-2025-0483

Click on Submit Comment

# *Some history*

- In 1980s, US Rep. Leon Panetta obtained annual moratoria on funding activities to support offshore oil.
- After a failed compromise, proposed moratorium lost by one vote in Appropriations Committee in 1985.
- This allowed plans to lease federal waters for offshore oil to proceed.



# *PROTECTING THE COAST AN INCH AT A TIME*

Frustrated, Santa Cruz City leaders formulated a local strategy.

In November 1985 82% of Santa Cruz City voters agreed to:

1. Subject zoning changes for onshore facilities for offshore oil to a vote of the people, and
2. Spend funds to spread the idea in California.

Save Our Shores was hired with Dan Haifley as coordinator.



He traveled the coast, engaging communities and local governments.

26 communities from San Diego to Humboldt passed laws, most by popular vote.

Marin County's ordinance, approved in 2020, made it 27.



# Onshore Oil Facilities Ordinances Map



# *Capitola's ordinance*

- Approved 5-0 in April 1987.
- Bans onshore facilities, no industrial space in city.
- Symbolic, not included in oil industry lawsuit.



## *Lawsuit against 13 ordinances*

- Western Oil and Gas Association (WOGA) lawsuit was filed against 13 communities – WOGA vs, Sonoma County, et al.
- Heard in 1987 by federal Judge Consuelo Marshall of Central District Court in California.
- Marshall ruled in favor of local governments; that decision was upheld by Appeals Court.



# *San Luis Obispo Test Case*



- In 1988, San Luis Obispo County law was tested when three permits - the San Miguel Project - went to the ballot.
- Shell Oil spent around twenty dollars per yes vote, according to the *San Luis Obispo Tribune*, and lost.

December 7, 1992, article in the  
*Oil & Gas Journal*:

*“Shell Oil Co. suspended plans to develop San Miguel oil field in the northern Santa Maria offshore basin after voters in San Luis Obispo County rejected an onshore facility in 1988.”*

After Shell’s loss, WOGA asked the Supreme Court to review the Appeals Court decision.

Supreme Court rejected that request in January 1992.



Platform Irene, off Point Conception

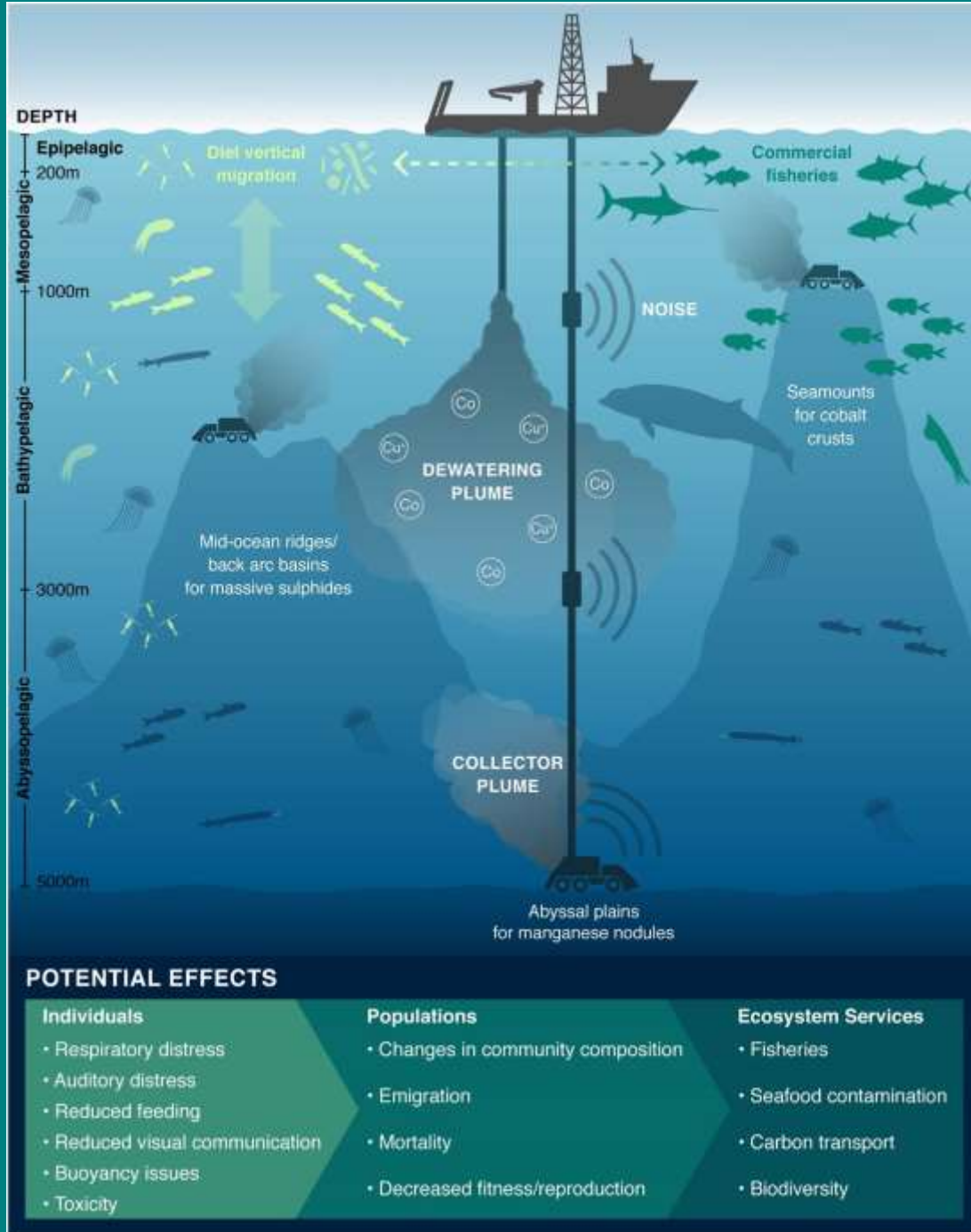
# *Fortifying the Blue Wall*

- Strengthen legal defensibility of existing laws.
- Add language to cover emerging threat of seabed mining, under separate BOEM lease and permit track.
- Add laws where they do not exist.
- *Save Our Shores asks Capitola to revise its ordinance.*



# *Progress with Santa Cruz*

- Currently reviewing Santa Cruz City and County ordinances
- Goals are to:
  1. Strengthen legal defensibility
  2. Include the new threat of seabed mining
- Seabed mining development will be under a separate federal plan
- Updating ordinances allows for reinforced protections against offshore oil and to be proactive against seabed mining



Environmental impacts of seabed mining. Image credit: Amanda Dillon





# Recommended Action

Authorize Mayor to submit a letter opposing the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management's proposed 11th National Outer Continental Shelf Oil & Gas Leasing Program.



For more information contact Katie Thompson,  
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[katie@saveourshores.org](mailto:katie@saveourshores.org).