

**CALIFORNIA COASTAL COMMISSION**

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January 31, 2012

The Honorable Doc Hastings  
Committee on Natural Resources, U.S. House of Representatives  
1324 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Congressman Hastings:

On behalf of the California Coastal Commission, I write in **opposition** to the proposed amendment to H.R. 3410 that would require new lease sales be offered in the Southern California Planning Area and exempt these activities from federal consistency review that is currently provided by the Coastal Zone Management Act (CZMA) (16 U.S.C. § 1456(c)).

The Coastal Commission implements California's federally approved Coastal Management Program and, as such, is the only California agency with regulatory authority under the CZMA over oil and gas leasing, exploration, development and production activities on the OCS. Our long history with offshore oil and gas activities makes clear that such development significantly threatens California's coastal environment and its multi-billion dollar tourism and non-oil industry economy. As a result, California's review of any potential new lease activities is critical to ensuring that such activities meet the coastal and marine protection standards mandated by state laws. These protections are paramount to numerous other economic benefits the state enjoys from having a healthy coast and ocean. Tourism – and its dependence on clean water and beaches for swimming, surfing, fishing, boating and other coastal uses --- is even more critical to the state's economy today given the significant impacts of the recession.

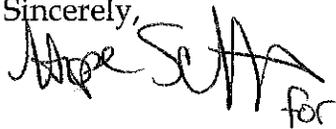
Accordingly, the Commission strongly opposes this effort to remove California's authority under the CZMA to review OCS leasing activities. The proposal to target one state and remove this authority under the CZMA is unprecedented. It is absolutely incompatible with the long-standing mandate of the CZMA that states should have a substantial role with respect to federal activities and permits that may affect a state's coastal resources.

In addition, the Commission has documented, in many previous communications, its concerns about new leasing. While the amendment language restricts leases to the use of existing structures or onshore based drilling, we maintain these concerns that new leases could have significant and far-reaching effects on marine and coastal wildlife,

wetlands, ocean and beach users, and coastal tourism. Activities that occur during oil and gas exploration, such as high-intensity geophysical seismic surveys, drilling operations, and increased ship traffic, all pose potential threats to marine life, including several endangered and protected species. In addition, onshore infrastructure impacts and daily operations would have significant adverse effects, including adverse impacts on water quality, commercial and recreational fishing, air quality, greenhouse gas emissions, agricultural lands and uses, recreation, wetlands, environmentally sensitive habitat areas, scenic vistas and archaeological resources.

For all these reasons, the Coastal Commission has consistently opposed new offshore oil and gas leasing for thirty-five years. Furthermore, we strongly oppose any attempts to rescind our federal consistency review authority over new lease sales. This change would put our state's coastal and marine resources in an unprecedented state of jeopardy. If you have any questions, please contact me at the above address.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Charles Lester", with the word "for" written below it.

Charles Lester, Executive Director

CC: Senator Dianne Feinstein  
Senator Barbara Boxer  
Congresswoman Lois Capps  
Congressman Jim Costa  
Congressman John Garamendi  
Congresswoman Grace Napolitano  
Congressman Tom McClintock  
Congressman Jeff Denham