

**Resolution of the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary Advisory Council**  
**Supporting Efforts to Protect Florida**  
**from Offshore Oil Drilling and Exploration**  
June 19, 2007

Whereas, Florida's coral reefs, mangroves, seagrasses, beaches, fisheries, endangered species, tourism and quality of life depend upon clean ocean waters. The impacts of drilling muds and spills caused by offshore oil development can be carried by great distances by the Gulf Loop Current onto Florida's coasts. Routine drilling muds release thousands of pounds of toxic chemicals into the environment, harm fish, corals and marine mammals, and place Florida at risk of a large or catastrophic spill, and

Whereas, Floridians and especially residents of the Florida Keys have been unified in their opposition to offshore oil drilling and exploration for many years, and

Whereas, the area south of 26 degrees North Latitude, approximately where Marco Island, Florida, lies, and all waters outside of Lease Sale 181, are under a Congressional moratorium for oil and natural gas exploration and development, thanks to years of past efforts, and

Whereas, the Congressional and a Presidential moratoria on offshore oil are now up for review, at a time when our coral reefs are endangered and need more, not less, protection to survive. The White House agreement with the State of Florida, that currently protects most of Lease Sale 181, a hotly contested area in the Gulf, expires this year, and

Whereas, the U.S. Interior Department released a new Five Year Plan for Oil and Gas Development and Exploration that undermines current protections for Florida's coral reefs. The current program runs through June 30, 2007. The next Five Year Plan would put a 4 million plus acre area on the auction block and proposed to rapidly make the west coast of Florida the most intensively-leased region of all currently-protected Outer Continental Shelf waters nationwide. In addition, it opens up the coast of Virginia and Alaska's fishery-rich Bristol Bay, and

Whereas, Florida Senators Mel Martinez (R) and Bill Nelson (D) sponsored legislation that Congress recently passed to protect coastal areas, but which opens up Lease Sale 181 to oil and natural gas drilling. The measure would not prevent development on roughly 700,000 acres in the Eastern Gulf of Mexico, and

Whereas, after years of being unified against drilling, Florida's congressional members seem more divided and indecisive on the issue than ever.

Now, therefore, the Sanctuary Advisory Council of the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary resolves as follows:

We support the strongest possible protection for Florida and other fragile marine environments from the impacts of offshore oil and gas exploration and development, including additional efforts to expand exclusionary zones, extension of Presidential and Congressional moratoria, and

defeat of legislation to open up Lease Sale 181 to offshore oil. We encourage our Florida Congressmen and Florida Governor Charles Crist to work in support of these goals.

We oppose the Department of the Interior's new 5 Year Plan and the legislation filed to remove natural gas from the moratoria. We oppose any new offshore oil and gas leasing, exploration, drilling activity and seismic inventories affecting Florida's coast and support new Congressional moratoria against offshore oil drilling near Florida and other fragile coastal areas.

We support a permanent cancellation of the 90 plus existing and active leases, some as close as 11 miles from our coast. Compensate the holders of those leases through rents due and royalty forgiveness for other current drilling activity. We support cancelling any activity in Lease Sale 181 and establishment of a buffer zone against drilling on Florida's east coast.

We resolve to request that the Superintendent forward this resolution to:

- \* Honorable Norm Dicks, Chairman, Subcommittee on Interior and Environment, Committee on Appropriations, B-308 Rayburn House Office Building, Washington, DC 20515
- \* Honorable Todd Tiahrt, Ranking Member, Subcommittee on Interior and Environment, Committee on Appropriations, 1016 Longworth House Office Building, Washington, DC 20515
- \* Representative Bill Young, 2407 Rayburn Building, Washington, DC 20515
- \* Representative Connie Mack, 115 Cannon House Office Building, Washington, DC 20515
- \* Representative Alan Boyd, 1227 Longworth House Office Building, Washington, DC 20515
- \* Honorable Senator Bill Nelson, 716 Senate Hart Office Building, Washington, DC 20510
- \* Honorable Senator Mel Martinez, 317 Hart Senate Office Building, Washington, DC 20510
- \* Honorable Representative Ileana Ros-Lehtinen, 2160 Rayburn Building, Washington, DC 20515
- \* Governor Charles Crist, The Capitol, Tallahassee, FL 32301
- \* Renee Orr, 5-Year Program Manager, Minerals Management Service (MS-4010), Room 3120, 381 Elden Street, Herndon, VA 20170.

Passed unanimously on this date: June 19, 2007.

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The Council is an advisory body to the Sanctuary Manager. The opinions and findings of this publication do not necessarily reflect the position of the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.