President Joseph R. Biden, Jr.
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Ave.
Washington, D.C. 20500

The Honorable Deb Haaland
Secretary
Department of the Interior
1849 C Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20240

September 6, 2023

Dear President Biden and Secretary Haaland,

On behalf of 204 organizations, we urge the administration to reject new offshore fossil fuel leases in the National Outer Continental Shelf (OCS) Oil and Gas Leasing Proposed Program for 2023-2028 (“Five-Year Program”). We must put an end to drilling for oil and gas in our ocean if we are to limit the worst impacts of climate change, protect the health of our most vulnerable communities, and safeguard our threatened marine wildlife. The Five-Year Program, scheduled for release in September, is the place to make this literal sea change.

New oil and gas leasing on the nation’s OCS in the upcoming Five-Year Program is a step backward on climate that we cannot afford. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) has found that any new fossil fuel development, including in our ocean, is incompatible with limiting global warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius; the International Energy Agency has similarly said new oil and gas fields are inconsistent with "net zero emissions" by 2050. Offshore lease sales lock in new production for decades, resulting in hundreds of millions of metric tons of CO2 emissions. By its own calculation, the Department of the Interior’s Five-Year Program as drafted would generate carbon emissions up to ten times the size of Alaska’s Willow project.

Expanded OCS oil and gas drilling would also perpetuate a legacy of harms to our coastal communities and wildlife. Researchers have found that particulate pollution from the combustion of fossil fuels is directly responsible for an estimated 350,000 deaths and $77 billion in health impacts annually, in the United States alone. Climate change will increase this health toll exponentially, as well as cause trillions of dollars in property damage. These tragic burdens are and will be disproportionately borne by some of our most vulnerable and disadvantaged populations, such as in the Gulf South. Every stage of offshore drilling has harmful impacts to marine life. From seismic blasting to oil spills, this dirty industry is a direct threat to ocean wildlife and the ecosystems that sustain them. If the administration is committed to championing
equity and environmental justice and to combatting the biodiversity crisis, it cannot maintain the practice of leasing our public waters to the highest bidders.

The administration should consider the upcoming Five-Year Program to be a critical opportunity. As part of the nation’s global climate commitment, the President has committed to cut carbon emissions fifty percent by 2030 (as well as net zero by 2050). The buildout of clean energy infrastructure that will be spurred by the recently-passed Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) and Bipartisan Infrastructure Act are predicted to lead to a 33 to 40 percent emissions reduction by 2030. A decision on your part to end new ocean oil and gas leasing would substantially contribute to closing the remaining 10 to 19 percent reduction gap. Conversely, however, continuing “business as usual” leasing policies would make this necessary task that much more difficult. As recent polling shows, the public strongly supports a marriage of transitioning to justly sourced renewable energy with ending any expansion of oil and gas drilling in our ocean.

More offshore leasing is as unnecessary for our energy security as it is disastrous for our climate and communities. The U.S. produces enough oil and gas that it far exceeds our domestic needs and is exported to other countries. Moreover, because of the lag time between lease issuance and production, an end to new leasing would not meaningfully affect offshore production levels for almost a decade. Over that time, experts expect oil demand to decline significantly due to federal and state policies encouraging renewable energy development, incentivizing the transition to electric vehicles, and placing stricter limits on carbon emissions from cars and trucks.

The most recent IPCC report is clear: what we do, or fail to do, now will determine whether we will face a livable or catastrophic climate in the decades ahead. The current administration has set the country on a bold new course toward climate solutions. We now ask for your leadership to maintain this course, to meet the IPCC’s challenge, and to issue the Five-Year Program with no new leasing.

Sincerely,

1000 Grandmothers for Future Generations
198 methods
350 Bay Area Action
350 Chicago
350 Colorado
350 Conejo / San Fernando Valley
350 Hawaii
350 Mass
350 Pensacola
350 Sacramento
350 Seattle
350 US
7 Directions of Service
Accelerate Neighborhood Climate Action
Action for the Climate Emergency (ACE)
Alabama Interfaith Power & Light
Alaska Community Action on Toxics
Alaska Wilderness League
American Friends Service Committee
Animal Welfare Institute
Animals Are Sentient Beings Inc
ARTivism Virginia
Azul
Bayou City Waterkeeper
Black Girl Environmentalist
Bold Alliance
Bronx Climate Justice North
Businesses for a Livable Climate
California Democratic Party Environmental Caucus
Call to Action Colorado
CASA
Cascadia Climate Action Now
CASE Citizens Alliance for a Sustainable Englewood
CatholicNetwork US
Center for Biological Diversity
Center for Oil and Gas Organizing
Chispa LCV
Chispa Texas, a program of LCV/LCVEF
Christians For The Mountains.org
CleanEarth4Kids.org
Climate Hawks Vote
CO Businesses for a Livable Climate
Coalition to Protect New York
Colorado Rising
Community for Sustainable Energy
Concerned Health Professionals of Pennsylvania
Connecticut Citizen Action Group
Conservation Voters of PA
Cook Inletkeeper
Creation Justice Ministries
Defend the Gulf
Defenders of Wildlife
Dogwood Alliance
Don't Waste Arizona
Earth Action, Inc.
Earth Ethics, Inc.
Earthjustice
Earthworks
Endangered Species Coalition
Environment America
Extinction Rebellion Delaware
Extinction Rebellion San Francisco Bay Area
Extinction Rebellion US
Food & Water Watch
For a Better Bayou
Fox Valley Citizens for Peace & Justice
FrackBustersNY
FracTracker Alliance
Fridays for Future US
Friends of the Earth US
Global Choices
Good Neighbor Steering Committee of Benicia
Greater New Orleans Housing Alliance
Green New Deal Network
Green New Deal Virginia
Greenpeace USA
Healthy Gulf
Healthy Ocean Coalition
Hispanic Access Foundation
I-70 Citizens Advisory Group
Idle No More SF Bay
Indigenous Environmental Network
Indivisible Ambassadors
Indivisible Sacramento
Indivisible San Francisco
Indivisible Yolo
Inland Ocean Coalition
Institute for Policy Studies Climate Policy Program
Interfaith Power & Light
International Marine Mammal Project of Earth Island Institute
Larimer Alliance for Health, Safety and Environment
League of Conservation Voters
Littleton Business Alliance
Maine Youth Action
Mayfair Park Neighborhood Association Board
Mental Health & Inclusion Ministries
Mid-Ohio Valley Climate Action
Mitzi Mayer Productions
Montbello Neighborhood Improvement Association
Movement Rights
National Ocean Protection Coalition
Native Movement
Natural Resources Defense Council
NC Council of Churches
NC Interfaith Power & Light
NC League of Conservation Voters
New Energy Economy
New Mexico Climate Justice
New York Progressive Action Network
Nicaragua Center for Community Action
North American Climate, Conservation and Environment(NACCE)
North Bronx Racial Justice
Nuclear Energy Information Service (NEIS)
NY4WHALES
Occupy Bergen County
Ocean Conservation Research
Ocean Defense Initiative
Oceana
Oil and Gas Action Network
Oil Change International
One Earth Sangha
OneUpAction International
Pacific Whale Foundation
Peace Action WI
Peoples Climate Movement - NY
Physicians for Social Responsibility Pennsylvania
Preserve Montgomery County VA
Progressives for Climate
Protect Our Water, Heritage, Rights
Public Citizen
Putnam Progressives
Puvunga Wetlands Protectors
RapidShift Network
Rise to Thrive
Rise Up WV
Sacramento Indivisible
San Joaquin Valley Democratic Club
San Luis Valley Ecosystem Council
Save EPA (former employees)
Scientist Rebellion, Turtle Island
Seattle Aquarium
SEE (Social Eco Education)
ShaleshockCNY
Sierra Club
Sisters of Mercy of the Americas Justice Team
Sisters of St. Dominic of Blauvelt, New York
Small Business Alliance
SoCal 350 Climate Action
SolaVida
SOMA Action
South Carolina Aquarium
South Seattle climate action network
Southeast Alaska Conservation Council
Southern Environmental Law Center
Southwest Organization for Sustainability
SouthWings
Spirit of the Sun, Inc.
Stand.earth
Sullivan Alliance for Sustainable Development
Sunrise Movement New Orleans
Surfrider Foundation
System Change Not Climate Change
Taproot Earth
Terra Advocati
Texas Campaign for the Environment
The Alaska Center
The Clean Air Coalition of WNY
The Enviro Show
The Green House Connection Center
The Mind’s Eye
The Ocean Project
The People’s Justice Council
The Phoenix Group
The Quantum Institute
The Rachel Carson Council
The Revolving Door Project
The Wilderness Society
Third Act Lawyers
Third Act Maine
Third Act Maryland
Third Act North Carolina Working Group
Third Act NYC
Third Act Virginia
Three Rivers Waterkeeper
Turtle Island Restoration Network
Unitarian Universalists for a Just Economic Community
Unitarian, Universalist, action of New Hampshire
Unite North Metro Denver
Urban Ocean Lab
Vermont Climate & Health Alliance
Vets for peace
Virginia Aquarium & Marine Science Center
Vote Climate
Wall of Women
Waterkeeper Alliance
Waterspirit
Western Slope Businesses for a Livable Climate
Wetlands Watch
WildEarth Guardians
Womxn from the Mountain
Working for Racial Equity
World Wildlife Fund
Zero Hour
Zonta Club of Fort Collins

CC:

The Honorable Brenda Mallory, White House Council on Environmental Quality
Liz Klein, Director, Bureau of Ocean Energy Management
John Podesta, Senior Advisor for Clean Energy Innovation and Implementation
Tommy Beaudreau, Deputy Secretary of the Interior
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