



HILARY S. FRANZ  
COMMISSIONER OF PUBLIC LANDS

February 15, 2018

The Honorable Ryan Zinke  
Secretary of the Interior

Dr. Walter Cruickshank  
Acting Director  
Bureau of Ocean Energy Management

U.S. Department of the Interior  
1849 C St. NW  
Washington, DC 20240

**Dear Secretary Zinke and Acting Director Cruickshank:**

As the elected Commissioner of Public Lands for Washington State, I am writing in strong opposition to the draft proposal to lease portions of the Pacific Region outer Continental Shelf for oil and gas drilling.

The people of Washington State did not ask for offshore drilling and do not want offshore drilling. Opening our waters to oil and gas drilling jeopardizes the economic and natural productivity of Washington's coast.

The Department of Natural Resources, which I lead, manages 2.6 million acres of state-owned aquatic lands. These include the submerged lands from the coast out to three miles, where federal jurisdiction begins.

As Commissioner of Public Lands, I must ensure that any use of state-owned aquatic lands is in the best interest of Washingtonians.

Given the danger offshore drilling poses to our environment and economy, I do not foresee how any proposal to use our aquatic lands to service offshore wells is in the best interest of Washington State.

This includes any pipelines, cables, or other oil and gas infrastructure that would cross state-owned aquatic lands.

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My duty is to ensure that any proposal for the use of state-owned aquatic lands will not impact the resources vital to the fish and wildlife that are dependent on them and the coastal communities that rely on them.

The track record of offshore drilling makes clear that catastrophic spills are a question of when, not if. Sadly, Washingtonians are no strangers to oil spills. Major spills in 1988 and 1991 unleashed hundreds of thousands of gallons of oil on our coast. And the 2010 industrial disaster at Deepwater Horizon demonstrated that oil and gas production remains highly dangerous.

A similar large-scale oil spill off our coast would do irreversible damage to our coastal communities whose livelihoods depend on a healthy marine environment.

Shellfish aquaculture in Washington generates \$150 million in annual income and employs more than 50,000 people. The Dungeness crab fishery generates an additional \$82 million annually.

Commercial fishing provides more than 3,800 jobs and \$117 million in income, and recreational fishing adds more than \$30 million to our coastal economies. These vital industries would be imperiled by oil spills, with significant and often irreversible impacts to aquatic lands and resources.

The federal government recognized the threat oil spills and other contamination from oil and gas production pose to Washington when it established the Olympic Coast National Marine Sanctuary to protect 3,188 square miles of marine and intertidal habitat in 1994 after oil spills contaminated our shorelines.


Four tribes also have millennia-old traditions of fishing off the Washington coast; traditions that are enshrined under treaties that protect tribal fishing up to 40 miles off our shoreline.

As the head of the Washington State Department of Natural Resources, I have the responsibility to ensure our natural resources can sustainably support our communities and economy, now and into the future.

Our public lands and waters belong to all of us. They are not assets to be plundered, leaving Washingtonians with the mess

I urge you to withdraw your proposal to open our continental shelf to oil and gas leasing, and provide Washington the same exemption you provided the state of Florida.

Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Hilary S. Franz". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large, sweeping flourish at the end.

Hilary S. Franz

Washington Commissioner of Public Lands