

March 16, 2016

President Barack Obama  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW  
Washington, DC 20500

cc: The Honorable Sally Jewell, Secretary, U.S. Department of the Interior  
Abigail Ross Hopper, Director, Bureau of Ocean Energy Management

re: Take Action to Cancel Lease Sales 226 and 241 in New Orleans

Dear Mr. President,

We, the undersigned organizations, would like to thank you for your climate leadership in committing the U.S. to strong carbon emissions reduction goals in the Paris Agreement and for pledging to accelerate the transition away from dirty fossil fuels during your State of the Union address. We were encouraged when your administration put a moratorium on new federal coal leases until the climate impacts of the federal coal leasing program are taken into account, and we request that a similar precedent be brought to bear in the Gulf.

Please take action to cancel Lease Sale 226 for the Eastern Planning Area and Lease Sale 241 for the Central Planning Area of the Gulf of Mexico. These sales continue the dangerous disconnect between your administration's climate goals and the continued leasing of federal lands and waters for fossil fuel extraction. Federal leasing of fossil fuels ensures significant carbon pollution, threatening the very well-being of the communities and wildlife who call the Gulf home. Over 57,000 people have signed an online petition requesting that you cancel these sales.

The science is clear. To maintain a good chance of avoiding catastrophic climate disruption, the vast majority of known fossil fuels must stay in the ground. Impossible to ignore, the Gulf sits on the frontlines of fossil fuel influence and climate disruption. Offshore production in the Gulf accounts for 17 percent of total federal oil production and 5 percent of gas production. Half of our country's petroleum and natural gas refining capacity also resides along the Gulf Coast. Industry of this scale comes with great costs. Over 10,000 spills have been recorded in the Gulf this decade, and its waters are blighted by some 27,000 abandoned, leaky wells. Coastal wetlands are shrinking by about one football field every hour due to natural subsidence, sea level rise and thousands of miles of canals carved out by oil and gas companies, forcing many residents to permanently relocate.

Nearly six years since the *Deepwater Horizon* disaster, the Gulf is far from recovered. Fish catches are still down by a third. Oil and dispersant chemicals continue to kill wildlife and impact their reproduction and development. The bottom line is that offshore oil and gas development comes with significant inherent risks that are nearly impossible to avoid or mitigate. While the fossil fuel industry seeks to continue its unchecked expansion, the people of the Gulf and allies across the country are standing up to send a simple message: the Gulf is NOT an energy sacrifice zone and deserves protection for present and future generations to experience and enjoy.

Last September, over 400 organizations and leaders called on your administration to end new federal fossil-fuel leasing. Each new federal fossil fuel lease opens new deposits for development that should be deemed unburnable. An end to new leasing would keep up to 450 billion tons of carbon pollution in the ground and further cement your administration's commitment to a better future.

For these reasons, we urge you to cancel Lease Sales 226 and 241, scheduled for March 23 in New Orleans, Louisiana.

Respectfully,

350.org

350 Louisiana – New Orleans

Alabama Coast United

Alliance Institute

ArtSpot Productions

Athens County Fracking Action Network

Black Belt Citizens Fighting for Health and Justice

Blue Frontier

Bold Nebraska

Calhoun County Resource Watch

Care2.com

Center for Biological Diversity

Earth Ethics, Inc.

Earthworks

Environment America

Environment Texas

Environmental Justice Task Force, First  
UUA Church of New Orleans

Fighting Against Natural Gas

Friends of the Earth

Food and Water Watch

Great Old Broads for Wilderness

Greenpeace

Gulf Restoration Network

Hands Across the Sand

Idle No More – Gulf Coast

Indigena

Indigenous Environmental Network

Kairos Center

Louisiana Bucket Brigade

Louisiana Environmental Action Network

Lower Mississippi Riverkeeper

Mothers for Sustainable Energy – Gulf  
Coast

Ocean Conservation Research

Oil Change International

Operation Homecare

Public Citizen

Rainforest Action Network

Science and Environmental Health Network

Sierra Club

Sierra Club – Delta Chapter

The Life Support Project

Steps Coalition

U.S. Climate Plan

Vanishing Earth

Waterkeeper Alliance

WildEarth Guardians

Zion Travelers Cooperative Center