



September 4, 2024

Dear Members of Congress:

On behalf of ocean advocates from our 70 organizations, we urge you to oppose the egregious giveaways to the oil and gas industry found in the Energy Permitting Reform Act of 2024. While this bill includes important updates for the much-needed expansion of renewable energy, we are alarmed by provisions that reverse recent progress for our ocean, climate, and communities. To reach U.S. and global climate goals, our ocean must be a source of climate solutions, not climate problems.

The ocean has absorbed nearly one-third of the carbon and [90% of the excess heat](#) created by greenhouse gas emissions. If not for the ocean, the average global temperatures on land would be 122°F, more than double the current average temperature. Because of this, however, the ocean is hotter, more acidic, and less habitable for fish and wildlife. The past [ten years](#) have been the hottest on record since at least the 1800s for the ocean, with [2023 and 2024](#) on track to shatter all previous records. Climate change is changing the ocean's basic chemistry, with [ocean acidification up 25%](#) over the last 100 years, a pace faster than any known in history. Sea levels are expected to rise up to a foot along the U.S. coastlines in the next 30 years, with damaging flooding expected to occur more than 10 times as often as it does today.

Despite these serious impacts, the ocean also offers us powerful solutions to help us fight and adapt to climate change. Recognizing the potential and the urgent need for action, the Biden-Harris Administration developed America's first Ocean Climate Action Plan and Ocean Justice Strategy to drive a comprehensive ocean climate strategy and promote equitable decision making across the federal government. Combined with new federal funding for scaling up offshore wind, bolstering coastal resilience, and decarbonizing ports, the U.S. is poised to be a global leader on ocean climate action.

The harmful provisions of the Energy Permitting Reform Act of 2024 threaten this trajectory. Senators Manchin, Barrasso, and fossil fuel allies have crafted legislation that rolls back historic ocean climate progress made under the Biden-Harris Administration. Unacceptable provisions which would harm our ocean and our climate include:

- mandating offshore oil and gas lease sales totaling at least 60 million acres each year, undermining the Biden-Harris Administration's 2024-2029 Five Year Plan;
- requiring leasing in proposed critical habitat areas for the critically endangered Rice's whale;

- 90-day fast-tracking of approvals for liquefied natural gas (LNG) export approvals;
- weakening bedrock environmental laws, including community participation in federal decision-making under the National Environmental Policy Act; and
- severely limiting judicial review of energy projects.

These giveaways to the oil and gas industry, which already owns 10.5 million acres of unused leases in public waters, threaten our climate, environmental justice, sustainable coastal economies, fisheries and wildlife. Letting the fossil fuel industry continue to exploit our public waters results in increased emissions that fuel the climate crisis and perpetuate environmental injustices. Offshore drilling brings more pipelines, more refineries, and more petrochemical facilities, dumping even more pollution on frontline communities and exacerbating health problems like cancer and asthma. For too long, Gulf of Mexico communities have borne the unfair burden of fossil fuel infrastructure and associated health impacts in their neighborhoods. Long considered acceptable sacrifices to the fossil fuel industry, these communities were sacrificed yet again as a result of the Inflation Reduction Act's provision linking new leasing for offshore wind to more offshore oil and gas leasing. This cannot continue, and would continue with this bill as written.

While we support portions of this bill which would reduce emissions, policies to address the climate crisis should never be tied to fossil fuel giveaways and we respectfully ask Congress to work towards alternative legislative pathways to advance clean energy. If Congress wants to expedite responsible permitting and continue to position the U.S. as a leader to leverage the ocean as a source of climate solutions, Congress must pass robust budgets for agencies that review and permit projects and focus on solutions that prioritize community input, reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and promote the rapid and just phaseout of fossil fuels.

At COP28, the U.S. joined a historic global agreement to transition away from fossil fuels. This transition must begin at home, on our public lands and waters. It has never been more clear that the time to cut emissions from offshore oil and gas development is right now. We urge you to protect our ocean, climate, and communities by rejecting the egregious provisions in the Energy Permitting Reform Act of 2024—instead working toward a future where our ocean is a source of climate solutions.

Sincerely,

Alaska Wilderness League
Alliance for Affordable Energy
Animal Welfare Institute
Azul
BLAC
Bold Alliance
Brian Skerry Photography, LLC

Carnivore Coexistence Lab
Carolina Ocean Alliance
Cascadia Wildlands
Center for Biological Diversity
Center for Oil and Gas Organizing
Center for the Blue Economy
Cetacean Society International
Christian Council of Delmarva
Clean Water Action
Climate Justice Alliance
Creation Justice Ministries
Cultivating Lives Educational Services, Inc.
Earthjustice
Endangered Habitats League
Endangered Species Coalition
Environmental Protection Information Center
Food and Water Watch
For a Better Bayou
Friends of Merrymeeting Bay
Friends of the Earth
GreenLatinos
Greenpeace USA
Healthy Gulf
Healthy Ocean Coalition
Inland Ocean Coalition
International Marine Mammal Project of Earth Island Institute
Kettle Range Conservation Group
Latino Outdoors
López-Wagner Strategies
Marine Mammal Alliance Nantucket
Mystic Aquarium
National Aquarium
National Ocean Protection Coalition
Next 100 Coalition
NY4WHALES
Ocean Alliance
Ocean Conservancy
Ocean Conservation Research
Ocean Defense Initiative
Oceana

Oregon Shores Conservation Coalition
Pacific Whale Foundation
Plaquemines Rising Coastal Restoration
Predator Defense
Public Citizen, Inc.
Rachel Carson Council
Resource Renewal Institute
Sanctuary Education Advisory Specialists
Seattle Aquarium
Sierra Club
Species Unite
Surfrider Foundation
Sustainable Ocean Alliance
TAO
The CLEO Institute
The Conservation Angler
The Ocean Project
Urban Ocean Lab
Virginia Aquarium & Marine Science Center
Washington Wildlife First
Western Environmental Law Center
Western Nebraska Resources Council
Western Watersheds Project