

SANTA BARBARA COUNTY BOARD AGENDA LETTER



Clerk of the Board of Supervisors
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Agenda Number:
Prepared on: 9/15/05
Department Name: Planning and Development
Department No.: 053
Agenda Date: 9/27/05
Placement: Administrative
Estimate Time: 30 minutes on October 4, 2005
Continued Item: NO
If Yes, date from:

TO: Board of Supervisors

FROM: Dianne Meester, Assistant Director
Planning and Development Department

STAFF CONTACT: Doug Anthony, Interim Deputy Director
Energy Division, 568-2046

SUBJECT: U.S. Department of the Interior's 5-Year Oil & Gas Leasing Program (2007-2012)

Recommendation(s): That the Board of Supervisors set a hearing for October 4, 2005, to consider execution of a letter to the Department of the Interior as it commences the preparation of the 2007-2012 oil and gas leasing program for the Outer Continental Shelf (OCS).

Alignment with Board Strategic Plan: This recommendation primarily aligns with Goal No. 1 – An Efficient Government Able to Anticipate and Respond Effectively to the Needs of the Community

Executive Summary and Discussion: Every five years, the U.S. Department of the Interior (DOI) prepares a 5-year oil and gas leasing program for all submerged lands on the OCS, pursuant to the Outer Continental Shelf Lands Act. This program essentially indicates a 5-year schedule of lease sales that the Secretary of the Interior determines is necessary to best meet the nation's future energy needs. The program also identifies the expected intensity and location of the scheduled lease sales.

DOI recently announced plans to prepare the next 5-year leasing program that addresses leasing between mid-2007 to mid-2012. As a routine first step, DOI is seeking public comment. Comments must be submitted by October 11 of this year. DOI's solicitation notes that Presidential withdrawals and Congressional moratoria have placed many OCS areas off limits to new oil and gas leasing, and that these areas will not be fully analyzed for possible leasing in the forthcoming 5-year leasing program.¹ All OCS areas offshore the states of California, Oregon, and Washington are subject to those withdrawals and moratorium.

¹ Former President George H.W. Bush first imposed the Presidential withdrawal in 1990 in response to a study by the National Research Council, concluding that environmental information for OCS decisions offshore Florida and California was inadequate. Former President Clinton extended that withdrawal through mid-2012. According to the DOI notice, the current Bush Administration has repeatedly expressed its support for the moratoria, based upon deference to the wishes of the states to determine what activities take place off their coasts.

DOI provides additional opportunities for public comment at key milestones during preparation of the leasing program, which is routinely accompanied by an Environmental Impact Statement.

Historically, 10 lease sales have occurred offshore California between 1966 and 1984, resulting in 369 leases. Approximately 200 of these leases were situated offshore the tri-county region of Ventura, Santa Barbara, and San Luis Obispo. Today, 79 leases remain, 75 of which are offshore the tri-county region. Of these remaining leasing, 43 are producing or situated inside producing units, and 36 have not yet been produced.

Staff has attached the comment letter submitted to DOI by the County regarding preparation of the 2002-2007 leasing program to illustrate the County's most recent position on offshore leasing.

Mandates and Service Levels: The U.S. Department of the Interior is mandated by law to prepare a 5-year leasing program and to provide the public ample opportunity to comment during its preparation. The County is not under any legal obligation to comment. County service levels could be affected eventually should the proposed five-year leasing program result in leasing offshore the County.

Fiscal and Facilities Impacts: Preparation of this memorandum and a draft comment letter is funded by Planning and Development's currently approved budget, page D-304, under "Use of Funds Summary," line-item "Long-Range Planning." The costs is offset by a Coastal Impact Assistance Program grant to the County to address federal and state legislation, rulemaking, and other agency activities such as the 5-year leasing program.

Special Instructions: none.

Concurrence: N/A