

Katherine Douglas

General Public Comment

**From:** Thomas Becker <tbeckerpower@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Thursday, January 22, 2026 2:08 PM  
**To:** sbcob  
**Subject:** Public comment, general public comment and closed session, BOS meeting of 1/27/26  
**Attachments:** BOEM LETTER.pdf

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Please find attached a public comment for both general public comment and closed session for the BOS meeting of 1/27/26.

1/20/26

To: The Honorable Doug Burgum

U.S Department of the Interior

Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (BOEM)

From: T. Becker Power Systems

Subject: Public comment for the 11<sup>th</sup> National OCS Oil and Gas Leasing Program,

Docket # BOEM-2025-0483.

This is a public comment letter submitted for the proposed 11<sup>th</sup> National OCS Oil and Gas Leasing Program.

T. Becker Power Systems is located in Santa Barbara County, California. Santa Barbara County is, and will continue to be, the epicenter of the debate over offshore oil development in the OCS. With a history of large oil developments, and the problems that go with that history, this county will play an oversized role in the development of the proposed leasing program.

I support President Trump's plan to make the United States the dominate energy producer in the world, and the effort to secure this country's energy independence. The State of California is a massive consumer of petroleum derived fuels and products. Californians love gasoline, diesel fuel and jet fuel. Californians buy so much petroleum derived products, the State imports close to 1 million barrels of oil every day from foreign sources to meet the demand.

On January 20, 2025, President Trump signed Executive Order 14156, declaring a national energy emergency. This country is in a state of crisis. We are \$38 trillion dollars in debt. We are adding 1-2 trillion every year. Inflation is causing extensive damage to the wealth of private citizens and businesses. AI is coming at us like a freight train, and we are not prepared.

Energy plays a massive role in the security and prosperity of the United States. Electrical energy and energy from liquid, gaseous and solid fuels power our military, hospitals and transportation system. Soon, AI will consume more energy than the U.S. military does. When energy prices go up and supply becomes scarce, the impact on the economy is devastating. Buying energy from foreign sources adds to the deficit and makes the country vulnerable.

The United States is in an energy crisis that justifies the development of oil resources in the OCS. Federal preemption of state statutes that are being misused to block development of oil resources and disrupt interstate commerce is also justified.

Here in Santa Barbara County, Coastal Act statutes are being misused, and it can be argued misused with malice. On December 17, 2025, PHMSA took jurisdiction over pipeline safety and operations from the Office of the State Fire Marshal for the Las Flores pipeline. This step was justified due to the actions of both the State of California and the County of Santa Barbara. PHMSA then acted under the authority of EO 14156 and granted an emergency waiver to the owner/operator of the pipeline.

The abuse of process and violations of property rights by state and local governments with jurisdiction over oil and gas developments is rampant in California and Santa Barbara County. It has gotten so egregious that federal preemption over oil and gas production and support facilities necessary for national security and prosperity is justified.

The County of Santa Barbara submitted suspect documents to state investigative agencies that tainted and influenced a federal court-ordered vote on permits for the Las Flores Pipeline.

This is the most recent example of how the State of California and the County of Santa Barbara abuse the Coastal Act to block oil projects and disrupt interstate commerce. The County government, through County Council, submitted a map to the State Fair Political Practices Commission (FPPC) claiming the map depicted the location of the Las Flores pipeline in relation to property owned by a member of the Board of Supervisors. The Supervisor, who is opposed to oil and gas development in the OCS, was previously required to recuse herself from hearings on the pipeline permits. The recusal was required because the pipeline abuts the Supervisor's property, creating a conflict of interest. The Supervisor contacted County Council about the recusal requirement. County Council asked County Planning and Development to determine the location of the pipeline in relation to the Supervisor's property. County P&D prepared a map indicating the pipeline is 900 feet from the Supervisor's property. The map was submitted by County Council to the FPPC. The FPPC used the suspect map to declare the Supervisor did not have a conflict of interest. On November 4<sup>th</sup>, 2025 the Supervisor participated in a hearing where she voted to deny the transfer of permits. The hearing and vote were conducted pursuant to an order from the Federal District Court.

However, a parcel/subdivision map was available to County Council and P&D before the suspect map was submitted to the FPPC. The parcel/subdivision map clearly depicts the Las Flores pipeline easement abutting the Supervisor's property. In addition to the parcel/subdivision map, photographs of pipeline warning signs identified as abutting the Supervisor's

Property are on file with P&D. Both the parcel/subdivision map and the photographs were easily and readily available to P&D, County Council and the Supervisor. To make matters worse, the pipeline warning signs may be easily visible to anyone standing on the Supervisor's property.

After the November 4<sup>th</sup> vote, the pipeline owner/operator submitted a satellite/ aerial photo of the property in question. The photo depicts the location of the pipeline abutting the Supervisor's property. On December 16, during the final vote on the permits, the FPPC, County Council and the Supervisor all accepted the owner/operator's photo as possibly depicting the true location of the pipeline. The Supervisor recused herself, but the damage had already been done. There is no indication County Council ever notified the FPPC of the parcel/subdivision map which clearly depicts a pipeline easement.

The photo submitted by the pipeline's owner/operator depicts the location of the pipeline in the identical location as the easement depicted on the parcel/subdivision map. Again, the parcel/subdivision map was easily and readily available to P&D, County Council and the Supervisor. Both County Council and the Supervisor are attorneys. Their legal training and experience make it highly improbable they are unaware that parcel/subdivision maps are easily accessible. Their legal training and experience also make it highly improbable they are unaware that parcel/subdivision maps depict easements. I'm a simple tractor mechanic. I found the parcel/subdivision map in 2 minutes using google search, and saw the pipeline easement within seconds of viewing the map.

The history of the Las Flores pipeline repair and restart project is replete with examples of similar abuses of process, by both the State and the County. PHMSA would be totally and legally justified to take ALL jurisdiction over the Las Flores Pipeline away from state and county agencies.

The State of California and the County of Santa Barbara can be expected to continue to commit abuses of process with all projects, approvals and actions involving oil and gas development in the OCS. Federal preemption to prevent the intentional obstruction of federal property rights and interstate commerce would be justified.

The State of California has substituted oil produced in California with 1 million barrels per day of oil imported from foreign sources.

In 2025, the State, on average, imported close to 1 million barrels of foreign oil per day. The increase in imports occurred while the State and county governments aggressively attacked local oil production. The imported oil value was around \$18 billion. The State faces a \$20 billion deficit in its 2025-2026 fiscal year. The oil is tankered into California ports, with little concern expressed by the people opposed to oil development in the OCS.

Importing oil from foreign sources damages the national interest and national security. Replacing imported oil with oil produced in California is in the national interest and improves national security.

But of course, reducing all imports from foreign sources is in the national interest and would improve national security. Producing oil, gas, vehicles, appliances, electronics, farm and construction equipment and steel in the U.S., instead of importing from foreign sources would be a gamechanger to the U.S.A.'s advantage.

Oil is part of a larger picture.

## The State of California and County of Santa Barbara have intentionally inflated alternative transportation usership to falsely claim oil production is not needed.

For decades, the State of California and County of Santa Barbara have been making false claims about alternative transportation usage. They inflate the numbers to show oil production is no longer needed, claiming people are walking and riding bikes instead of driving cars. In reality, bike lanes are empty of bike commuters, while motor vehicle commuting traffic is unaffected by phantom bike riders and pedestrians. Yet, the parking lots at government buildings are filled with government employee cars, and rallies against offshore oil are attended by people driving gasoline powered SUVs. The falsification of alternative transportation statistics in Santa Barbara County is well documented. For a recent example, it was announced in November that the promised Metrolink commuter train between Ventura and Santa Barbara was being cancelled. In 2016, when the "Lane and a Train" plan was approved, it was noted that the tracks the train would be operating on are owned by Union Pacific, were already being operated at capacity, and the low population density between Ventura and Santa Barbara could not support a commuter train. The State and the County inflated the estimates of ridership to support the false narrative that the train would reduce car usage, reducing gasoline consumption. 10 years and millions of dollars later, the commuter train is dead, with the County now saying the Amtrak Pacific Surfliner will make a wonderful commuter train, so what if the commuter usage is a fraction of what was promised.

The State of California and County of Santa Barbara can be expected to use misleading alternative transportation statistics to show new oil production is not needed. These statistics are easily proven false by simply conducting proper commuter usage counts, such as bike lane counts during commute hours, and comparing the observed usage to the usage claimed by the State and the County.

The California Air Resources Board has rejected proposals to reduce gasoline consumption. The result is a massive increase in oil imported into California from foreign sources.

Over the last 20 plus years, CARB has created rules and regulations to reduce the emissions of CO<sub>2</sub> from California sources. CARB has also attempted to force other states to adopt CARB's agenda by wielding the State's market clout, forcing manufacturers to conform to California's regulations on all their products, including products sold in other states.

During the rulemaking process for all of these regulations and rules, alternatives were proposed to CARB, alternatives that would reduce petroleum consumption in the state without imposing California's agenda on states that don't want products made to CARB's specifications. The biggest regulation was the Advanced Clean Cars II (ACCII).

For all intents and purposes, the ACCII was a mandate that would have forced automakers to produce nothing but battery powered cars by 2035. Because of California's market share clout, automakers would not be able to make both electric cars for California, and gas cars for all the other states. They would be forced to make only battery powered cars, and consumers in all 50 states would be forced to buy battery powered cars, or pay steep prices for gas powered cars, if they were even available.

I proposed an alternative to the ACCII regulation. I proposed the State reduce statewide VMT by 50% from a 2014 baseline, and have motor vehicle fuels be a blend of 50% ethanol/butanol with gasoline. CARB rejected my alternative, sticking with their battery car agenda. Butanol is a drop-in fuel that is produced from the same feedstocks as ethanol. In May of 2025, the U.S.



Senate killed the ACCII regulation. Today, California is importing close to 1 million barrels a day from foreign sources, thanks to CARB's refusal to consider any plan that competed with their ACCII scheme.

And just to show the massive negative impact caused by California's push for electric cars, Ford announced they were taking a \$9 billion dollar hit on their electric car program, a program foisted on Ford by California's CARB.

BOEM, PHMSA, BSEE, and other involved Federal agencies should be taking steps now to preserve infrastructure that will be needed to support oil development in the OCS.

In Santa Barbara County, Freeport McMoRan has submitted a plan to County P&D to decommission, abandon and demolish the Point Arguello Unit platforms, pipelines and onshore facilities. The unit consists of 3 platforms located in the OCS, pipelines that run to the Gaviota Processing Facility, and the Gaviota Processing Facility located at Gaviota. The pipelines cross federal waters, state waters and land along the Gaviota Coast. The pipelines and onshore facilities are irreplaceable, and if demolished, infrastructure vital for the development of the Sword Unit and possibly the Lion Rock Unit will be lost.

Sword and Lion Rock are the big oil plays off Santa Barbara County. The Point Arguello Unit is located between Sword and Lion Rock. The Point Arguello pipelines connect to Sable Offshore's line 325, which transports oil into Kern County, where it goes to refineries in Los Angeles. That Arguello pipeline may be crucial for OCS development off Santa Barbara County.

The Federal government should consider purchasing the Point Arguello facilities from Freeport to be used as oil production support facilities. The platforms have had their wells capped, so they no longer produce oil. Freeport has indicated they wish to divest themselves of their oil business assets and concentrate on their core business. Repurposing the facilities by the Federal government would save Freeport the expense of demolition. And if state and county governments oppose the repurposing, it can be pointed out the State had the opportunity to reduce foreign oil importation and failed to do so, making development in the OCS necessary. One thing for sure: Jurisdiction over any project involving the Point Arguello Unit should be taken away from Santa Barbara County. Their behavior during the Las Flores pipeline restart should disqualify the County from ever having any jurisdiction over any oil and gas project anywhere in the County, or offshore.

## To summarize and conclude this public comment

- Oil production from the OCS is in the national interest and necessary for national security.
- California imports close to 1 million barrels of oil from foreign sources every day.
- California has shown no concern about the damage importing foreign oil does to the national interest or national security.
- Foreign oil imports harm the national interest and weaken national security.
- California's importation of foreign oil is against the national interest and jeopardizes national security.
- The Federal government can preempt California jurisdiction over oil production and related projects if preemption is required to protect the national interest and protect national security.
- The Federal government should consider purchasing the Point Arguello Unit to preserve infrastructure that may be needed to develop the Sword and Lion Rock Units in the OCS.
- The Federal government should take jurisdiction over Point Arguello Unit projects from the County of Santa Barbara.
- Insubordinate federal employees who unlawfully refuse to implement the President's national energy emergency EO, must be quickly replaced with people who will obey orders.