



SUMMARY REPORT

Agenda Date: 11/4/2025

To: Board of Supervisors

Department or Agency Name(s): Supervisorial District 5

Staff Name and Phone Number: Supervisor Lynda Hopkins 707-565-2241

Vote Requirement: Majority

Supervisorial District(s): Countywide

Title:

Oppose New and Existing Offshore Oil Drilling

Recommended Action:

- A) Adopt a Resolution Opposing New and Existing Offshore Oil and Gas Drilling, and Seabed Mining and joining the Local Government Outer Continental Shelf (OCS) Coalition, a coordinated effort among California's coastal cities and counties to oppose new offshore oil and gas drilling and related threats;
- B) Approve Supervisor Hopkins to represent the County of Sonoma in the Local Governments Outer Continental Shelf (OCS) Coordination Program;
- C) Authorize the County Executive to execute a Memorandum of Understanding with the County of Santa Cruz to support participation in the coalition and secure professional coordination services, including contribution of \$30,000 in General Fund Contingencies, in substantially the form presented and in a final form approved by County Counsel; ;
- D) Direct staff to collaborate with coalition representatives to ensure timely engagement in federal and state processes affecting offshore drilling and deep-sea mining;
- E) Authorize the Chair to send a letter to Santa Cruz Board Chair and Third District Supervisor Justin Cummings regarding the Board's decision. □

Executive Summary:

With the signing of the executive order Unleashing American Energy Act in January of 2025, federal agencies are moving quickly to open new offshore drilling opportunities. The federal government is expected to release a new Five-Year Offshore Oil and Gas Leasing Plan this fall, with only limited opportunities for public comment. Additionally, in April 2025, President Trump signed the Unleashing America's Offshore Critical Minerals and Resources executive order, which promotes deep seabed mining that poses serious threats to California's coastal economies, marine ecosystems, and climate goals.

In response, there is an attempt by Santa Cruz County to re-establish a coalition of California local governments to ensure coordinated, science-based, and timely engagement with federal decisionmakers. Participation in this effort will ensure that our jurisdiction's voice is amplified alongside other cities and counties, without requiring significant diversion of local staff resources.

This item requests the Board pass a resolution opposing new and existing offshore oil and gas drilling and seabed mining; approve Supervisor Hopkins to represent the County on the Local Governments Outer

Continental Shelf (OCS) Coordination Program; authorize the County Executive to execute a Memorandum of Understanding with the County of Santa Cruz regarding coalition participation and support, including authorizing the use of \$30,000 in General Fund Contingencies to contribute towards this effort; and other actions to implement participation in this group.

Discussion:

History:

Efforts to lease offshore oil drilling sites in California waters have surfaced periodically since the 1970s. In response, the Local Governments Outer Continental Shelf (OCS) Coordination Program was established to oppose these activities and protect our coastal environments. The group's original membership consisted of Santa Cruz, Monterey, San Luis Obispo, City and County of San Francisco, Marin, Sonoma, Mendocino, and Humboldt, along with several cities including Santa Cruz, Laguna Beach, and Newport Beach, and San Diego Association of Governments (SANDAG).

Richard Charter was hired to coordinate and represent the group, which existed from 1980 - 1994. Through this effort, the Local Government OCS Coordination Program successfully opposed those efforts, working closely with federal and state partners, which resulted in the protection of our coastal ecosystems and economies.

Current Efforts:

Today, similar threats have re-emerged. With the signing of the executive order Unleashing American Energy Act in January of 2025, and the signing of the Unleash America's Offshore Critical Minerals and Resources executive order, federal agencies are moving quickly to open new offshore drilling opportunities and to advance deep-sea mining permits. These proposals threaten California's fishing, tourism, and visitor-serving industries-the backbone of local coastal economies-and increase the risks of climate change and marine pollution.

As a result, Santa Cruz County has initiated the re-establishment of the Local Governments OCS Coordination Program, with Supervisor Justin Cummings serving as the lead board member.

It is estimated that the annual costs for the coordination efforts will be ~\$250,000, which would be shared across participating jurisdictions to help reduce the cost burden on individual jurisdictions. However, no jurisdiction will be denied participation if they are unable to commit funding at this time. To date, Santa Cruz County and the City of Santa Cruz have each allocated an initial \$29,000 to retain Richard Charter Senior Fellow with The Ocean Foundation and also serves, separately, as the Director of Friends of Coastal Coordination, a fiscally hosted project of The Ocean Foundation, to help coordinate the multi-jurisdiction efforts to protect our coast and coastal economies. Humboldt County passed a resolution of support and participation in the group, however, is not allocating funding to the effort.

The attached Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the County of Santa Cruz defines the terms of the County's participation in the Local Government OCS Coalition. Participation in the Local Government OCS Coalition includes a contribution of \$30,000, of General Fund Contingencies, towards the total estimated \$250,000 to retain Richard Charter.

The Coordination Program:

Individual local governments often lack the staff capacity to monitor fast-moving federal actions, review complex technical documents, and engage directly with Congress and federal agencies. Additionally, without coordinated participation, the local government perspective is often diminished in federal decision making.

The Local Government OCS Coordination Program provides the infrastructure to address these challenges by offering shared resources, timely updates, and direct representation. The coalition builds on decades of successful local coordination, led by experienced coastal advocate Richard Charter, who has a proven track record of helping local governments mount effective opposition to offshore drilling.

What the Coalition Provides to Participating Jurisdictions:

- Regular Briefings & Alerts: Real-time updates on federal offshore oil and gas leasing and deep-sea mining proposals, tailored for local officials.
- Draft Materials: Comment letters, resolutions, testimony, talking points, and media templates that jurisdictions can adapt and adopt.
- Direct Advocacy: Representation of local government interests in meetings with Members of Congress, federal agencies, and stakeholders.
- Regional Coordination: Sessions to align efforts across jurisdictions, amplify messaging, and strengthen collective influence.
- Communication Tools: Fact sheets and outreach materials grounded in science to inform the public and local decisionmakers, and a website and social media for a digital presence.
- Future-Proofing: Continuous monitoring of emerging offshore threats, ensuring local governments are prepared to respond.

Benefits of Participation:

- Ensures our jurisdiction is ready, resourced, and represented without having to dedicate significant local staff time.
- Strengthens California's bipartisan local government voice in defending our clean-coast economy.
- Protects critical local industries-fishing, tourism, recreation-and the marine environment from preventable harm.
- Demonstrates local leadership in safeguarding the California coast for future generations.
- Timely submission of comments on federal permitting proposals.
- Reduced cost due to a collaborative funding model

Joining the Local Government OCS Coalition is a timely and strategic step to protect our community, our economy, and our environment. By participating, our jurisdiction will benefit from expert coordination, shared resources, and a unified presence in federal processes-ensuring that California's local governments continue to play a decisive role in protecting our coast.

Strategic Plan:

N/A

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Racial Equity:

Was this item identified as an opportunity to apply the Racial Equity Toolkit?

No

Prior Board Actions:

None.

FISCAL SUMMARY

Expenditures	FY25-26 Adopted	FY26-27 Projected	FY27-28 Projected
Budgeted Expenses			
Additional Appropriation Requested	\$30,000		
Total Expenditures	\$30,000		
Funding Sources			
General Fund/WA GF			
State/Federal			
Fees/Other			
Use of Fund Balance			
General Fund Contingencies	\$30,000		
Total Sources	\$30,000		

Narrative Explanation of Fiscal Impacts:

This item requests \$30,000 in General Fund Contingencies to provide funding towards this effort. If use is approved, CEO staff will coordinate with Santa Cruz County to transfer the funds and will include the budgetary adjustment as part of the next Consolidated Budget Changes board action.

Staffing Impacts:			
Position Title (Payroll Classification)	Monthly Salary Range (A-I Step)	Additions (Number)	Deletions (Number)

Narrative Explanation of Staffing Impacts (If Required):

Attachments:

1988 OCS Historical Brochure

Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the County of Santa Cruz and the County of Sonoma
Resolution

Related Items "On File" with the Clerk of the Board:

Richard Charter CV

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Richard Charter Budget