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Gulf Coast Residents Demand To Be A Sacrifice Zone No More

Bureau of Ocean Energy Management's Five Year Plan takes the Arctic and Atlantic off the table but keeps in the Gulf, outraging Gulf Coast residents now demanding executive action.

NEW ORLEANS — Gulf Coast residents, social justice advocates, and their allies in the environmental, climate and social justice movements have been steadily rising up against exploitative institutions, declaring the region will no longer be treated as a sacrifice zone. Despite this, today the Bureau of Ocean and Energy Management retained the Gulf of Mexico for lease sales in its Five Year Plan. The Gulf Coast's position on the direct front lines of climate change impacts and ground zero for extractive industry made this decision particularly outrageous to community members across the region, over 50 of whom sent a letter to President Obama today demanding the Gulf also be taken out of BOEM's offshore lease sale plan. "No means no. We do not consent to being the designated sacrifice zone for this country," said David Underhill from Mobile, Alabama.

"We are, of course, happy as water protectors that BOEM has taken the Arctic and the Atlantic out of harm's way. However, we are very disappointed in the federal government for sending us the message that our precious Gulf of Mexico is not valued in the same way. For how much longer will this country allow our region to be extracted from, being polluted and plundered for the profits of corporations?" said Jayeesha Dutta, New Orleans resident. "From Standing Rock to the Gulf of Mexico, we know water is life. By choosing to sell off our waters to the highest fossil fuel bidder, BOEM is effectively giving our people and our planet a death sentence," she said.

The Gulf Coast has long suffered disproportionate impacts from the country's over-reliance on fossil fuels, from disasters such as Hurricane Katrina and the BP oil disaster to poor health in communities of color, like the infamous "Cancer Alley" near oil refineries, to pipeline dredging that has eroded wetlands and made the region more environmentally, economically and socially vulnerable by polluting the water, harming wildlife and the fishing industry. More than 53,000 offshore oil and gas wells have already been drilled from thousands of offshore platforms, accounting for approximately 96 percent of the nation's total oil and gas production in federal waters. "These waters, depended on by shrimpers and fishers alike, are being sacrificed to further the greed of the richest companies in history, and all for oil we can't afford to burn in the first place. Deep sea drilling is another false promise from an industry with a long history of them. It's time to stop poisoning our communities' air and water for the crumbs we get in return," said Benjamin Franklin Craft-Rendon of Houston, TX.

"With the new administration threatening to roll-back nearly every safety and environmental reform put into place after the BP drilling disaster, it's more important than ever that we draw the line against new oil and gas leasing in the Gulf of Mexico," said Raleigh Hoke from the Gulf Restoration Network. "President Obama can and must leave a real legacy for the Gulf and the climate by permanently withdrawing the Gulf from any new lease sales." Given the uncertain future with a new climate change denying administration, Gulf Coast residents are requesting immediate executive action via a letter to President Obama demanding no new leases in the Gulf. Cherri Foytlin from Rayne, LA pled "Mr. President, it is not within the realm of revolution that we come forward to ask you to protect our waters, lands, and people. Clean water and air are human rights. Under a Trump Administration, you surely know that we will stand little chance of partaking in that most basic moral directive. By removing the Gulf, you would buy us several years of protection, while we build our communities toward a just transition with renewable energy goals. And we will work hard, Mr. President, like no other region, simply because we have the most to lose should the current realities continue. Remove new leases in the Gulf of Mexico from the five year plan, allow us time to determine and forge our path forward and to true energy independence."

Letter to Obama From the Gulf: <https://anothergulf.com/2016/11/18/dear-president-obama-love-the-gulf/>

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