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## **CALIFORNIA COASTAL COMMISSION OBJECTS TO OFFSHORE OIL AND GAS LEASES**

*Costa Mesa, California* - Today the California Coastal Commission voted unanimously to object to the proposed extension of 36 oil and gas leases located in federal waters off the coast of Santa Barbara, Ventura and San Luis Obispo Counties. These leases were originally sold between 1968 and 1984, but have never been developed. Development of these leases would add a new generation of oil and gas development off the coast of California.

The 36 leases were previously extended by the U.S. Minerals Management Service (MMS) in 1999, without any environmental review, and without allowing the California Coastal Commission to review the leases for consistency with the California Coastal Act, as required by the federal Coastal Zone Management Act (CZMA). At that time several environmental groups, led by the Santa Barbara-based Environmental Defense Center, asked the Coastal Commission to demand the right to review the leases. When the U.S. Minerals Management Service (MMS) denied the Commission's request, the State of California filed a lawsuit in federal court. EDC and the Natural Resources Defense Council joined in the lawsuit, on behalf of ten environmental organizations. The plaintiffs prevailed both in the federal district court as well as in the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals.

In response to the court's ruling, MMS submitted "Consistency Determinations" to the California Coastal Commission on April 6, 2005, asserting that extending the leases would be consistent with the policies of the California Coastal Act. On April 22, the Coastal Commission requested additional information from MMS, noting that the State agency could not complete its review without this information. On June 27, the EDC sent a letter to the Commission on behalf of EDC, NRDC, League for Coastal

Protection, Sierra Club, Get Oil Out!, Santa Barbara Channelkeeper, The Otter Project, Defenders of Wildlife, Surfrider Foundation, Environment California, and Citizens Planning Association, pointing out that MMS had failed to adequately consider impacts from oil spills, and had failed to consider impacts to marine wildlife (including the southern sea otter and other threatened and endangered species), coastal habitats and wetlands, air and water quality, cultural resources, public recreation, views, and commercial fishing.

“We are very pleased with the action taken today by the California Coastal Commission,” said Linda Krop, Chief Counsel of the Environmental Defense Center. “Allowing more oil and gas development off our coast would violate State laws protecting our precious ocean and coastal resources, including the southern sea otter and other threatened and endangered species. Development of these leases would threaten our environment for over 25 years, while supplying fuel for the nation for less than one month. We must stop the continued pollution of our coast and instead pursue clean energy alternatives such as conservation, efficiency, solar, and wind power.”

Krop further noted that offshore oil development threatens not only our coastal environment, but also our State’s economy: “The majority of our State’s coastal economy depends on tourism, which would be significantly impacted in the event of an oil spill. In contrast, oil and gas development contributes less than 2% to our State’s economy.”

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EDC is the only nonprofit environmental law firm between Los Angeles to San Francisco. EDC works with citizen groups on environmental issues such as protecting water quality, preserving precious open spaces, saving species from extinction and guarding public health. EDC has been a leader in fighting offshore oil and gas development for over two decades. For more information, please visit [www.edcnet.org](http://www.edcnet.org).