



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
NATIONAL OCEAN SERVICE
Office of National Marine Sanctuaries
1305 East-West Highway
Silver Spring, Maryland 20910

JUN 17 2009

Mr. Chris Harrold
Advisory Council Chair
Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary
299 Foam Street
Monterey, California 93940

Dear Mr. Harrold:

This is in response to your January 2009 resolution requesting that I ask Congress to re-impose the previous longstanding legislative moratorium on oil and gas leasing on the Outer Continental Shelf (OCS) along the Pacific and Atlantic coasts. Your resolution also expressed the need to reinstate the executive deferral for the same. I will be sure to send a copy of this letter and your resolution to NOAA leadership to ensure they are aware of our positions on this issue.

Like you, I am concerned about the impacts of offshore industrial activities on sanctuary resources and qualities. This is precisely why most sanctuaries have regulations prohibiting oil and gas activities within sanctuary boundaries. As you note in your resolution, there also continues to be a Presidential moratorium on leasing areas within sanctuaries for oil and gas activities and a legislative moratorium on oil and gas activities in Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary. Because the role of the Office of National Marine Sanctuaries (ONMS) is to concentrate on protecting the ecosystems within sanctuary boundaries, it would not be appropriate for me to call upon the Congress to reinstate the OCS-wide moratorium. Nonetheless, we have been working with the Minerals Management Service (Department of the Interior) and the offshore oil and gas industry to address our concerns about impacts of oil and gas activities near national marine sanctuaries, e.g., industrialization at sanctuary boundaries, increased ship traffic, and the potential for spills.

This resolution conveys two of the most important issues that face our Nation today: energy security and global climate change. As I articulated in a recent memo to my staff, our challenge as a Nation, and as a program, is to reconcile the apparent conflict between producing more energy in the United States while sharply reducing carbon emissions responsible for global climate change and protecting special places and ecosystems as a whole. The implication of these challenges for national marine sanctuaries is that we must be involved in finding solutions that ensure we fully protect national marine sanctuaries. The ONMS will continue to have extremely rigorous standards to protect sanctuary resources when the impacts are uncertain, and we must ask ourselves what we and our sanctuaries can do to help solve these vexing societal issues. We must look for alternative ways to increase our energy security and reduce carbon emissions while maintaining the special character of our national marine sanctuaries.

As always, I am extremely appreciative of your continued support and the hard work you do for the Office of National Marine Sanctuaries and the Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary in particular.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Dan', written over a large, light-colored circular scribble.

Daniel J. Basta
Director

Cc:

Dr. Jane Lubchenco, NOAA Administrator

Jack Dunnigan, Assistant Administrator, NOS