

**Testimony of**  
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**to the**

**U.S. House of Representatives**  
**Committee on Natural Resources**

**“Offshore Drilling: Environmental And Commercial Perspectives”**

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Chairman Rahall, members of the Natural Resources Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify before you here today on the perspectives of my organization and many in the commercial fishing industry on new offshore oil and gas development on the Outer Continental Shelf,

By way of introduction, the Pacific Coast Federation of Fishermen’s Associations (PCFFA) represents working men and women in the U.S. West Coast commercial fishing fleet. Its offices are in San Francisco with a Northwest branch office in Eugene, Oregon. PCFFA is a member of the Marine Fish Conservation Network and the newly-formed Commercial Fishermen of America.

PCFFA was founded in 1976 bringing together mostly port-based fishermen’s marketing associations to address with a single voice common issues facing mostly the small to mid-sized family fishing operations. PCFFA is currently comprised of 16 fishing associations, mostly in California. The fishing men and women in PCFFA member organizations are engaged in a number of different fisheries, including salmon, crab, herring, rockfish, halibut, sablefish and swordfish, utilizing a variety of different gears including, troll, trawl, trap, longline, hook-and-line, seine and gillnets. Among PCFFA’s members are the Commercial Fishermen of Santa Barbara, Inc., and the Southern California Trawlers Association. Both those organizations have had first hand experience with offshore oil development in the Santa Barbara Channel.

My background is in the commercial fisheries, having worked part-time in fish buying and processing plants while in high school and college and managing a fish processing plant while in law school. I joined the PCFFA at the time of its founding in 1976, shortly after graduation from law school and passing the California Bar. In addition to my role for the past 33 years as PCFFA’s executive director, I was the first chair of the Pacific Council’s Salmon Advisory Subpanel, served on the board of the West Coast Fisheries Development Foundation (President – 1985) for nearly a decade, was a member of the Secretary of Commerce’s Marine Fisheries

Advisory Committee (MAFAC) during the Reagan and first Bush Administration, and currently serve on the executive committee for the Marine Fish Conservation Network. Since 1993, I have served as executive director for the Institute for Fisheries Resources, in addition to my work with PCFFA, and am a member of the California Bar's Environmental Law Section.

A few years after PCFFA's founding, California fishermen were confronted with an issue none, at least north of Santa Barbara, had ever dealt with before – the prospect of oil and gas drilling offshore along California's narrow shelf. Lease Sale 53 was initially proposed to extend from the Santa Maria Basin – just north of Santa Barbara to the Oregon Border. There was a strong temptation by PCFFA's member groups to support offshore drilling.

The oil embargo had affected commercial fishing as it had the rest of the nation, with shortages and price increases. Oil industry jobs, we were told, could help our coastal communities already beginning to reel from the downturn in the timber industry. Oil industry representatives assured our members there would be no conflicts - even promising the rigs would be good habitat for fish. Our members were told there were no conflicts between commercial fishing and oil drilling in the Gulf of Mexico.

PCFFA's Board, however, wanted to hear what California fishermen who had lived with offshore oil in the Santa Barbara Channel had to say. The Santa Barbara Channel fishermen they called on had experienced the major spill from a Union Oil platform a decade before, as well as day-to-day offshore oil and gas activities

Surprisingly, that major oil spill was not the problem for Santa Barbara fishermen. It was rather, the small, unreported spills they said would foul their gear and contaminate catches. There were even instances where fishermen were cited for pollution when they sought to clean their gear that had been in oily waters near the rigs.

There was a problem with fishing gear becoming snagged on debris left by oil companies in their operations ranging from old washing machines disposed overboard from the rigs to tractor tires. While the rigs may act as fish attraction devices, this did most fishermen little good due to the precautionary zones established around many of the rigs where fishermen could not operate. Trawlers, in particular, were affected losing much of their fishing grounds, over sandy and soft bottoms, for the catch of halibut, sole and flounder. Although California banned bottom trawling in state waters for decades, it did open some state waters in sandy and soft bottom areas off Santa Barbara for halibut and flounder to partially mitigate losses of fishing area in federal waters to oil and gas development.

Considering California's narrow shelf – considerably different than the wide shelf in the Gulf of Mexico – the PCFFA Board felt the potentials for conflict with offshore drilling operations were just too great. That, and the fact that the oil reserves off central and northern California, along with Oregon and Washington, were not expected to be that large, made it seem the prudent course to oppose drilling off central and northern California.

Then-Secretary of Interior Cecil Andrus subsequently reduced the scope of Lease Sale 53 to the Santa Maria Basin. PCFFA, along with other West Coast commercial fishing groups, supported Congressional appropriations language thereafter prohibiting oil and gas development off central and northern California - Lease Sale 73 for example, and later for Oregon and

Washington. New England fishermen fought plans for oil drilling off Georges Bank and Alaska fishermen sought to stop drilling from going ahead in Bristol Bay where a lease sale had already been held (the leases were later bought back at a cost of \$100 million to the federal government).

Offshore drilling has taken a back seat in recent years among the issues fishermen have to contend with. The 27-year old congressional moratorium and the Presidential offshore oil moratorium established by the first President Bush took away the threat. All that changed when the last President Bush lifted the executive order against drilling this past July 14<sup>th</sup> and the Congressional moratorium was allowed to lapse.

Times change and certainly the cost of diesel fuel the past two years was cutting deeply into fishermen's meager profits and made it just too costly to untie the boats where a great deal of running for fish was necessary or the anticipated catches too small to offset the cost of fuel. So, thirty years after first voting to oppose new drilling along the coast, the issue was brought back to the PCFFA Board this past year. After a full discussion of the issue, the vote was unanimous to stay the course, to oppose new drilling. We know of no other fishing groups along the West Coast that have changed their positions in opposition.

### **Problems for Fishing from Offshore Drilling**

The conflicts between commercial fishing and offshore oil and gas operations can be summed up as 1) seismic surveys; 2) spatial and gear losses; and 3) pollution/contamination. Before I detail the nature of the conflicts, let me state that much of this is a repeat from testimony I gave the Congress in the 1980's and from various correspondence to members at that time.

***Seismic Surveys.*** While the American public may not see any of the oil developed from new offshore leases for a decade or more, the impact on commercial fishing will be almost immediate, as soon as the companies decide to go ahead with drilling they will be wanting to update information to give them information on where the most likely deposits of oil and gas are likely to be under the seabed. To find this out they will deploy seismic vessels to explore areas both before and after any lease sale.

The powerful sound waves generated by seismic surveys can have a variety of harmful effects on fish. Within close range, seismic surveys have been found to kill adult fish as well as larvae and fish eggs. More than 20 years ago research in the Santa Barbara Channel found seismic surveys were lethal to anchovy populations. Scientific studies have also shown that air gun blasts can cause a variety of sublethal impacts on fish such as damaging orientation systems and reducing their ability to find food. Researchers have noted disturbances in the migration routes of salmon and other anadromous species as a result of seismic operations.

Seismic surveys can cause physical damage to fish ears and other tissues and organs such as swim bladders. Although such effects may not kill fish immediately, they may lead to reduced fitness, which increases their susceptibility to predation and decreases their ability to carry out important life processes. Furthermore, if important prey species in the food web such as squid and zooplankton are harmed by seismic testing, the fish dependent on these creatures may also be negatively affected.

Seismic surveys not only threaten commercial and subsistence fishing by harming fish resources, but also by interfering with fishing operations and dramatically affecting catch rates. Seismic ships tow streamers that can be miles long. These can get tangled up with crab pots, set nets and trawl nets causing damage and decreasing crucial fishing time. The best time to conduct seismic surveys in Arctic and sub-arctic environment is during the summer, which is also prime season for many Alaskan fisheries. As a result, seismic survey operations can end up competing with fishing for time and space on the water.

In California, the state's Coastal Commission was forced to utilize its CZMA authority to end a conflict between the hook-and-line fleet in the Santa Barbara Channel by prohibiting seismic surveys during key fishing seasons. There seismic surveys were making it impossible for fishermen to operate. Even then the one of the companies, Exxon, sued to try to keep operating with full knowledge of what their seismic surveys were doing to fishing.

Even if these kinds of conflicts can be avoided, several studies have shown that seismic operations have greatly reduced catches of fish around areas where air guns were being fired. These studies have demonstrated reduced catches over 20 miles away from the source with catch reductions continuing five days after the testing was complete (see table below). Researchers believe these catch reductions are a result of altered fish behavior due to seismic operations which cause them to be less likely to take hooks and/or to move down and away from the seismic firing.

#### Reductions in fish catch rates as a result of seismic survey activity

Species	Gear type	Noise level of seismic testing	Catch reduction	Source
Atlantic cod ( <i>Gadus morhua</i> )	Trawl	250 decibels (dB)	46-69% lasting at least 5 days	Engas et al. 1993
Atlantic cod ( <i>Gadus morhua</i> )	Longline	250 dB	17-45% lasting at least 5 days	Engas et al. 1993
Atlantic cod ( <i>Gadus morhua</i> )	Longline	Undetermined, 9.32 miles from source	55-79 % lasting at least 24 hours	Lokkeborg and Soldal, 1993
Haddock ( <i>Melanogrammus aeglefinus</i> )	Trawl	250 dB	70-72% lasting at least 5 days	Engas et al. 1993
Haddock ( <i>Melanogrammus aeglefinus</i> )	Longline	250 dB	49-73% lasting at least 5 days	Engas et al. 1993
Rockfish ( <i>Sebastes</i> spp.)	Longline	223 dB	52%- effect period not determined	Skalski et al., 1992

The conflicts with seismic surveys are not unique to the U.S. fishing industry. This past year, the Norwegian Association of Fishing Boat Owners threatened to initiate civil disobedience action around oil installations in the Barents Sea, where they said increased oil and gas related activities in the area scare the fish away from their fishing fields. In 2006 and 2007, 800 tons of Atlantic pollock were caught off the Vesteralen and Lofoten Islands. By comparison, in 2008 just 83 tons of the fish have been caught. The fishermen say that drop off in catch was primarily due to oil and gas operations. Unfortunately, former Speaker Gingrich, it seems, didn't talk to any fishermen before returning from his trip last year to Norway proclaiming how well offshore oil

was working for that nation.

***Spatial Conflicts (Including Gear Loss and Construction and Presence of OCS Infrastructure)***

The second problem for commercial fishing with offshore oil and gas is the displacement of fishing by oil on either the fishing grounds, in the ports, or both. While looking at a chart, it may seem that the ocean is large enough to accommodate a myriad of uses. However when looking at where fishing takes place, mostly on the shelf, and where oil and gas development occurs, they tend to be in the same places and the footprint of the rigs is not limited to the area covered by a platform.

The rigs have precautionary zones around them, precluding most fishing. Thus, the area taken from fishing tends to be quiet a bit larger than the platform. Cables and anchors can extend out making fishing, particularly trawling impossible.

The spacing of the rigs can also hinder fishing operations where the fishing is mobile, such as a trawler working a tow, or trollers on a tack. The rigs may not present a spatial conflict, as I mentioned, where there is a wide shelf, but along the West Coast the shelf is narrow and most fishing occurs along that shelf, thus there is a real potential for displacement of fishing.

In the Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) for the 5-Year (2007-2012) Offshore Oil and Gas Leasing Program for Alaska, the Minerals Management Service found:

“Some exploration, development, and production activities have a potential to result in space-use conflicts with commercial fishing activities. Commercial fishing vessels could be **excluded from normal fishing grounds to avoid the potential for gear loss.**” (IV-256)

“Offshore construction of platforms could infringe on commercial fishing activities by **excluding commercial fishing from adjacent areas due to safety considerations.**” (IV-257)

“Fishing activities could be temporarily excluded from some areas during construction of offshore pipelines. Once pipelines are put into place, they **could result in entanglement hazards for some types of fishing gear...**” (IV-257)

Pipelines, during construction and once in place, can act as snags for fishing gear - thereby displacing fishing. Making matters worse, as fishermen experienced in the Santa Barbara Channel, is the fact some oil and gas operators treated the ocean as if it were their own personal landfill where they could dump old machinery, tires used for bumping and other materials that then snagged fishing gear - from trawl nets to troll lines. That has been the experience in the Santa Barbara Channel. Of course, pipelines and their construction affect not just fishing, but fish. For the Bristol Bay area, MMS concedes in its FEIS for the 5-year leasing plan:

“Pipeline installation would include **trench excavation through intertidal and shallow subtidal areas.**” (IV-204)

“Trenching and excavation for pipeline installation could **directly disturb** tidal and mud flats, eelgrass beds, marshes, or other **coastal habitats** (depending on the location of the pipeline route) **resulting in direct habitat losses.**” (IV-204)

“**Pipeline crossings** (onshore) of streams could **affect EFH for several life stages of managed anadromous salmon**, including eggs, larvae, juveniles, and adults.” (IV-184)

“Onshore facility construction (e.g. pipelines, processing facilities, service bases, etc.) causes **definite short-term and long-term changes**, with localized long-term effects on coastal habitats along onshore pipeline corridors.” (IV-522)

The spatial problem is not limited to fishing grounds. Fishing activities in ports – ranging from areas for berthing, processing fish, mending fish gear and other space required to support commercial fishing have been displaced by offshore oil and gas support operations and vessels. This is not a problem where there is adequate space, space not used to support fisheries, but it becomes a real problem in smaller ports where space may be at a premium.

Some of the areas where drilling is planned are relatively remote with little infrastructure in place, thus the impacts will be far greater. The area of northern Mendocino, southern Humboldt Counties in California – known as the Lost Coast, for example, is the one area in the lower continental U.S. where there is no coastal road, yet the area (around Shelter Cove) is under consideration for development. Much of Alaska is equally as remote.

**Pollution/Contamination.** As mentioned earlier, the concern voiced by commercial fishermen from the Santa Barbara Channel has been with the small, but chronic, unreported spills and leaks that caused the oiling of fishing gear or catch. That, however, was before the *Exxon Valdez* spill in 1989 or a number of other spills that have occurred subsequent where there is a greater understanding now of the impacts of a major spill on certain key species.

The Prince William Sound herring fishery has still not recovered from the *Exxon Valdez* spill and even the small herring fishery in San Francisco Bay seems to have been affected by the November 2007 spill of bunker fuel by the *Cosco Busan*, judging from the size of the biomass now in the Bay. While both the *Exxon Valdez* and *Cosco Busan* were spills from ships, not rigs, it does point out to the danger posed by oil to the marine environment. Again, quoting from the MMS’ 5-Year FEIS:

“...localized areas of shellfish essential fish habitat (EFH) could be affected by **leaks from offshore pipelines.**” (IV-186)

“...contact with some EFH [Essential Fish Habitat] resources from an oil spill would probably be **unavoidable.**” (IV-188)

“Valuable shellfish species, including various crabs and weathervane scallops, could be affected by oil spills that occur when planktonic life stages are present in surface waters.” (IV-186)

Oil spills, however, are not the only pollution source from offshore oil and gas. Santa Barbara fishermen complained of the disposal of drill muds on the seafloor containing diesel fuel. The State of California has banned the disposal of drill muds in state waters and requires them to be disposed of safely onshore. The problem identified by the Santa Barbara fishermen with diesel fuel in the drill muds may be far greater with findings in the Gulf of Mexico of mercury and heavy metals in the drill muds and fish sampled from the nearby rigs. In its FEIS, MMS stated:

“Depositions of sediments could **smother more sedentary invertebrates** (e.g. clams or scallops) located within a given radius of discharge points.” (IV-182)

“Settling of discharge cuttings on the seafloor could **smother some prey species, displace some managed groundfish species, and change substrate composition** in the area where the cuttings settle.” (IV-184)

“**Eggs, fry, and small prey occurring or entering the mixing zone** during the discharge of muds and cuttings could experience **lethal and sublethal effects** if they are within 1-2 m of the discharge point and if the volumes of muds and cuttings are released at the **rates permitted by the US EPA** (500-1,000 bbl/hour).” (IV-182)

“...approximately 522 tons of drill cuttings would be released into the environment for each exploration well constructed. Up to 20 exploration wells are anticipated, which could result in the **release of up to 10,440 tons of cuttings.**” (IV-181)

## **Major Fishing Grounds Threatened**

As we are discussing offshore oil drilling here today, the clock is already ticking under the previous 5-year plan for Lease Sale 214, the North Aleutian Basin, which includes Bristol Bay – with the largest salmon fishery in the world. After the lifting of the moratorium, under the revised plan, the clock is also ticking for lease sales of the Northern and Central Coast of California, Georges Bank and the Virginia coast.

Some of the nation’s most productive fishing grounds are now threatened. They include:

***Bristol Bay.*** In its October 16, 2008 letter to the Minerals Management Service regarding the EIS for Lease Sale 214 in the North Aleutian Basin, which affects Bristol Bay, the United Fishermen of Alaska described the area as “the most important economic driver of the region, the commercial fishing industry has impacts extending throughout Alaska and the Pacific Northwest. As shown by National Marine Fisheries Service statistics, over 40% of the commercial U.S. fisheries catch including the nation’s richest crab, Pollock, cod, halibut, and salmon fisheries come from the Bering Sea region with annual harvests worth more than a half a billion dollars.

“Both groundfish and shellfish fisheries completely overlap the proposed lease sale area 214. Shellfish harvested in significant numbers include Bristol Bay red king crab, Bering Sea tanner crab, and Bering Sea snow crab. Commercially harvested groundfish species include Pacific cod, Alaska Pollock, Pacific halibut, flatfish species, rockfish species, Atka mackerel and sablefish. The Bristol Bay and north Alaska Peninsula salmon fisheries depend on the large numbers of all five species of Pacific salmon that utilize the area for feeding and migration. Subsistence fisheries, while not economically comparable to the region’s commercial fisheries, are vital to local communities.”

An earlier letter sent to President Bush by six Alaskan organizations (Bristol Bay Native Association, Bering Sea Fishermen’s Association, Bristol Bay Economic Development Corporation, Alaska Independent Fishermen’s Marketing Association, and Bristol Bay Reserve) stated, “[t]he economics of the fisheries that depend on the North Aleutian Basin have sustained an annual average wholesale value of about \$450 million dollars; we estimate the retail value to be nearly \$2 billion annually. The snapshot of oil and gas development for this area does not compare to the longevity of these fisheries or to the future value. The Bristol Bay salmon fishery alone maintained an average annual catch value of \$105 million from 1980-2003. This represents

a 20-40% total value of Alaska's salmon fisheries. Jobs in Bristol Bay that depend on fisheries and wildlife provide an annual payroll of about \$175 million. The economic benefits and impacts of Alaska's fishing industry extend far beyond the region in which they are located as the Commercial Fisheries Entry Commission reports 41% of the Bristol Bay Drift and Set Gillnet permit holders to be residents of states other than Alaska.

“Even though the North Aleutian Basin does not directly overlap with the Bristol Bay salmon fisheries it provides significant habitat for salmon. Salmon smolt outmigrate through the area and adult salmon migrate through the area on their way to spawn in Bristol Bay Rivers. Juvenile salmon also feed and grow to maturity within and surrounding the area. Clearly, leasing in the North Aleutian Basin poses serious risks to salmon. Even a small spill or contamination event could damage the ability to market Bristol Bay salmon and could harm new efforts to increase their value.”

**Northern California.** Although much of the Central California coast enjoys protection in one of four national marine sanctuaries, the area from Sonoma Coast to the Oregon border remains vulnerable. North of San Francisco the coast is increasingly remote, to the roadless area of the Lost Coast. The shelf is narrow and the area is frequented by treacherous winter storms with few ports of refuge. The fishing and tourism industries that support this region of the coast would be devastated by offshore oil and gas development.

In his recent letter to you, Mr. Chairman, Representative Mike Thompson stated the coastal part of his district, “is remote, pristine, and rocky. It is also host to one of four major upwelling regions in the world. Upwelling regions are coastal areas that support extremely abundant and productive marine life. This is because upwelling brings cold, nutrient-rich waters up from the ocean depths that, when combined with sunlight, enhance seaweed and phytoplankton growth. The seaweed and phytoplankton provide energy for some of the most productive ecosystems in the world, including many of the world's most important fisheries, such as the North Coast fisheries. According to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, while upwelling regions make up only one percent of the world's oceans, they contribute to approximately half of the world's fish catch.

“Northern California's coast brings biological and economic benefits to the entire country as a result of the incredibly productive and diverse ecosystem found within its waters. Drilling activity off the Northern Coast of California could cause serious harm to the unique ecosystem and abundant marine life found off my district. The impact this would have on the California fishing industry and the coastal communities that depend on it could far exceed any benefits we would hope to gain by drilling.

“Even if the price of oil were to skyrocket again, the Minerals Management Service's own estimates show that the amount of oil we could expect to recover would only be enough to satisfy about 100 days of national demand.”

**Georges Bank.** Part of MMS' proposed North Atlantic lease sale, includes the fishing rich ground of Georges Bank. Representative Ed Markey reflects the feelings of most fishermen in New England, when he says Georges Bank is vital to New England's economy. New Bedford, Massachusetts is the most productive fishing port in the United States, raking in \$268 million in

catch value. The collective catch of New Bedford, Gloucester, and Provincetown-Chatham-all of which rely on Georges Bank-is worth nearly \$350 million annually.

"From the boats and wharfs to the markets and restaurants of New England, the unique habitat of Georges Bank is a key economic engine for Massachusetts and the region and an important part of our cultural heritage," said Congressman Markey. "In this economic crisis, the preservation of Georges Bank is vital to not just the environmental integrity of New England but also the stability of its economy."

In the case of all three areas identified above, if the fishing is well-managed these areas will continue to provide economic benefit to the nation well into the future. But these areas are now at risk in order to pursue finite oil and gas reserves, whose extraction will affect fish and fisheries for, at best, a short supply of carbon-based fuel.

### **If Drilling Were to Go Ahead**

It is PCFFA's position supporting reinstatement by Congress and the Administration of the offshore oil and gas moratorium. However, if a moratorium is not reinstated, PCFFA recommends at minimum the following actions are taken:

1. Remove Bristol Bay, Northern California and Georges Bank immediately from any lease sales. We would also ask for consideration of much of the rest, if not all, of the lease sales planned for offshore Alaska, as well as Oregon and Washington, any unprotected areas of Central and Southern California, the remainder of the North Atlantic and the Mid-Atlantic be protected from oil and gas exploration. We cannot comment on the South Atlantic and Straits of Florida, but those areas, too, may be worthy of protection from offshore oil.

2. Consolidate oil and lease sales around areas where existing oil and gas development is taking place to minimize disruption to fishing and coastal communities.

3. Establish mitigation measures to protect fishing where new drilling is to occur. To this end, we support the recommendations made by the United Fishermen of Alaska for fishery protection and mitigation including:

- Creation of Regional Citizens Advisory Councils for states, following approved OCS lease sales, to be funded by the approved leaseholders
- Zero discharges from drilling installations.
- Establishment of oil and gas spill response and mitigation plans, to be developed in consort with a regional citizens advisory councils.
- Establishment of an adequate fisheries disaster fund to provide compensation to the fishing industry and coastal communities in the event of disruption of fisheries.

- A commitment from the oil and gas industry and the federal government to develop and implement a long term scientific monitoring program to assess potential impacts to the marine environment and the fisheries.
- A prohibition of any use of offshore energy facilities for open ocean aquaculture.
- Inclusion of commercial fishing organizations in the planning process as stakeholders on par with the status of other cooperating municipal, state and federal agencies.
- Restrict lease-related use will to prevent conflicts with local commercial, subsistence, and sport harvest activities. All OCS operations, both onshore and offshore, must be designed, sited and operated to ensure that:
  - (a) adverse changes to the distribution or abundance of fish resources do not occur;
  - (b) fish or shellfish catches are not adversely impacted by OCS activities;
  - (c) all exploration, construction and operation activities is coordinated with the fishing community to maximize communication, ensure public participation, and avoid conflicts;
  - (d) ballast water treatment is required to remove or eliminate non-indigenous species.
  - (e) fishermen are not displaced or precluded from access to fishing areas, unless they are adequately compensated for the displacement;
  - (f) fishermen are not precluded from participating in designated fishing seasons, unless they are adequately compensated for the lost season(s); and
  - (g) fishermen are compensated for damage to fishing equipment, vessels, gear and decreased harvest value from OCS operations in a timely manner.

### **Why Offshore Drilling is Not a Good Move**

When PCFFA formulated its policy 30 years ago to oppose new offshore drilling, it did so unaware of climate change or its implications, including the acidification of ocean waters. We felt there was a compelling case to be made then for not expanding offshore drilling beyond the high yield basins where it was then taking place.

From what we have learned in the past decade, certainly the past year and even month, it is evident that we need to phase out carbon-based fuels as quickly as possible. We say that knowing our fishing boats currently rely on diesel fuel for power. But if we don't stop putting carbon into the atmosphere from burning coal and oil there won't be any fish in the ocean for our members to harvest. This is a problem that needs fixing now.

This past summer was particularly disturbing for those of us who remember the summers of the late 1960's, when many of the nation's cities were burning. We heard then the chants of "Burn, Baby, Burn." Most of us understood the frustration of those rioting, torching buildings. The years of Jim Crow, inequality, lack of opportunity, and brutality at the hands of police and

vigilante groups set off a powder keg. Understandable as it was for many of us, looting and burning was no answer.

When the President lifted the executive order on the offshore moratorium, when Congress allowed the moratorium to lapse, when we heard people shouting “Drill, Baby, Drill,” we felt for our fisheries the way a shop owner must have felt in those hot summers of the late 1960’s as the mob converged. We understood the frustration with the prices at the pump. The cost of diesel had taken the profit out of fishing, keeping many tied to the dock. And, we understood the frustration with paying for fuel imported from nations that are openly hostile to our interests.

But drilling for a small amount of oil and gas, putting at risk America’s oldest industry, to further exacerbate global warming – which may not be reversible for a century, is no solution. It is no more an answer to our energy needs than burning the cities was in the 1960’s in response in discrimination and inequality. Are we now prepared to loot and burn the planet, chanting “Drill, Baby, Drill?”

There is no doubt that immediate action is needed on the energy front, but in so acting we should not threaten our food supplies, nor life on Earth. Prompt and thoughtful action, based on good science, is what’s needed. It’s time to “Think, Baby, Think.”

Mr. Chairman we urge you and committee members to rethink our offshore drilling policies, both in terms of damage to the environment and industries such as fisheries that rely on a clean environment, as well as damage to the planet from continued reliance on carbon based fuels.

A better course I would suggest is to focus on the development of renewable energy sources – continue to push solar and wind and development of alternative fuels that can safely power everything from fishing vessels to jet aircraft. We do not expect any of the oil from development of new offshore leases to be available for a decade. Wouldn’t we be better off spending this next decade working to be free of not just foreign oil, but oil as a fuel altogether?

Thank you Mr. Chairman for this opportunity to testify and I’ll be happy to answer any questions you or members of the Natural Resources Committee may have.

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