

TAB 4

November 3, 2009

Respected Members of the Manatee County Legislative Delegation:

As elected public officials of Manatee County, the City of Bradenton, the City of Palmetto, the City of Anna Maria, the City of Bradenton Beach, the City of Holmes Beach and the Town of Longboat Key, we want to express our unified strong opposition to legislation that would authorize offshore oil and gas drilling in Florida waters.

There was consensus among elected local officials attending the October 21, 2009 Council of Governments meeting to urge the Legislature to prohibit offshore oil and gas drilling in the territorial waters of the state. We ask you to join us in opposing initiatives designated to allow offshore drilling off the coast of Florida and to retain the current statutory ban on such drilling.

If this matter of critical and far-reaching import to our coastal community comes before you in a vote this year, please consider:

The beaches of Anna Maria Island and Longboat Key are among our community's most valuable resources. The area's natural beauty is the driving force behind a tourism industry that hosted more than 446,000 visitors in 2008 resulting in a total economic impact of over \$479 million to Manatee County's economy. The unknown possibilities of drilling would jeopardize our pristine coast.

- Because some offshore sites would be exempt from drilling, Anna Maria Island and Longboat Key beaches will bear a disproportionate burden of the environmental damage and cost of clean-up from oil spills and related accidents caused by oil drilling were it to occur in state waters.
- The potential impacts of drilling would impact, perhaps the most severely, the people who call Manatee County home. Beachfront property values could plummet. A nearby oil spill has the potential to ruin the boating, fishing, charters, scuba diving and parasailing pastimes and related water industries that are a local way of life.
- Drilling poses a clear threat to Florida's \$562 billion-a-year coastal economy including tourism, fishing and other water-dependent businesses.
- Oil production will take years to develop and the promise of local jobs and increased revenues is highly speculative. Offshore drilling is not a viable long term solution to energy independence and economic development.
- Offshore oil drilling and its underwater components could have a direct adverse impact on valuable sand resources that will one day be utilized for the important beach nourishment of Anna Maria Island.
- The possibility of offshore drilling presents a significant threat to the unique birds, fish and wildlife indigenous to southwest Florida. Our valuable marine environments and the wildlife could suffer serious, perhaps catastrophic and long-lasting harm if an accident occurs off the coast of Florida.

- Public beach access is important not only as major recreational and economic engine for Manatee County and the State of Florida, but also serves as an important free recreational resource. Some of the free public beach access provided on Anna Maria Island and on Longboat Key would be adversely impacted if the sand were to become polluted by the impacts of oil and gas drilling.
- Proposed or planned drilling operations in the Gulf of Mexico could impair, restrict or negatively impact the ability of the United States military, and specifically Eglin Air Force Base, Tyndall Air Force Base, Hurlburt Field, Duke Field or the NAS Pensacola assigned, tenant, remote and/or guest units, to fully utilize the existing Joint Gulf Range Complex (JGRC) airspace and surface waters for ongoing or planned aircraft test, weapons test and/or training missions.

We ask the members of the Manatee County Legislative Delegation to officially oppose any legislative initiatives that facilitate oil and gas exploration off the coast of Florida. This legislation must be opposed to preserve our tourist economy, protect our clean beaches and shores and to ensure that our natural resources and coastal community character are retained.

We are unified in strong opposition to any initiatives to allow offshore drilling in Florida waters. Please consider our concerns on this critical issue to the state and to our community.

Sincerely,

Public Officials of Manatee County, the City of Bradenton, the City of Palmetto, The City of Anna Maria Island, the City of Bradenton Beach, the City of Holmes Beach and the Town of Longboat Key