



Trump Administration Proposes Massive Expansion of Offshore Oil Drilling

Yesterday, the Trump administration released a proposal that would allow oil and gas drilling off the Atlantic and Pacific coasts. Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke said nearly all the nation's outer continental shelf is being considered for drilling, including areas off the coasts of Florida, California, Maine and Alaska. It would be the first time in decades that oil drilling would be allowed off the waters of California, where drilling has been off limits since 1969. The Department of Interior (DOI) is expecting to have 47 lease sales between 2019 and 2024, including 19 off the coast of Alaska and 12 in the Gulf of Mexico. Seven other areas offered for lease for new drilling would be in the waters off California. Under the proposal, only one of 26 planning areas in the Atlantic Ocean, Pacific Ocean, Gulf of Mexico and the Arctic Ocean would be off limits to oil and gas exploration. That area, known as the North Aleutian Basin, was protected under an Executive Order by President George Bush.

Under the Obama Administration, oil drilling was blocked on more than 90 percent of the outer continental shelf. Secretary Zinke argued that those restrictions on drilling had cost the United States billions of dollars in lost revenue and the new proposal would make nearly 90 percent of those waters available for leasing. In April, President Trump signed an Executive Order requiring the DOI to reconsider President Obama's five-year offshore drilling plan to block new lease sales in many areas of the Atlantic and Arctic.

The proposal comes less than one month after Congress passed a comprehensive tax bill that includes a provision to open the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge (ANWR) to oil and gas drilling and directs the Energy Department to sell as much as seven million barrels of crude oil from the Strategic Petroleum Reserve.