



Photo by Beth Comeau

# Block Offshore Oil Drilling in Maine's Waters

The Department of Interior has released a dangerous five-year plan to allow offshore oil and gas drilling off 90 percent of the U.S. coast—including in Maine waters. This plan would expose Maine communities, fishermen, and coastal residents to significant new dangers from oil pollution, threatening our economy and way of life. Now is the time for all Mainers to speak up and oppose oil drilling off the coast of Maine.

## **Threats to Our Economy:**

Exposing Maine's coast to oil spills would threaten our fishing, tourism, aquaculture, and real estate sectors, all of which depend on clean and healthy coastal waters. These are critical industries that support our state's economy. For example, the Maine lobster industry contributes \$1.7 billion to the state's economy annually. Maine's coast also brings in \$4 billion in tourism dollars annually—more than 70 percent of the state's tourism revenue. Even a minor spill could cause irreversible damage to the Gulf of Maine ecosystem. Our fishing industry also would be threatened by offshore seismic exploration associated with drilling, which can disrupt the migratory patterns of fish, whales, and other sea mammals. This exploration technique uses extremely loud seismic air gun blasts once every 10 seconds for days or weeks on end and would affect the catch rates of commercial fishermen.

## **Threats to Our Health:**

Drilling off Maine's coast would increase air pollution, threatening Maine's already compromised air quality. Polluted air increases asthma attacks and other respiratory ailments like bronchitis. It also increases the risk of life-threatening conditions such as cancer and burdens our neighbors and health care system with substantial medical costs. Between drilling and processing oil, a single rig can generate as much pollution as 7,000 cars driving 50 miles per day. In addition, the drilling process releases thousands of gallons of polluted water containing toxins such as benzene, zinc, arsenic, and radioactive materials.

## **Threats to Wildlife:**

Offshore oil drilling threatens wildlife with ocean noise, habitat destruction, and oil spills. The seismic noise used by oil and gas companies to explore for oil offshore can be deafening for whales and other marine mammals, which use sound to navigate, find mates, and find food. Imagine puffins, whales, and seals coated in oil from a spill and deafened by seismic bursts. The roads, pipelines, and other facilities built to serve oil companies can harm and destroy important habitat. An oil spill can be devastating for wildlife, as oiled birds can lose the ability to fly, regulate body temperature, dive for food, or float on the water, and can ingest and inhale the oil on their bodies, leading to death.

## Threat of a Disaster:

The April 2010 disaster involving the Deepwater Horizon oil rig in the Gulf of Mexico should put Mainers on notice about the extreme risks involved in the Department of Interior's proposal. Considered the worst oil spill in U.S. history, the Deepwater Horizon disaster caused 11 deaths and took 87 days to cap, releasing more than 3.2 million barrels of oil into the Gulf. This oil caused widespread ecological impacts and wildlife deaths, with seabird losses alone in the hundreds of thousands. Economic impacts for coastal communities also were immediate and devastating.



Fireboat response crews battling the blazing remnants of the offshore oil rig, Deepwater Horizon, in the Gulf of Mexico, April 21, 2010

## Mainers are Against This Plan:

Because of these threats, Maine's entire Congressional delegation opposes this plan, as do thousands of individuals, elected officials, and businesses along the entire Eastern Seaboard. Maine Senators Susan Collins and Angus King and Maine Representatives Chellie Pingree and Bruce Poliquin have co-sponsored bills that would prohibit oil and gas drilling off the coast of New England.

This plan to sell off New England's ocean waters to the oil industry poses a major, unacceptable risk to Maine's coastal communities and marine life. Please take action now to help block this dangerous proposal.

## Take Action to remove Maine waters from offshore drilling plans.

- Submit a public comment to the Department of Interior urging them to remove Maine from the offshore drilling proposal. Comments can be submitted to the Federal Register by March 9, 2018, at <https://nrcm.salsalabs.org/offshoredrillinginmaine>.
- Write and submit a letter-to-the-editor to your local paper opposing offshore oil drilling.
- Urge members of your city or town council or board of selectmen to pass a local ordinance putting your community on record as opposing offshore oil drilling in Maine.
- If you're a business owner, sign our coastal business letter against offshore drilling at <https://tinyurl.com/offshoredrillingME>.

For more information contact Kristin Jackson, Federal Project Outreach Coordinator  
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