

*FLORIDA KEYS NATIONAL MARINE SANCTUARY ADVISORY COUNCIL*

**DRAFT RESOLUTION  
OF THE FLORIDA KEYS NATIONAL MARINE SANCTUARY ADVISORY COUNCIL  
OPPOSING ANY EXPANSION OF OFFSHORE DRILLING IN THE GULF OF MEXICO**

February 16, 2010

**WHEREAS**, the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary extends approximately 220 miles southwest from the southern tip of the Florida peninsula; and

**WHEREAS**, The Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary and Protection Act (Public Law 101-605) finds the following:

Sec. 2(2) Adjacent to the Florida Keys land mass are located spectacular, unique and nationally significant marine environments, including seagrass meadows, mangrove islands and extensive living coral reefs.

Sec. 2(3) these marine environments support rich biological communities possessing extensive conservation, recreational, commercial, ecological, historical, research, educational and esthetic values which give this area special national significance.

Sec. 2(4) these environments are the marine equivalent of tropical rain forests in that they support high levels of biological diversity, are fragile and easily susceptible to damage from human activities, and possess high value to human beings if properly conserved.

Sec. 2(5) these marine environments are subject to damage and loss of their ecological integrity from a variety of sources of disturbance; and

**WHEREAS**, the plant and animal communities within the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary have experienced decline resulting from numerous causes, such as boat groundings and anchor scrapes, warm and cold water temperature extremes, the effects of diminished freshwater flows from development in the Everglades, algal blooms, etc., and are at a vulnerable state where any further stress may jeopardize their health for future generations; and

**WHEREAS**, the impacts of drilling contaminants and spills caused by offshore oil development can be carried great distances by the Gulf Loop Current into Florida's coasts and into the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary; and

**WHEREAS**, environmental specialists contend a major risk from drilling platforms is the wastewater they routinely discharge which contains drilling fluids and heavy metals including mercury; and

**WHEREAS**, according to oil industry data, an oil rig in the Gulf of Mexico can dump up to 90,000 tons of drilling fluid and metal cuttings over its lifetime. These contaminants accumulate in the marine food web and may contaminate local beaches and have a negative effect on the environment and the tourism industry; and

**WHEREAS**, despite technological advances in oil drilling technology, there is no positive assurance that catastrophic damage to our coastline, beaches, coral reefs, plant and fish life could be avoided during normal operating conditions, including pipeline or tanker transport, or during storm situations; and

**WHEREAS**, lifting the moratorium on mineral leasing in the Gulf of Mexico poses a devastating threat to the resources of the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary; and

**WHEREAS**, the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary Advisory Council previously passed two resolutions and one motion, in 2006, 2007, and 2009, respectively, related to opposing efforts to expand drilling efforts in the Gulf of Mexico;

**Therefore be it resolved,**

We hereby strongly encourage all elected officials at the local, State and Federal levels to oppose legislative attempts to expand oil and gas exploration or drilling in Florida, including those allowing near-shore drilling or eliminating moratoria prohibiting off shore drilling in state or federal waters, and we urge such officials to take immediate steps to encourage and assist in the development of renewable and sustainable sources of energy.

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The Council is an advisory body to the sanctuary superintendent. The opinions and findings of this publication do not necessarily reflect the position of the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, the Florida Department of Environmental Protection, or the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission.