

House Energy and Mineral Resources Subcommittee Virtual Forum
October 14, 2020

Chair Lowenthal and members of the subcommittee, it is an honor to be included in today's virtual forum to discuss the threats posed to local communities and businesses by offshore oil and gas drilling. My name is Catherine Blakespear and I have had the privilege of serving as the Mayor of the beautiful coastal city of Encinitas since 2016. Before I begin my remarks I would like to thank Congressman Levin, a member of this committee and a dedicated public servant who has worked tirelessly to promote coastal economies, to reduce shoreline erosion and to protect our natural resources. Congressman on behalf of the City of Encinitas, thank you for your partnership and shared vision.

Encinitas incorporated as a city 34 years ago this month and when I look ahead at the future that Encinitas's residents want for themselves and their families, it is a future that protects our coastal identity. The City of Encinitas is on the front lines of the climate change battle. Set along six miles of Pacific coastline in northern San Diego County, Encinitas boasts serene beaches, offshore reefs, and natural bluffs. Our coast defines our regions' identity, and therefore combatting the effects of climate change while preserving our ocean ecosystems is not an option, it's an obligation. We have pioneered and been lauded for our nature-based approaches to mitigating rising seas, such as our award-winning Living Shoreline Project which protects our shoreline through the establishment of a natural dune environment. We've utilized new technologies to protect our offshore reefs and investigated opportunities to restore kelp and oyster beds to keep our oceans resilient and adaptable. We invest in our oceans and provide them protections, for that is exactly what they provide us.

Our scenic coastline draws around three-million visitors and residents to the beach each year. Encinitas is an ecological hot spot, not to mention an epic surf destination when the swells are good. We are bookended to the north and south by natural lagoon systems, which provide nursery habitat for countless marine species. Offshore, Encinitas is home to the Swami's State Marine Conservation Area, a 12.6 square mile marine protected area. The rich waters around Swami's reef contain distinct habitats—kelp forests, extensive surf grass beds, and rocky reefs—where lobsters, halibut, grunion, and many other fish and invertebrates feed and breed. These precious spaces keep our beach ecology stellar, our economy thriving, our beach community happy and healthy. We would

never put them in peril for the archaic, weakly regulated and damaging pursuit of offshore oil drilling. To do so would be shortsighted and would be a permanent mistake.

In conjunction with ocean stewardship, the City of Encinitas is on the forefront of reducing our dependence on fossil fuels. Through our award-winning Climate Action Plan, Encinitas is committed to reducing greenhouse gas emissions and we are united with the State of California in doing so. Over the past several years, the City has taken large strides in implementing safe bicycle paths and encouraged active transportation in every part of the City. We are founding members of San Diego Community Power, a CCA dedicated to providing green power options. And we've developed an urban forest management program, dedicated to cooling our planet while sequestering carbon. These are the sort of progressive endeavors we do in Encinitas, building economic resilience in conjunction with climate resilience. Oil-derived fuel is an obsolete technology, increasing global warming with the potential of inflicting horrible damage on our marine environment. Offshore drilling provides profits for a few at a cost to many. We simply know better.

Thank you for holding this timely and important forum. I look forward to your questions.