

by Donna Osborne

The United States Department of Interior has scheduled the Oregon-Washington outer-continental shelf for lease sale to the oil industry in 1992 for offshore oil and gas drilling. The Interior Department is determined to expedite development of remaining domestic oil and gas resources as quickly as possible, in spite of tremendous public and official opposition. This determination to exploit all remaining U.S. oil and gas deposits at wholesale prices has been aptly dubbed the "Drain America First" policy.

Interior has projected fifty-eight million barrels of oil and one thousand, forty-three billion cubic feet of gas off Oregon and Washington, which would take thirty-five years to obtain. By way of comparison, current oil consumption in the U.S. is sixteen and a half million barrels of oil a day. The fifty-eight million barrels off Oregon and Washington would fuel the nation for about three and a half days.

The plan includes the entire length of the Oregon-Washington coast from three miles out. This enormous area might contain \$130 to \$486 million worth of oil. On the other hand, according to the Oregon Territorial Sea Management Study, Oregon's commercial fisheries averaged a landed-value per year of \$64 million for 1978-1985. These fisheries generated an income equivalent of eleven thousand, six hundred and forty-five jobs in 1986, with a total personal income of \$233 million for that year. Oregon's commercial fisheries provided around fourteen percent of coastal earned income in 1986. In some areas such as Astoria and Newport the figure is closer to twenty-five percent.

Fishing is the past, present and future of the Oregon coast. We simply cannot afford to jeopardize this valuable, sustainable resource. Renewable resources have clear priority over non-renewable ones. Fossil fuels represent the extreme end of the nonrenewable as fisheries do the renewable.

The Oregon offshore oil project will generate one hundred and seventy-five thousand barrels of muds and cuttings and forty-three and a half million barrels of formation water. These contain significant amounts of toxic pollutants as well as emulsified oil and grease, and are routinely discharged into the water column. Some areas require industry to barge muds and cuttings to shore but onshore disposal of toxic substances is a problem as well.

Air pollution from diesel engines on board the drilling vessels and production platforms can be significant. It causes acid rain which kills tree seedlings. Emissions from just one drilling rig equal those from seven thousand automobiles driving fifty miles.

The impact of exploration, development production, processing and transportation could cause substantial degradation of the "relatively pristine" air quality of the Pacific Northwest.

Noise pollution from the drilling ships, platforms, tankers, support vessels and helicopter and airplane traffic will cause a noticeable change in the generally nonindustrialized nature of the northwest coastline. The massive diesel engines on the platforms can be heard for miles. Helicopter overflights would be particularly disruptive to the many seabird and shorebird nesting colonies up and down the coast.



TOM FUNK

OFFSHORE OVERDRILL

Even preliminary exploratory activities are a worry and endanger certain species. A single seismic survey vessel operating in Pacific Northwest waters several years ago snagged a field of crabpots and cost the dungeness crab industry \$250 thousand. Underwater seismic testing has been documented to reduce fish catches, may damage fish eggs and can disrupt the echo location abilities of whales. Gray whales spend many weeks each year migrating the length of the Pacific coast.

And what about oil spills? the major causes of spills are transferring and transporting the oil. Tankers alone put one and a half million tons of oil into the marine environment each year. Large tanker accidents are alarmingly common. Perhaps even more alarming are the many smaller spills from transport, transfer and production we never hear about. Interior does not include spills of less than one thousand barrels in their statistics. Do you know what nine hundred and ninety-nine barrels of oil could do to our beaches? Even in good weather cleanup operations recover an average of only five to fifteen percent of an oil spill in calm waters. The Arco spill in Port Angeles Harbor cleanup costs were \$14 million. The 1983 Yaquina Bay spill cost \$300 thousand and the Mobile tanker spill in the Columbia River cost \$2.5 million.

Development and production of mineral and petroleum deposits offshore will put directly at risk key marine resources and environmental values of Oregon's coast. Indirectly, local lifestyles, economics and the attractiveness of the coast to tourists will be greatly affected. Yet this is not how it will be sold to

the Oregon coastal communities. The oil industry will paint a rosy picture of increased tax revenues, jobs and huge money influxes into the local economy. The reality is quite different. Permanent jobs are few and almost always filled with experienced hands from Texas, Louisiana and Oklahoma. Also, the dollars earned by workers tend to be exported out of the area, whereas the dollars earned by local small business people, fishermen, loggers and tourism related jobs turn over in the local economy many times. Even in the shortrun, tax revenues generated by oil industry activity would not offset public taxpayer expenses of providing roads, schools, sewers, fire departments and large energy requirements to support even the temporary swelling of the workforce caused by construction activities.

Potential tax revenues would be significantly reduced in Oregon's case because we have no sales tax.

Longterm losses such as reduction in tourism or fisheries damaged or wiped out could never be made up. It is for good reason that Interior has judged the Pacific Northwest coastal seas to be the second most environmentally sensitive and productive in the nation.

Oil exploration has no place in Oregon or Washington waters.

Donna Osborne lives in Cannon Beach. She has adapted this article from a speech she made recently to the Cannon Beach City Council.

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