



January 28, 2019

Senator Michael Dembrow, Chair
Senate Committee on Environment and Natural Resources
Oregon Legislature

Re: Environment Oregon supports Senate Bill 256

Chair Dembrow and Members of the Committee,

Environment Oregon is a statewide, citizen-based environmental advocacy organization working for clean air, clean water and open space. We fully support Senate Bill 256.

The Oregon Coast is blessed with sandy beaches, rocky coves, towering sea cliffs and an astonishing variety of ocean wildlife along our shores. These are the beaches where families and friends come together, where kids experience what Walt Whitman [called](#) the “continual miracle” of the sea. These are the waters where dolphins and seals surf the waves, sea turtles patrol the reefs, and the last great whales migrate up and down our coast. They remind us, as Rachel Carson [did](#), that “in every curving beach, in every grain of sand, there is a story of the earth.”

Drilling for oil and gas, both nearshore and offshore, poses a great risk to fragile ocean ecosystems and marine wildlife. We’ve seen time and time again that when you drill, you spill.

Exactly 50 years ago, from January 28th- February 7th 1969, an oil platform [blowout](#) spilled tens of thousands of barrels of oil onto nearly 40 miles of coastline in Santa Barbara County, California.

In 1989, the Exxon Valdez [spilled](#) 11 million gallons of oil into Alaska’s Prince William Sound, spreading to 1,300 miles of coastline.

In 2010, BP’s Deepwater Horizon drilling platform [exploded](#), releasing more than 200 million gallons of oil that washed up on beaches from Louisiana to Florida and spread far into the Gulf of Mexico.

Exploring for new oil and gas deposits can also damage ocean wildlife. For example, whales and dolphins depend on their hearing to navigate and communicate. “[Seismic testing](#)” subjects these animals to loud booms every 10 seconds, 24 hours a day, for days or even weeks at a stretch.

In an age of remarkable advances in energy conservation and renewable energy technologies, at a time when global warming poses an existential threat to future generations, sacrificing our beaches and ocean wildlife is no longer, if it ever was, the price we must pay for progress. That's not a world we have to live in anymore. Nor is it the future our children deserve.

Senate Bill 256 wisely makes permanent a moratorium on nearshore oil and gas drilling, and puts strong roadblocks in place to make it much harder—and much less lucrative—for companies to do oil and gas exploration and drilling offshore for oil we don't need.

Our shoreline and ocean are part of what make Oregon such an amazing place to live. We must do everything we can to protect them.

Thank you for considering this important issue and allowing the opportunity to provide comments.

Sincerely,

Celeste Meiffren-Swango
State Director