

RESOLUTION 2009- 51

A RESOLUTION OF THE BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS OF WAKULLA COUNTY, FLORIDA, ADOPTING THE POLICY OF OPPOSING OFFSHORE DRILLING FOR OIL AND NATURAL GAS OFF THE COASTLINE OF FLORIDA; AND PROVIDING AN EFFECTIVE DATE.

WHEREAS, the coastal waters off Wakulla County have abundant seagrass meadows, marshes, tidal creeks, estuaries, and other important habitats that are essential for healthy marine life communities; and

WHEREAS, the coastal waters off Wakulla County include the Big Bend Seagrass Aquatic Preserve, which is managed by the Florida Department of Environmental Protection and encompasses large, remote, and undeveloped expanses of submerged seagrasses and nearshore marshlands; and

WHEREAS, Wakulla County is surrounded by relatively pristine and healthy coastal waters that offer abundant recreational opportunity and support commercial fisheries that are vital to the local and regional economy; and

WHEREAS, nearly 90 percent of all economically important marine species spend at least part of their life cycle within the submerged seagrass beds, nearshore marshlands, and inshore estuaries; and

WHEREAS, much of the coastal land of Wakulla County is undeveloped, is publicly owned by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service as the St. Marks National Wildlife Refuge, is in relatively pristine condition, provides enormous benefits to the functioning coastal ecosystem, and provides habitat for ecologically important plant and animal species while providing abundant recreational opportunities; and

WHEREAS, any harm to this vast and important network of coastal ecosystems will be detrimental not only to the well-being of the coastal and marine life but to the residents and visitors to Wakulla County who come primarily to enjoy the abundant, relatively pristine, natural resources; and

WHEREAS, the current and future economic backbone of Wakulla County is in the development of ecotourism and related businesses and industries that rely on the abundant, relatively pristine, natural resources of the coastal and marine ecosystems; and

WHEREAS, the leaders of the Florida legislature have indicated that they support legislation permitting offshore drilling in the state-controlled waters within 10 miles of the coastline of Florida, and the Governor has said it is worth considering; and

WHEREAS, federal legislation proposes to repeal moratoria established by the Gulf of Mexico Energy Security Act of 2006 (GOMESA) and other acts and would allow drilling in waters 10 to 45 miles from Florida's Gulf Coast; and

WHEREAS, the purported economic benefits of drilling off Florida's Gulf Coast fail to take into account the risks to Florida's tourism industry due to drilling rigs, pipelines, storage facilities, vessels and other infrastructure in and on Florida land and waters that are in direct visual, physical and environmental conflict with the world-class beaches that are the basis of Florida's tourism and economy; and

WHEREAS, the purported economic benefits of drilling off Florida's Gulf Coast fail to take into account the risks to Florida's commercial and recreational fishing industries; and

WHEREAS, given that Florida waters extend no more than 10 miles from the coastline, drilling rigs of any size in these waters would be seen on the horizon in the daytime, in the sunset and especially at night; and

WHEREAS, despite technological advances in oil rig drilling technology, there is no assurance that catastrophic damage to our coastline, beaches, plant and fish life can be avoided—whether from drilling muds containing heavy metals such as mercury, from regular production, or from accidental oil spills—and whether during normal operating conditions or during storm situations; and

WHEREAS, offshore drilling spills are a significant threat to the beaches that high percentages of Florida tourists say are one of the top reasons they come to Florida, and that spills can be carried by Gulf of Mexico currents to miles of coastline on both the east and west coasts of Florida; and

WHEREAS, hurricanes in the Gulf of Mexico are a fact of life and can result in spills—as did Hurricanes Katrina and Rita near Louisiana in 2005, where hundreds of platforms and pipelines were destroyed and nearly three-quarters of a million gallons of oil and petroleum products were spilled from rigs, platforms and pipelines; and

WHEREAS, on August 21, 2009, a major oil spill began spewing oil into ocean waters off the western coast of Australia, a spill that had reached 6,000 square miles by September 14, 2009 and was expected to continue to flow for 6 weeks, using state-of-the-art technology touted as the safest ever by the oil industry and further claimed to be the same technology that would be used in Florida waters; and

WHEREAS, Florida citizens and state and federal legislators have been led to believe that drilling in Florida's Gulf Coast waters is needed immediately—to provide revenue to the State, to lower the price of gasoline, to eliminate the United States' dependency on foreign oil, and to provide additional areas where oil companies can drill—when in fact it would likely be several years before production would begin and decades before alleged production volumes would be achieved; and the volumes projected would have negligible effect on gas prices and our country's dependence on foreign oil.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, by the Board of County Commissioners of Wakulla County, Florida, that:

SECTION 1. RECITALS. The above recitals are true and correct and are hereby incorporated herein by reference.

SECTION 2. OPPOSITION TO OFFSHORE DRILLING. The Board strongly opposes legislative attempts to allow offshore oil drilling in any of the waters under the jurisdiction of the State of Florida or in federal waters off the coast of Florida, and that we encourage all elected officials at the County, State and Federal levels to join us in our opposition, as well as in our efforts to encourage and assist in the development of alternative, renewable sources of fuel and energy.

SECTION 3. EFFECTIVE DATE. This Resolution shall become effective on Oct. 20, 2009.

DONE AND ADOPTED in Wakulla County, Florida, by a vote of 5 to 0 this 20 day of October, 2009.

**BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
OF WAKULLA COUNTY, FLORIDA**

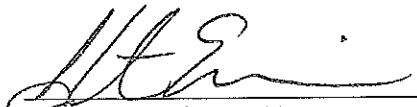

HOWARD KESSLER, Chairman

ATTEST:


BRENT X. THURMOND, Ex Officio
Clerk to the Board



APPROVED AS TO FORM:


Heather Encinosa, Esq.
County Attorney