



County of Monterey

Item No.

Board Report

Board of Supervisors
Chambers
168 W. Alisal St., 1st Floor
Salinas, CA 93901

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Report

Receive a preliminary response to **Board Referral No. 2025.17** (Askew) regarding affirmation, through resolution, of the County of Monterey's opposition to offshore drilling and seabed mining, and consider joining and financially contributing to the Local Government Outer Continental Shelf Coordination Program to ensure the local government perspective is not diminished in federal decision-making.

RECOMMENDATION:

It is recommended that the Board of Supervisors:

- a. Receive a preliminary analysis report in response to Board Referral No. 2025.17 (Attachment E), and;
- b. Direct staff to proceed with the completion of its response to the referral based on the proposed project description in this report; or,
- c. Direct that staff:
 - i. Proceed with completion of its response to the referral based on modifications by the Board; or,
 - ii. Return to the Board with a more comprehensive analysis of the referral and anticipated effort for completion
- d. Rescind the referral; or,
- e. Provide further direction, as appropriate.

PRELIMINARY ANALYSIS:

Referral Summary: With the signing of Executive Order No. 14154 - Unleashing American Energy Act in January 2025, federal agencies moved quickly to open new offshore drilling opportunities. In April 2025, President Trump signed Executive Order No. 14285 - Unleashing America's Offshore Critical Minerals and Resources, which promotes deep seabed mining, posing serious threats to California's coastal economies, marine ecosystems, and climate goals. As a result, Santa Cruz County moved to re-establish the Local Governments Outer Continental Shelf (OCS) Coordination Program and invited the County of Monterey to join. The original membership included the counties of Santa Cruz, Monterey, San Luis Obispo, San Francisco, Marin, Sonoma, Mendocino, and Humboldt, as well as several cities -among them Santa Cruz, Laguna Beach, and Newport Beach-and the San Diego Association of Governments (SANDAG).

Local governments often lack the staff capacity to track rapidly evolving federal actions, evaluate complex technical documents, and engage directly with Congress and federal agencies. Without coordinated participation, the local government perspective is also more easily overlooked in federal

decision-making. The program would address these challenges by providing a structured, collaborative framework with shared resources, regular updates, and dedicated federal representation. The estimated annual coordination cost is approximately \$250,000, to be distributed among participating jurisdictions to minimize individual cost burdens. As of December 4, 2025, the following jurisdictions had joined the program:

- 1) City of Santa Cruz
- 2) Santa Cruz County
- 3) Sonoma County

Background: In the 1970s, the federal government initiated the offshore oil-drilling lease process along the California coast. In response, federal and state leaders opposed the proposal, and coastal communities joined together to resist it. (Attachment A - printed April 1998).

The current federal administration is proposing an accelerated schedule for offshore oil-drilling leases, making a timely response critical, as such drilling would exacerbate climate change impacts on coastal communities. Notably, the County of Monterey has actively engaged on this issue, submitting comments on several relevant federal bills related to the proposal. For reference, those letters and comments are included in Attachment C.

This request seeks a coordinated effort among local coastal communities to engage in both the legal and political opposition to this initiative.

Estimated Project Cost: Project costs are approximately \$250,000 per year, shared among participating local agencies, with per-jurisdiction costs varying based on total participation. Funding would primarily support hiring Richard Charter (Attachment B - Mr. Charter's Resume), the original consultant and founder of the Local Governments OCS Coordination Program, to serve as a consultant managing operations. To date, the following jurisdictions have adopted the resolution to join and have contributed financially:

City of Santa Cruz: \$29,000

Santa Cruz County: \$29,000

Sonoma County: \$30,000

Staffing Level Estimate: It is anticipated that at least one county staff member will be involved, along with consultation of the County of Monterey's contracted federal lobbyist group, Ballard-Spahr, LLC. However, by joining, it is expected that Mr. Charter will handle most of the engagement with the federal government on this issue.

Departmental Challenges: The County of Monterey currently contracts with Ballard-Spahr, LLC for federal lobbying services and maintains a full-time Legislative Program Manager in the County's Administrative Office. Many municipalities, however, lack dedicated staff or outside lobbyists for legislative priorities. As a result, participating in a program to fund federal lobbying could be seen as duplicating resources. Nevertheless, there are clear benefits of regional collaboration among governments on this high-priority issue.

Proposed Response Date: Staff proposes to return to the Board in January 2026 with next steps based on the Board's direction, unless the referral is rescinded.

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Approved by: Nicholas E. Chiulos, Assistant County Administrative Officer

Attachments:

Attachment A

Attachment B

Attachment C

Attachment D

Attachment E