

Testimony of Allison Ford  
The Otter Project

Hearings on Offshore Oil Drilling and Renewable Energy  
Interior Secretary Salazar  
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San Francisco

Good afternoon, my name is Allison Ford and I am the Executive Director of The Otter Project. I am here today to tell you that I oppose offshore oil drilling. There are no two ways about it; sea otters and oil don't mix. Fish and Wildlife Service, the public, and private non-profit groups like ours have poured huge amounts of time, money and resources into protecting sea otters. FWS identified the threat of an oil spill as one of the primary threats to sea otters long ago, and although we have since identified other threats as well, the risk of an oil spill still looms large. A single oil spill could wipe out the entire population of sea otters in one blow. It is not worth the risk. I could stand up here and talk for an hour about why oil is bad for sea otters, but that would be a waste of everyone's time right now. Suffice to say, we oppose the extension of offshore oil drilling along the sea otter range and our coast.

I am a native California and the health of our coast is important to me. The coast supports many uses, and has environmental, cultural and economic value to all of us Californians. We have chosen time and time again to protect it and those uses.

Lastly, I would like to address the renewable projects that have been proposed. I am deeply concerned about climate change—it is an issue that we will be dealing with for the rest of our lives. I understand the need to explore all options and to find alternatives for fossil fuels. But in doing so, we cannot afford to undermine all of our past efforts to protect the coast. Exploration of elaborate and potentially massive renewable energy projects must be pursued with caution in a tempered manner. We need to proceed with full environmental analysis and cost-benefit analyses that include not just the economic benefit of extractive uses, but the full range of environmental and ecosystem services.

Thank you for receiving my comments.