

Testimony of Steve Shimek
Monterey Coastkeeper

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

Good afternoon:

My name is Steve Shimek and I am Executive Director of Monterey Coastkeeper.

Many here today are rallying against offshore oil drilling. I will simply say that I agree with that point of view.

But, my testimony here today is more nuanced than just say no to oil and yes to renewables.

While we agree with the new administration's focus on renewables, we are VERY concerned about the rush to lease land and water for unproven technologies.

Offshore wind farms are being rolled out throughout the world and there is some experience weighing costs and benefits.

But wave energy appears to be the renewable source with the most potential here on the west coast. We are VERY concerned.

Over a hundred square miles of California's nearshore ocean are in some early stage of FERC licensing. These leases will create a spider web of cabling directly in the path of migrating whales, will disturb sensitive and highly productive bottom environments, and could preclude other uses such as recreation and commercial fishing.

We don't even know what these new wave energy devices will look like. We certainly do not know the costs and benefits.

Worldwide there is no practical experience producing wave energy - the first experimental wave farm went into production in Portugal in September of 2008 - a few months ago - with only three buoys. It failed. In the US, the experimental Finnevera buoy sank. A 20 ft. diameter Stanford Research Institute buoy deployed off Santa Cruz generated enough power to light "one small light bulb."

The leasing of waters for wave energy should be paused. We are FOR renewable energy. Experiments should go ahead - BUT NOT OFF SENSITIVE COASTLINES.

It may sound like an eco-mantra but conservation is a strong component of the answer.

Maine uses half the energy per capita as Georgia. Japan uses half the energy per capita as the U.S. These disparities highlight the potential of conservation.

Let's maximize the potential of conservation before we discuss "booms" and "buoys" off our coast.

Thank you.