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COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE  
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**Congress of the United States**  
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March 30, 2017

Dr. Walter Cruickshank  
Acting Director  
Bureau of Ocean Energy Management  
1849 C Street, NW  
Washington, D.C. 20240

Dear Dr. Cruickshank:

We are writing to seek further information regarding the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management surveys in areas under moratoria in the Gulf of Mexico.

As you know, the Gulf of Mexico Energy Security Act of 2006 (GOMESA) prohibits leasing or pre-leasing activities in the eastern Gulf of Mexico, specifically the portion of the Eastern Planning Area within 125 miles of Florida, the portion of the Central Planning Area within 100 miles of Florida, and all areas of the Gulf east of the Military Mission Line (86 degrees, 41 minutes west longitude). This legal prohibition is in place until June 30, 2022.

Information from BOEM confirms that it has commissioned 12 surveys in the prohibited areas in the last five years. These activities include two- and three-dimensional seismic surveys, electromagnetic surveys, and sea-floor sampling. The most recent survey permit was issued in December 2016.


We understand that BOEM does not consider these surveys "formal steps identified by the Department of Interior as part of the actual lease sale process," as defined by the House Report 102-116 to accompany the fiscal year 1992 Interior appropriations bill, and therefore are not "pre-leasing" activities. These surveys, however, are pre-requisites to the preparation of sale-specific environmental impact statements, which are formal steps in the pre-leasing process and are prohibited by GOMESA.

Critically, the moratorium allows for the maintenance of the Joint Gulf Range Complex, an irreplaceable "national asset [and] national treasure," according to a former 325<sup>th</sup> Fighter Wing commander. There is strong support in Congress and throughout the Department of Defense for maintaining this unique test and training range.

Given that leasing or pre-leasing activity in the eastern Gulf of Mexico is prohibited by law until 2022, and there is no foreseeable leasing activity thereafter, we have concerns regarding the need for these taxpayer-funded surveys. Can you provide information on the specific purpose of each of these surveys conducted over the past five years and what findings or conclusions have been derived from each of them?

Thank you for prompt consideration of this request.

Sincerely,

  
Neal Dunn, M.D.  
Member of Congress

  
Matt Gaetz  
Member of Congress