

**Statement of the Honorable Madeleine Z. Bordallo**  
**Chairwoman, Subcommittee on Insular Affairs, Oceans and Wildlife**  
**Committee on Natural Resources**  
**Joint Subcommittee Hearing on**  
**Energy Development in the OCS and the Future of Our Oceans**  
**March 24, 2009**

The Subcommittees meet this morning to hear testimony on two issues related to energy development in the Outer Continental Shelf, or the OCS. Specifically, witnesses will testify on the potential environmental and known impacts of energy development and the need for careful planning and ecological assessments to guide our energy development—be it traditional or alternative energy—in the OCS.

This is the sixth in a series of hearings that the Committee on Natural Resources and the Subcommittee on Energy and Mineral Resources have held on this issue since the convening of the 111<sup>th</sup> Congress in January. Throughout these hearings, we have heard from a broad range of witnesses including government agencies, conservationists, coastal states, fishermen, oil companies, tourism bureaus, scientists, and the U.S. Chamber of Commerce. Some of our witnesses oppose further oil and gas development in the OCS, but support development of renewable energy. Some support more drilling as one of a suite of energy options, and some are somewhat ambivalent on the topic of drilling altogether, but believe any energy development that occurs must be done in a thoughtful manner, looking at and carefully balancing all uses of the OCS. Today's hearing will explore that last point in greater detail.

As many of you recognize, today is the 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Exxon Valdez, a terrible accident that had long term and far reaching impacts on the environment and that must never be repeated. There is no question that improvements have been made since then, not only in our tankers used to transport oil, but also in operations to avoid spills and responses to spills when they do occur. There will always be risks, however, no matter how far we have come, and there are some areas that are too sensitive to risk to oil and gas development, or maybe even for other forms of energy development.

Too sensitive, perhaps, because they provide critical habitat for valuable fish stocks or populations of endangered marine mammals. Or there may be areas that are too sensitive because they are close to coral reefs. It is our responsibility to ensure that we protect these important habitats and marine resources as we look to explore options for increasing our energy independence through energy development of many kinds in the OCS.

While I recognize that there are many who would like to see the moratorium on offshore drilling reinstated, the new Administration has made clear that some drilling will be a part of our broader, national energy strategy as we move forward. Our challenge, then, is to ensure that new drilling or any energy development in the OCS is done responsibly, and provides the greatest energy and economic benefit with the fewest environmental impacts possible.

This is why the comprehensive planning ideas being discussed by some of our witnesses here today make so much sense. In order to make responsible energy development decisions in the O-C-S, we need to know not only where the greatest energy resources are, but also where the most critical fisheries and marine mammal habitats are, where other important ecologically sensitive areas are located, and the current uses of the oceans areas in question.

When this information is considered in a comprehensive manner and cumulative impacts are assessed, instead of planning on a project by project basis, we can streamline energy development efforts, reduce conflicts, and ensure the long term conservation of our living marine resources and the health of our oceans. This is the energy strategy I believe we should be aspiring to in the OCS.