

## Front and center talking points:

With new offshore oil and gas development, it's only a question of when accidents and spills will occur. It doesn't have to be on the scale of the Exxon Valdez disaster to be a catastrophe for Cook Inlet. A recent estimate from the offshore Lease Sale 258 estimated a **1 in 5 chance of at least one major oil spill**. Salmon populations in these waters already face challenges from warming ocean and river temperatures; any oil and gas development in Lower Cook Inlet will open the door to unnecessary threat to our fisheries. Alaskans have worked to protect these coastal waters and fisheries from oil and gas for decades, and we need your help to oppose new leases now.

## 11th OCS 5-year talking points

- **Lower Cook Inlet supports economies built around commercial and sport fisheries, subsistence gathering, and tourism.** These businesses and cultural practices add hundreds of millions of dollars into local economies each year, and put food on the table for Alaskans and tourists alike. Fossil fuel development is a direct threat to these sustainable economies.
- **Offshore oil development impacts marine life every step of the way.** Underwater blasting noise for seismic exploration and oil drilling impacts humpback, orca, and endangered Cook Inlet beluga whales' ability to communicate and hunt. Even without a disastrous spill, platform discharge waste and damaging underwater pipeline construction are all inevitable.
- **Lease 258 shows just how unpopular offshore oil development in Lower Cook Inlet remains with residents.** Almost 93,000 people shared public comments opposing this lease sale, demanding that healthy fisheries, local tourism economies, and our parks and wildlife be put first.
- **Environmental shortcomings continue.** The environmental review for Lease 258 didn't adequately address impacts to endangered Cook Inlet beluga whales. BOEM's draft plan shows the same lack of care, only mentioning Cook Inlet belugas once, without any acknowledgement that the 331 remaining whales would be harmed by new development.
- **Past failures in Cook Inlet give a clear picture of disasters to come.** It doesn't take a catastrophe on the scale of the Exxon Valdez oil spill to negatively impact Cook Inlet. Repeated leaks from underwater pipelines in Upper Cook Inlet, along with untreated waste discharge from existing platforms show that accidents and pollution from development here will only get worse with new oil and gas development.
- **Hilcorp, the corporation responsible for recent pipeline failures in Cook Inlet, is the most likely company to bid on Cook Inlet leases.** They have a terrible environmental record in Alaska, and as a private company, currently avoid paying



[hundreds of millions of dollars in state taxes](#). Any offshore development by Hilcorp is a losing proposition for Alaskans.

- **Alaskans have already made it clear that industrial development in Lower Cook Inlet is not worth the risk.** Since the 1970s, when local communities united to protect Kachemak Bay from oil and gas development, Alaskans have put our fisheries and a healthy environment first. That vision is why we have a thriving tourism economy today.
  - **Cook Inlet salmon populations are already facing huge challenges.** New offshore oil will further harm the fisheries our communities and local businesses rely on.
- 

## Public comment guidance:

There isn't a strict format for how to share your individual public comment, but here are a few ideas to get you going. Please don't let these suggestions constrain you!

1. **Start by clearly stating your opposition to all future offshore oil and gas leases in Lower Cook Inlet.** The comment portal will also ask you to share your name, and if you are willing to put your name in the official public record, it strengthens your comment.
2. **Share your connection to Cook Inlet.** Do you run a local business? Did you grow up picking berries and fishing with your family along the Inlet? Do you hike and camp in the mountains or raft the rivers that feed into the Inlet? Do you host tourists or love taking family and friends to Cook Inlet area parks and beaches?
3. **Describe your vision for your community.** Does that involve clean water and healthy wildlife? Events that celebrate nature, like the annual Kachemak Bay shorebird festival? Local harbors that continue to prioritize local access over industrial traffic? Renewable energy development?
4. **Share your concerns and priorities.** What worries you most about offshore oil development in Lower Cook Inlet? The threat of pollution or spills to decreasing salmon populations and endangered Cook Inlet belugas? The big-picture risks of doubling down on fossil fuels, even as Alaskan communities experience increased threats from climate change like extreme events like the flooding from Typhoon Halong? Or do you remember the ExxonValdez spill's impact on Cook Inlet?
5. **Ask that Lower Cook Inlet leases from this offshore plan.** Restate your opposition to offshore oil leases in Lower Cook Inlet.

