

**CALIFORNIA COASTAL COMMISSION**

45 FREMONT, SUITE 2000  
SAN FRANCISCO, CA 94105-2219  
VOICE AND TDD (415) 904-5200  
FAX (415) 904-5400



## **Draft Bill Promoting Offshore Drilling Would Harm Whales, Dolphins Coastal Commission Warns**

Date: November 7, 2017

Contact: Noaki Schwartz, public information officer, at (562) 833-5487

Letter: [documents.coastal.ca.gov/assets/press-releases/astro-act/letter.pdf](http://documents.coastal.ca.gov/assets/press-releases/astro-act/letter.pdf)

SAN FRANCISCO, Calif. \_ The California Coastal Commission sent a [letter](#) this week warning a federal subcommittee about a draft bill that would encourage more offshore oil drilling by stripping protections from endangered whales and other wildlife, while making it harder to create new marine sanctuaries..

The proposed measure would fast track seismic surveys and other activities that are known to harm marine mammals, particularly whales and dolphins. It would also amend the Marine Mammal Protection Act to limit the ability of agencies to require mitigation measures or require less invasive survey methods, and provide an exemption from the Endangered Species Act. In addition, it would prevent any future president from permanently protecting new coastal waters from offshore drilling, and bans any future president from creating new National Marine Sanctuaries or Monuments. A recent amendment regarding offshore wind energy leases disregards the current environmental review process already underway, and mandates issuance of a lease offshore California by the end of 2018.

The draft Accessing Strategic Resources Offshore Act or so-called “ASTRO” Act will be discussed in the Subcommittee on Energy and Mineral Resources hearing on November 7. Rep Paul Gosar (R-Arizona) Chairs the committee. The commission’s letter, signed by Executive Director Jack Ainsworth, outlined the bill’s potential impacts on marine wildlife and expressed support for National Marine Sanctuaries.

“This draft bill strikes at the heart of federal protections for marine wildlife and ocean waters,” Ainsworth said. “These proposed changes would eviscerate any meaningful protections for whales, dolphins and other threatened wildlife. They are ill-conceived, unnecessary, and contrary to the intent of the law.”

###