

Not Just the Atlantic: Obama Leasing Millions of Gulf of Mexico Acres for Offshore Oil and Gas Drilling

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Global Research, July 24, 2014
desmogblog.com

Region: [USA](#)

Theme: [Environment](#), [Oil and Energy](#)

Deploying the age-old "Friday news dump," President Barack Obama's Interior Department [gave the green light](#) on Friday, July 18 to companies to deploy seismic air guns [to examine the scope of Atlantic Coast offshore oil-and-gas reserves](#).

It is the first time in over 30 years that the oil and gas industry is permitted to do geophysical data collection along the Atlantic coast. Though [decried](#) by [environmentalists](#), another offshore oil and gas announcement made the same week has flown under the radar: [over 21 million acres of Gulf of Mexico offshore oil and gas reserves](#) will be [up for lease on August 20 in New Orleans, Louisiana](#) at the Superdome.

On July 17, the [U.S. Department of Interior's Bureau of Ocean Energy Management \(BOEM\)](#) announced the lease in the name of [President Obama's "all of the above" energy policy](#).

"As part of President Obama's all-of-the-above energy strategy to continue to expand safe and responsible domestic energy production, BOEM...today announced that the bureau will offer more than 21 million acres offshore Texas for oil and gas exploration and development in a lease sale that will include all available unleased areas in the Western Gulf of Mexico Planning Area," [proclaimed a July 17 BOEM press release](#).

The release says this equates to upwards of 116-200 million barrels of oil and 538-938 billion cubic feet of natural gas and falls under the banner of the [U.S.-Mexico Transboundary Hydrocarbon Agreement](#).

That [Agreement was signed into law on December 26, 2013](#). It served as a precursor to the [recently-passed Mexican oil and gas industry privatization reforms](#), which have [opened the floodgates to international oil and gas companies to come into Mexico](#) for onshore and offshore oil and gas exploration and production.

Tourist Hot Spots Port Isabel, South Padre Island for Sale

According to BOEM's [Proposed Notice of Sale Package](#), dozens of blocks sitting in close proximity to both Port Isabel and South Padre Island will be auctioned off during the August 20 lease. Both [Port Isabel](#) and [South Padre Island](#) are vacation and tourist hot spots, which were visited during a recent vacation by this writer.



Image Credit: [U.S. Bureau of Ocean Energy Management](#)

In total, [an enormous 4,057 blocks of Gulf of Mexico oil and gas reserves](#) are up for lease on August 20 in the Superdome.

Climate Action Plan?

The Obama Administration will auction off the thousands of blocks of Gulf of Mexico oil and gas leases in the midst of rolling out its [Climate Action Plan](#), best known to some simply as the [U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's carbon rule for coal-fired power plants](#).

Ruled out of Obama's Climate Action Plan, however, is any second-guessing of his "all of the above" energy policy.

While critics of the climate plan have noted the carbon rule is a full-fledged embrace of [hydraulic fracturing \("fracking"\)](#) for onshore oil and gas, another undeniable truism has arisen: it's also a full-fledged embrace of offshore drilling for oil and gas both in the Gulf — and perhaps soon in the Atlantic.

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