

MEMORANDUM

TO: California Ocean and Coastal Community
FROM: Skyli McAfee, Executive Director, Ocean Science Trust
DATE: June 8, 2010
SUBJECT: *“Evaluating Alternatives for Decommissioning California’s Offshore Oil and Gas Platforms: A Technical Analysis to Inform State Policy.”*

The OST today released a report that identifies decommissioning options for the 27 state and federal oil and gas platforms off California’s coast. The report is compilation of existing relevant information that was thoroughly reviewed by a committee of experts. It will provide policy makers and stakeholders with a central source of information from which informed decommissioning decisions can be made.

It is important to note that the report is not about offshore oil drilling or oil exploration. Rather, it identifies and analyzes the impacts of a variety of decommissioning options that could be implemented once an oil and gas platform reaches the end of its design life. While the report does not provide any policy recommendations, by addressing a broad range of issues – from air quality to liability concerns to ecological impacts – the report identifies tradeoffs among decommissioning options.

Under the current regulatory framework, federal and state leases require complete removal of any installed facilities upon decommissioning. Consideration of any option other than full removal would require changes in state legislation. The report and the data within will serve as an authoritative synthesis of existing scientific, financial, and legal information regarding options for decommissioning California’s offshore oil and gas platforms. The full report can be accessed at http://calost.org/reports/Decommissioning_Report.pdf.

The OST was charged with coordinating the study, and modeled the process on respected and venerable institutions such as the National Academies. The OST worked for 12 months with a contracted, multidisciplinary project team and a 15-member, Expert Advisory Committee. The Expert Advisory Committee served as reviewers on drafts of the report and other interim project products, thus ensuring a thorough, balanced and unbiased final product that would prove to be a credible reference to stakeholders and decision-makers. This project was funded jointly by the California Ocean Protection Council (OPC), Chevron Corporation, the Ocean Conservancy, the Sportfishing Conservancy, and the United Anglers.

The Ocean Protection Council will meet in Santa Barbara on June 24 – 25 and plans to discuss the key findings of the report with a panel that will include members of the project team, as well as stakeholders and agency representatives with expertise in oil and gas platform decommissioning. This meeting will provide an opportunity for the public to learn about and comment on this important issue.

About the OST: The California Ocean Science Trust (OST) is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit public benefit corporation whose mission is to support ocean and coastal resource management decisions with the best available science. To learn more about the OST, visit their website at www.calost.org.

