

City of Capitola

Commission on the Environment Regular Meeting Agenda

Wednesday, January 21, 2026 – 5:30 PM



Capitola City Hall, Community Room
420 Capitola Avenue, Capitola, CA 95010

Chair: Michelle Beritzhoff-Law

Vice-Chair: Michael Maroney

Commissioners: Mayor Clarke, Dennis Norton, Scott Rohlf

Staff Representative: Erika Senyk

1. Call to Order and Roll Call

2. Additions and Deletions to the Agenda

3. Public Oral and Written Communications

The Chair may announce and set time limits at the beginning of each agenda item. The Committee Members may not discuss Oral Communications to any significant degree but may request issues raised be placed on a future agenda.

4. Staff Comments

5. December 17, 2025 Regular Meeting Minutes

Recommended Action: Review and approve minutes.

6. General Business

A. Offshore Oil Drilling

Recommended Action: Receive a presentation on the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management's proposed 11th National Outer Continental Shelf Oil & Gas Leasing Draft Program.

B. Selection of Chair and Vice Chair

Recommended Action: Select a Chair and Vice Chair to serve a one-year term for 2026.

7. Items for Future Agenda

8. Adjournment

Next regular Commission meeting is scheduled for February 18, 2026.

Agenda and Agenda Packet Materials: The Commission on the Environment Agenda is available on the City's website: www.cityofcapitola.org/ on Friday prior to the Wednesday meeting. If you need additional information, please contact the Public Works Department at (831) 475-7300.

Americans with Disabilities Act: Disability-related aids or services are available to enable persons with a disability to participate in this meeting consistent with the Federal Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990. Assisted listening devices are available for individuals with hearing impairments at the meeting in the City Council

Chambers. Should you require special accommodations to participate in the meeting due to a disability, please contact the City Clerk's office at least 24-hours in advance of the meeting at 831-475-7300. In an effort to accommodate individuals with environmental sensitivities, attendees are requested to refrain from wearing perfumes and other scented products.

City of Capitola

Commission on the Environment

Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, December 17, 2025 – 6:00 PM



Capitola City Hall, Community Room
420 Capitola Avenue, Capitola, CA 95010

Chair: Michelle Beritzhoff-Law

Vice Chair: Michael Maroney

Commissioners: Council Member Clarke, Dennis Norton, Scott Rohlf

Staff Representative: Erika Senyk

- 1. Call to Order and Roll Call** – Chair Beritzhoff-Law called the meeting to order at 6:01 PM.
Commissioners Present: Michelle Beritzhoff-Law, Michael Maroney, Council Member Clarke, Dennis Norton, Scott Rohlf
Absent: None
City Staff Present: Erika Senyk (Environmental Projects Manager), Kailash Mozumder (Public Works Project Manager)

2. Additions and Deletions to the Agenda

None.

3. Public Oral and Written Communications

Brookvale Terrace residents, Katy Guernsey and Sheryl Coulston, provided community outreach ideas concerning local native plant restoration and pollinator habitat protection.

4. Staff Comments

Staff announced that this week, the City released an RFP for the update of the City's 2015 Climate Action Plan.

5. October 15, 2025 Regular Commission Meeting Minutes

Recommended Action: Review and approve minutes.

Motion to approve the October 15, 2025 minutes: Vice Chair Maroney

Seconded: Council Member Clarke

Motion passed 5-0-0

6. General Business

A. The Park at Rispin Mansion Landscape Plan

Recommended Action: Receive a presentation from staff on the landscape plan for the Park at Rispin Mansion.

Kailash Mozumder, Public Works Projects Manager, presented the Rispin landscape plan and

answered questions from the Commission and the public.

B. Soquel Creek Tule Planting Plan

Recommended Action: Review and provide feedback on the 2026 Soquel Creek Tule Planting Plan.

Erika Senyk, Environmental Projects Manager, presented the staff report.

The Commission reviewed the tule planting plan and provided the following feedback:

Commissioner Norton: Commented that Area 2 may be more difficult for the tules to establish given that the area is in the main channel and receives higher velocity streamflow than Area 1.

Vice Chair Maroney: Requested that the City's contracted fisheries biologist, D.W. Alley & Associates, collect and record baseline data while monitoring Area 2. The baseline data could later be used to assess the ecological benefits that tules provide to Soquel Creek over time.

Commissioner Rohlf: Commented that constructed bulkheads will present challenges for tule establishment and areas with a more gradually sloping streambank may provide the most successful tule planting habitat.

The Commission recommended that staff proceed with the 2026 Soquel Creek Tule Planting Plan as proposed in the staff report.

C. Regular Meeting Schedule

Recommended Action: Approve the Commission's 2026 regular meeting schedule.

Erika Senyk, Environmental Projects Manager, presented the staff report.

Motion to approve the 2026 regular COE meeting schedule: Chair Beritzhoff-Law

Seconded: Vice Chair Maroney

Motion passed 5-0-0

7. Items for Future Agenda

1. Selection of Chair and Vice Chair for calendar year 2026
2. Offshore Oil Drilling
3. Staff update on Climate Action Plan/Sea Level Rise grants and City planning efforts
4. Community involvement opportunities for planting natives in parks and open spaces

8. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 7:26 PM to the next Regular Meeting of the Commission on the Environment on January 21, 2026.

ATTEST:

Erika Senyk, Environmental Projects Manager

Michelle Beritzhoff-Law, Chair

Capitola Commission on the Environment

Agenda Report



Meeting: January 21, 2026
From: Public Works Department
Topic: Offshore Oil Drilling

Recommended Action: Receive a presentation on the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management's proposed 11th National Outer Continental Shelf Oil & Gas Leasing Draft Program.

Background: The Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (BOEM), an agency of the U.S. Department of the Interior, is responsible for managing development of the nation's offshore resources. In 2025, BOEM released its proposed 11th National Outer Continental Shelf Oil & Gas Leasing Draft Program (Proposed 11th Program), which would establish a framework for potential offshore oil and gas lease sales on the U.S. Outer Continental Shelf for the upcoming program period.

Although the Proposed 11th Program does not identify specific lease sale locations at this time, it creates the potential for future offshore oil and gas development in federal waters, including areas offshore of Central California and even within the boundaries of National Marine Sanctuaries. BOEM is currently accepting public comment on the Proposed 11th Program as part of the federal review process through to January 23, 2026. At the January 22, 2026 regular Capitola City Council meeting, the Council will consider authorizing the Mayor to submit a comment letter to BOEM, opposing the Proposed 11th Program and requesting for the State of California to be excluded from the Program (Attachment 1).

In the late 1980s, Santa Cruz and Monterey Counties helped to form the Central Coast Outer Continental Shelf (OCS) Regional Studies Program to integrate science and policy on OCS proposals, supporting findings that drilling threatened coastal environments, economies, and resources. This regional effort prevented several federal proposals from opening oil and gas drilling operations in the OCS and led to the establishment of the Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary (MBNMS).

In support of this effort and to align with regional policies, in April 1987, the Capitola City Council voted unanimously to prohibit onshore facilities for offshore oil. That prohibition remains in effect today and is codified in the City's Zoning Code at Municipal Code Section 17.96.090 (Attachment 2). The adopted ordinance prohibits the construction, reconstruction, operation, or maintenance of any commercial industrial offshore oil development support facility within the City. Prohibited facilities and activities include any facility which operates directly in support of any offshore oil or gas exploration, development, drilling, pumping, or production (e.g., oil or gas storage facilities). The ordinance, as currently adopted, does not specifically call out restrictions on support facilities for seabed mining activities.

The current ordinance is effective at preventing offshore oil development because without access to nearby onshore facilities (e.g., ports, pipelines, storage yards, processing facilities) drilling projects become logistically impractical or prohibitively expensive. By adopting the current ordinance in the 1980s, the City became part of California's "Blue Wall", which refers to a network of local zoning protections enacted by coastal cities and counties that restrict or prohibit the construction of onshore facilities needed to support offshore oil development. To fortify the "Blue Wall", approximately 27 coastal jurisdictions adopted laws requiring local approval (often voter approval) for any onshore support facilities. The City of Capitola's current ordinance is stricter than those adopted by other local jurisdictions, given that it outrightly prohibits any such support facilities, rather than including a requirement for voter approval.

The City's ordinance, as currently adopted, does not specifically call out restrictions on support facilities for seabed mining activities. BOEM's primary focus for the Proposed 11th Program is on scheduling oil and gas lease sales and does not include seabed mining as part of that specific oil and gas leasing program. Although seabed mining is not formally included as part of the Program's schedule or scope,

parallel BOEM actions indicate that the agency is also advancing planning and potential leasing for critical minerals on or near the seabed in waters of the United States.

Recently, there have been numerous local and state governments opposing the latest federal effort to allow oil drilling in environmentally sensitive ocean areas. On June 10, 2025, the City of Santa Cruz's City Council unanimously adopted a resolution confirming the City's commitment to prohibiting offshore drilling in the Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary and authorized the Mayor to send a letter opposing BOEM's Proposed 11th Program.

On June 22, 2025, the County of Santa Cruz Board of Supervisors approved the launch of regional coordination efforts among local communities in the State of California focused on offshore drilling policy advocacy and calling for multi-jurisdictional support. On November 18, 2025, the City of Santa Cruz's City Council approved a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the County of Santa Cruz and executed a Professional Services Agreement with Save Our Shores to coordinate efforts to strengthen regional opposition to offshore drilling and seabed mining.

At the November 13, 2025 Capitola City Council meeting, Council Member Orbach requested that an item regarding City ordinances preventing offshore oil drilling and seabed mining activities be added to a future agenda for discussion. In preparation, staff are presenting this topic to the City's Commission on the Environment (COE) at the regularly scheduled January 21, 2026 COE meeting to gather feedback.

Discussion: The City of Capitola has adopted policies supporting environmental protection, coastal stewardship, and climate action. The City's economy, quality of life, and community identity are closely tied to a clean, healthy ocean and coastline. Offshore oil and gas development poses documented risks, including oil spills, chronic pollution, harm to marine ecosystems, and negative impacts to tourism, recreation, and fisheries.

The Proposed 11th Program also presents inconsistencies with state and federal laws. The City's coastline borders the MBNMS, which receives federal protections from offshore oil and gas exploration, development, and production within its boundaries under the National Marine Sanctuaries Act. These protections are reinforced by California state laws, such as the Coastal Zone Management Act, which requires federal consistency with state coastal policies. Together, the state and federal laws are intended to preserve the ecological health, scenic value, and economic benefits of the Monterey Bay coastline.

Additionally, expansion of offshore oil and gas leasing is inconsistent with state and local climate goals aimed at reducing greenhouse gas emissions and transitioning to renewable energy sources. The State of California and the City have made clear policy commitments to addressing climate change and protecting coastal resources, and offshore drilling is inconsistent with those objectives.

As part of the regional coordination effort, Save Our Shores representatives are currently reviewing Santa Cruz City and County ordinances against offshore drilling to strengthen their legal defensibility and include protections against the new threat of seabed mining. Staff propose no changes to the City's current ordinance at this time to allow for a coordinated approach with neighboring jurisdictions in support of a shared coastal policy.

City Council choosing to authorize the Mayor to submit a formal comment letter opposing the Proposed 11th Program allows the City of Capitola to formally document its concerns about the Program, join regional coordination efforts with coastal communities in opposing offshore drilling, and ensure that the City's voice is part of BOEM's public comment record.

Attachments:

1. Mayor's Draft Comment Letter
2. Municipal Code Section 17.96.090

Report Prepared By: Erika Senyk, Environmental Projects Manager



420 Capitola Avenue
Capitola, California 95010
Telephone: (831) 475-7300
FAX: (831) 479-8879
Website: <http://www.cityofcapitola.org>

Acting Director Matthew Giacoma
Bureau of Ocean Energy Management
1849 C Street, NW
Washington, DC 20240

RE: Docket ID BOEM-2025-0483 — 11th National OCS Oil & Gas Leasing Draft Proposed Program

Dear Mr. Giacoma:

The City of Capitola (City) respectfully submits these comments strongly opposing the Proposed 11th National Outer Continental Shelf (OCS) Oil & Gas Leasing Draft Proposed Program (Proposed 11th Program) as it pertains to the State of California and, specifically, the Central Coast of California.

Previous efforts to promote new offshore oil were defeated in the Central California region due to impacts on tourism, agriculture, and commercial and recreational fishing, the acceleration of climate change, and effects on the diverse wildlife and habitats.

As lease sales under the Proposed 11th Program are now scheduled to begin as early as 2027, the current plan places the City and its surrounding protected marine environment at imminent risk. Consequently, the City Council voted **X-X-X** at its January 22, 2026 meeting to formally oppose the proposed offshore oil lease sales scheduled for 2027 and 2029 in the Central California planning area.

Violation of Federal, State, and Local Laws

The Proposed 11th Program conflicts with a range of federal, state, and local laws and regulations designed to protect the Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary (MBNMS) and California's coast. Federally, the National Marine Sanctuaries Act and its implementing regulations (15 C.F.R. Part 922) expressly prohibit exploring for, developing, or producing oil, gas, or minerals within the sanctuary boundaries, and any new lease issuance that would authorize such activities inside those boundaries would be inconsistent with these protections. At the state level, the Proposed 11th Program violates the Coastal Zone Management Act, which requires federal consistency with state coastal policies. Locally, in April 1987, the Capitola City Council voted unanimously to prohibit onshore facilities for offshore oil, in part due to the effect that offshore oil and gas development would have on its economic base (Municipal Code Section 17.96.090).

Tourism and the Local Economy

The City of Capitola, with a population of approximately 9,500, is a popular beach tourism destination centered around the Capitola Village with seaside shopping and restaurants, world renowned surfing, and many other outdoor recreational activities. Tourism-related revenues, including transient occupancy tax and parking revenues, represent a significant portion of the City's discretionary revenue and are highly dependent on visitor activity.

Historically the Capitola Municipal Wharf has been a center for recreational fishing and the waters surrounding it have been popular for salmon, crab, and varieties of rockfish, owing in part to the nearby offshore Soquel Canyon. This popular outdoor activity supports the visitor-based economy of the City.



420 Capitola Avenue
Capitola, California 95010
Telephone: (831) 475-7300
FAX: (831) 479-8879
Website: <http://www.cityofcapitola.org>

Recent events such as ocean storm damage to the Capitola Wharf and Village in 2023 greatly impacted the City, which suffered approximately \$2.5 million in storm damage, coupled with losses in business activity and employment. An oil spill would have similar negative effects on the City's economy, with the addition of increased cleanup and repair costs to impacted facilities.

Offshore oil and gas drilling poses significant risks to the economy of a beachside city, where tourism, recreation, and small businesses depend on a clean and healthy coastal environment. For a coastal community whose economic vitality is closely tied to its natural resources and scenic coastline, potential oil spills or industrial accidents from offshore drilling would discourage visitation, be detrimental to the City's local revenue, and compromise public well-being.

Climate Considerations

The Proposed 11th program also conflicts with the State's and City's well-established policies to protect coastal resources and address climate change. The Proposed 11th Program prioritizes fossil fuel extraction incentives and would undermine state and local efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, transition to clean energy, and build climate resilience. At a time when coastal communities are already facing sea level rise, erosion, and other climate-related impacts, further investment in fossil fuel development is inconsistent with both sound public policy and environmental responsibility.

Ecological Impacts

The rich and diverse ecosystems around the City and within the MBNMS support dozens of marine mammals (e.g., sea otters, sea lions, and multiple whale species), seabirds, fish, and invertebrates, along with critical habitats such as kelp forests, rocky reefs, estuaries, and upwelling zones that fuel food webs.

Activities affiliated with offshore drilling (e.g., increased vessel traffic, noise pollution, and significant risks of oil spills) could disrupt natural patterns for feeding, communication, migration, and breeding behaviors of marine protected species. Even small oil spills or leaks could have long-term ecological impacts on sensitive habitats within the MBNMS such as kelp beds and intertidal zones, leading to elevated mortality, reproductive harm, and population declines. These risks pose serious threats to recreational and commercial fisheries and would compromise decades of progress made within the MBNMS to restore and protect keystone species and their critical habitats.

Considering the impacts of the Proposed 11th Program, the City strongly recommends that BOEM:

1. Exclude the State of California and, specifically, the Central Coast, the Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary and adjacent waters from the Program to protect sensitive ecosystems and coastal communities.
2. Prioritize renewable energy development and alternatives to fossil fuel extraction that are consistent with state and local regulations.
3. Enhance coordination with state and local governments and Tribes, ensuring federal actions are fully consistent with local coastal plans and climate action goals.



420 Capitola Avenue
Capitola, California 95010
Telephone: (831) 475-7300
FAX: (831) 479-8879
Website: <http://www.cityofcapitola.org>

4. Require completion of site-specific environmental review, including cumulative impact assessments and climate risk modeling, prior to any lease consideration.

The Central Coast of California is a region of exceptional ecological, cultural, and economic value. Its offshore waters support diverse marine life and working coastal economies, while its beaches and coastal access define the character and quality of life for residents and visitors alike. The City of Capitola urges BOEM to recognize the strong opposition of local coastal communities and to remove California's Central Coast waters from consideration under the Proposed 11th Program.

Sincerely,

Margaux Morgan
Mayor, City of Capitola

17.96.090 Offshore oil development support facilities.

A. Prohibition. There shall be no construction, reconstruction, operation, or maintenance of any commercial or industrial offshore oil development support facility within the city of Capitola.

B. Facilities and Activities Included in Prohibition. Prohibited facilities and activities include, but are not limited to:

1. Oil or gas storage facilities, pipe and drilling materials, or equipment repair or storage facilities, which operate directly in support of any offshore oil or gas exploration, development, drilling, pumping or production.
2. Construction, reconstruction, or operation of facilities to process any oil or natural gas taken or removed from any offshore oil or gas drilling or pumping operations. (Ord. [1043](#) § 2 (Att. 2), 2020)

Capitola Commission on the Environment

Agenda Report

Meeting: January 21, 2026

From: Public Works Department

Topic: Selection of Chair and Vice Chair



Recommended Action: Select a Chair and Vice Chair to serve a one-year term for 2026.

Background: Following the first day of January of each year, the Commission on the Environment shall select one of its members as Chairperson and one of its members as a Vice-Chairperson. The Chairperson and Vice Chairperson shall serve a term of one year, or until a successor is elected.

The positions shall be elected by a majority vote of the membership. The Chairperson presides at all meetings and is the representative of the Commission before the City Council. The Chairperson also coordinates with City Staff to set meeting agendas.

The Vice Chairperson assumes the duties of the Chairperson in their absence.

Report Prepared By: Erika Senyk, Environmental Projects Manager