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August 17, 2017

Ms. Kelly Hammerle
National Program Manager
Bureau of Ocean Energy Management
45600 Woodland Rd.
Mailstop VAM-LD
Sterling, VA 20166

Submitted via regulations.gov

Dear Ms. Hammerle:

On behalf of Gulf Economic Survival Team (GEST), we thank you for the opportunity to comment in response of request for information on the development of the federal government's 2019-2024 offshore oil and gas leasing program. We fully support developing a new leasing program that includes all 26 Outer Continental Shelf (OCS) planning areas. There is an extensive estimated amount of undiscovered oil and gas in our nation's OCS, yet 94% is off limits to development, which is detrimental to American job growth, economic prosperity, and the opportunity for energy dominance.

GEST is a grassroots advocacy organization that promotes the significance of Gulf of Mexico energy production to this U.S. economy, small service companies, and middle-class Americans throughout our great nation. We are focused on achieving full production of Gulf energy in a safe and environmentally protective manner, providing energy security and economic growth for America. Experiencing the undeniable benefits of the GOM oil and gas industry, we urge other off-limit OCS expansion.

Since the first offshore well was drilled 70 years ago, the Gulf has produced **90% of domestic US crude oil** from all OCS territories. In 2016, offshore oil and natural gas production accounted for approximately 18.2 percent and 4.4 percent of U.S. production respectively. This production is a critical component to ensuring a dominant U.S. oil and natural gas industry in the future.

The Gulf of Mexico has had tremendous success and is an example of how opening unexplored OCS regions will create thousands of good-paying jobs, enhance American security and generate billions of dollars to federal and state treasuries. The total economic impact of Gulf energy is immense, with more than 650,000 jobs nationwide estimated to be linked to Gulf energy activity. In FY2014, offshore oil and gas activity in the Gulf generated over \$64 billion in Gross Domestic Product and contributed over \$7 billion in revenues to

the federal treasury, making the industry one of the largest sources of revenue to the federal government.

The Gulf of Mexico is an example of how our country can explore and produce American energy while also balancing the needs of other stakeholders to ensure multiple uses can be attained. In Louisiana, commercial fishermen harvest over two billion pounds of fish and shellfish annually, representing nearly 30 percent of the commercial fishing landings of the continental U.S. Louisiana's wetlands provide habitat for over 5 million migratory waterfowl, and its wildlife recreation, has amounted to a \$3 billion industry, supporting over 25,000 jobs. And in 2016, the state experienced a record-breaking year for tourism with 46.7 million visitors and spending \$16.8 billion

We encourage BOEM to develop a new Five-year Program with continued and expanded access in the Gulf of Mexico as well as other OCS areas in order to support American jobs, economic prosperity and America's energy dominance.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Lori LeBlanc", written in a cursive style.

Lori LeBlanc
Executive Director