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How Effective will the Proposed Plan to Facilitate Domestic Drilling for Offshore Oil Be? (/full-blog/2010/04/how-effective-will-proposed-plan-to.html)

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By: Andrew Leung, Staff Member

Disclaimer: The following post reflects the views of the author and not necessarily that of KJEANRL.



Environmental preservationists and proponents of developmental interests have been engaged in an ongoing struggle to influence American policy to facilitate the adoption and spread of their respective agendas. Environmental preservationists often wish to proscribe or severely curtail any human activities with the potential to have a significant adverse impact on the environment. The environmentalist stance necessarily defaults to a position in opposition to intrusive, irreversible changes to our environment, such as the destructive harvesting of natural resources whose reserves take millions of years to regenerate.

Developmentalists, in the form of corporations peddling natural resources, are diametrically opposed to the environmentalists' stance. Their mentality to exploit natural resources as quickly as possible allows company coffers to be filled at the cost of environmental security. Each time a coal mine is opened or an oil well drilled the probability of toxic contamination rises greatly. Oil and coal magnates would argue that they serve an essential function to society, that they mobilize the world populace. While this is indisputably true, it is just another way for such companies to add to the pollution carelessly being released.

A recent plan to permit offshore prospecting and drilling for oil and natural gas announced by President Obama seems in direct contrast with an environmentalist agenda. The plan "would allow drilling along the Atlantic coastline, the eastern Gulf of Mexico and the north coast of Alaska." John M. Broder, *Obama Oil Drilling Plan Draws Critics*, New York Times, March 31, 2010, available at <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/04/01/science/earth/01energy.html?pagewanted=1> (<http://www.nytimes.com/2010/04/01/science/earth/01energy.html?pagewanted=1>).

While the President's proposal has enraged environmental interest groups, oil companies are pushing for more concessions. One would think that the 167 million acres of the Atlantic Ocean from which a moratorium on exploration has been lifted should suffice to appease oil companies. However, they push for more pristine environment to taint, specifically drilling rights to the pristine Bristol Bay in Alaska. It seems the oil companies have already decided the fate of the 130 million acres of Alaskan water to be made eligible for exploration and drilling.

One might argue that the entire oil debate is a matter of politics, as many environmentalists seem to be Democrats while Republicans draw support from coal and oil companies. However, this is not the case. In actuality, the dispute over permitting offshore drilling is a matter of numbers. President Obama concedes that Americans use approximately 20% of the world's oil supply while possessing only 2% of the world's reserves within its territorial limits. John M. Broder, *Obama Oil Drilling Plan Draws Critics*, New York Times, March 31, 2010, available at <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/04/01/science/earth/01energy.html?pagewanted=1> (<http://www.nytimes.com/2010/04/01/science/earth/01energy.html?pagewanted=1>). Even if the oil companies are permitted to run roughshod over environmental policy and harvest every drop of oil within the United States' jurisdiction – as seems to be their unstated goal – it would not be enough to satiate the American thirst.

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