



FACTSHEET: Increasing U.S. Crude Oil Export Capacity via Deepwater Ports Would Continue Harming Communities and the Climate

Since the ban on exporting crude oil was lifted by Congress in 2015, the extraction, production, and transportation of crude oil has exploded in the U.S. at the expense of communities and the climate. The United States is now producing more oil than any country in history and reached a record level for exporting more oil and LNG than any country in the world in 2023.¹ No country in history has extracted as much oil as the U.S. has in each of the past six years.

To take advantage of this fracking boom in the Permian Basin, one of the largest and most productive oil fields in the country, greedy oil companies are trying to build massive offshore oil export terminals (“deepwater ports”) in the Gulf of Mexico. Four projects—Sea Port Oil Terminal (SPOT), Texas GulfLink, Blue Marlin and Bluewater Texas Terminal—would be the largest oil export terminals in the U.S., designed to get more oil out of the Permian to overseas markets faster and cheaper. Yet, allies overseas are looking to phase out fossil fuels in their energy system. Expert analysis shows proposed deepwater oil ports would lead to more drilling, raise the risks of oil spills, and stand in the way of important progress to cut greenhouse gas emissions. **The Biden-Harris Administration must reject the proposed crude oil deepwater ports that stand in the way of a healthy future and just energy transition.**

Deepwater Ports would increase drilling and fracking in the U.S.

New deepwater ports will continue to drive what the industry says is a “bottleneck” to drill for more oil in the Permian Basin, the highest-producing oilfield in the U.S. The Permian accounts for nearly half of U.S. crude oil production, and EIA expects production in the Permian to once again increase by nearly 8% in 2024.² This record-breaking production is not fueled by surging domestic demand for oil and gas, as it has in the past, but by exports to global markets. Oil from the Permian Basin is too ‘light’ to refine in the U.S., making it destined to be exported. The increase in export capacity resulting from new deepwater oil export terminals would induce more oil drilling and fracking in western Texas and southeastern New Mexico, intensifying the burden low-income, Black, Brown and Indigenous populations are forced to endure—just so Big Oil executives can line their pockets with profits from buyers overseas.

Deepwater Ports would not replace existing nearshore ports.

Big Oil claims that new offshore ports will replace existing near shore ports, transporting oil that would already be extracted and exported. Yet, in the analysis of the SPOT and GulfLink terminals, federal agencies used baseless assumptions that deepwater ports would simply replace crude oil exports from nearshore operations. These unsupported assumptions have served as the basis of deepwater port project reviews and must be re-evaluated and corrected to accurately evaluate each project's impacts. Although a deepwater port can directly fill an oil supertanker with 2 million barrels of toxic crude oil in a single day, making it easier, faster and cheaper for big oil companies to export more oil, these projects would not even become operational until around 2030—when oil demand is projected to decline. Even one deepwater port running at 100% capacity represents almost half the U.S.’s current crude exports of 4.1 million barrels of oil per day.³ It is likely that deepwater ports would operate in addition to existing near shore export operations.

¹ U.S. Energy Information Administration, [United States produces more crude oil than any country, ever](#). March 11, 2024.

² U.S. Energy Information Administration, [EIA expects crude oil production in the Permian Basin to increase by nearly 8% in 2024](#). June 11, 2024.

³ U.S. Energy Information Administration, [Weekly Petroleum Status Report](#). August 30, 2024.

Deepwater Ports would worsen climate impacts in the U.S.

Analysis from Global Energy Monitor estimates that over their 30-year timespan, the oil transported from the four proposed deepwater port projects would generate 24 billion metric tons of carbon once burned, equivalent to over 5.7 billion cars or 6,169 coal plants. The federal review of SPOT's impacts estimated the lifecycle greenhouse gas emissions calculated 232 million metric tons CO₂⁴ and \$25 billion⁵ of climate damages. The Gulf Coast is a region highly vulnerable to sea level rise, extreme heat, coastal degradation and extreme weather from climate change. It is clear we need to phase out fossil fuels to avoid even more catastrophic levels of climate disasters like heat waves, fires, hurricanes, and floods. Deepwater ports would be historically massive oil export terminals, posing serious environmental harm directly, indirectly, and cumulatively.

Deepwater Ports threaten endangered species and environments.

The proposed deepwater port projects have been criticized for the potential harm they pose to endangered species. The Rice's Whale is a rare species, which only lives in the Gulf of Mexico, and is among the most endangered marine mammals in the world. Experts predict that SPOT could cause hundreds of oil spills over its lifetime, and increase vessel traffic and noise which would negatively impact whales. The proposed terminal could also threaten critically endangered sea turtles. Onshore and offshore pipelines would run directly through nesting habitat for critically endangered Kemp's ridley sea turtles, the most endangered sea turtle in the world. Both loggerhead and green sea turtles are year-round visitors to Gulf waters. Any disturbance or oil spill would be detrimental to global conservation work underway to protect these sea turtles. The ports could also threaten oyster reefs in the area, which are among the few that remain open to commercial harvest in Texas.

Deepwater Ports would reduce air quality and worsen air pollution.

The reviews of deepwater ports have not fully evaluated the project's total air pollution impacts. This includes analyzing the harms increasing ozone pollution will cause as Brazoria county already has levels of ozone that are higher than EPA standards for clear air. Federal agencies have not evaluated the cumulative impacts of air pollution of all proposed projects, along with other nearby proposed projects that would emit air pollutants. Breathing ground-level ozone can cause chest pain, coughing, throat irritation, and congestion. Ozone can worsen chronic conditions like bronchitis, emphysema, and asthma. Repeated exposure can reduce lung function, inflames the lining of the lungs and cause permanent scarring to lung tissue.

Deepwater Ports are not in the national interest.

Expanding crude oil exports does not support the United State's emission reduction and environmental justice policies, is not in our national security interests, and does not bring significant economic benefits. The costs to build the SPOT project's are estimated to be over \$3.5 billion dollars. SPOT will likely generate more harm than benefit to the local economy, supporting only 1,400 temporary construction jobs and 62 permanent jobs. Over the last decade, oil and gas companies have worked to cut and automate jobs, creating fewer opportunities for workers. At the same time, oil exports place local jobs in fishing and tourism at risk from oil spills, particularly along Texas's iconic Surfside beach, a tourist destination and site for nesting sea turtles. The cost of those cleanups is immense, and only one of the economic harms of oil. Finally, oil and gas markets and prices are volatile, putting U.S. consumers and economies at risk. The national interest is in securing a clean energy future, the urgent need to meaningfully address the climate crisis, and the imperative to halt the environmental injustice facing frontline communities that time and are again being forced to bear the full brunt of a petrochemical, oil-and-gas export, and fracking boom.

⁴ Table BB-2: 2019 Upstream GHG Emissions—Crude Oil Exploration, Production, and Transportation and Table BB-3: 2019 Downstream GHG Emissions, Diesel Vehicle Combustion, and Gasoline Vehicle Combustion. Deepwater Port License Application: SPOT Terminal Services LLC-Final Environmental Impact Review

⁵ Table BB-5: Estimated Social Cost of Downstream GHG Emissions (CO₂e) for the Maximum Capacity of Crude Oil that could be Exported by the Project —2025 to 2050