

Biden Moves To End New Offshore Drilling Before Leaving Office: Report

- Patrick Houck
- January 2, 2025



President Joe Biden is reportedly preparing to permanently ban offshore oil and gas drilling in select U.S. coastal waters, a last-minute move that could thwart President-elect Donald Trump's efforts to expand domestic energy production. The proposed action, as reported by Bloomberg, would target sensitive marine areas, making it notoriously challenging for future administrations to reverse the protections:

Biden is set within days to issue the executive order barring the sale of new drilling rights in portions of the country's outer continental shelf, according to people familiar with the effort who asked not to be named because the decision isn't public.

The move is certain to complicate President-elect Donald Trump's ambitions to drive more domestic energy production. Unlike other executive actions that can be easily undone, Biden's planned declaration is rooted in a 72-year-old law that gives the White House wide discretion to permanently protect US waters from oil and gas leasing without explicitly empowering presidents to revoke the designations.

The move responds to pressure from congressional Democrats and environmental groups who have lobbied Biden to "maximize permanent protections"

against offshore drilling, arguing the action is essential to safeguard vulnerable coastal communities, protect marine ecosystems from oil spills and fight climate change.

...

Biden administration officials have been considering the approach for more than two years, though their efforts intensified after Trump's victory, as the outgoing president sought to enshrine new environmental measures before the end of his term. The fresh offshore protections are in line with similar recent Biden actions to protect areas from industrial mining and energy development, including a formal proposal issued Monday to thwart the sale of new oil, gas and geothermal leases in Nevada's Ruby Mountains.

Though Republicans hold trifecta control in Washington, D.C., Biden can unilaterally undermine Trump's promise of greater energy independence through executive orders.

If issued, the decree would likely prohibit new drilling across parts of the Outer Continental Shelf, including regions near California and Florida's Gulf Coast.