



Written by [Luis Miguel](#) on December 21, 2023

Environmentalists Sour on Biden Amid Gulf Coast Drilling Auction

Infighting is once more breaking out within the Left over environmental issues, as green activists rail at the Biden administration's opening up of 73 million acres in the Gulf Coast for auctioning to the oil and gas industry.

While these auctions are routine and were treated as run-of-the-mill events under both Barack Obama and Donald Trump, they have become major points of contention during the Biden White House, drawing contempt from leftists who argued that Joe Biden is failing to live up to promises to go big on environmental and climate policy.



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The current strife over drilling rights in the Gulf of Mexico is partly owing to the discovery of a new endangered species of whale in those waters. As [The Associated Press](#) reports, the administration tried to scale back the auction in order to protect the whales, but courts shot down the attempt.

On Wednesday, oil companies offered \$382 million for the drilling rights as the auction went forward as originally planned. These firms included Chevron, Hess, and BP. Notably, the offered figure for 2,700 square miles was significantly higher than the \$250 million offered for 2,500 square miles during the previous sale back in March.

The next sale won't take place until 2025, which oil companies and Republicans say is too far away.

AP noted:

A federal judge in southwest Louisiana ordered the sale to go on without the whale protections, which also included regulations governing vessel speed and personnel. Environmental groups appealed, but the New Orleans-based 5th Circuit Court of Appeals last month rejected their arguments against the sale and threw out the plans to scale it back.

Biden found himself compelled to make the sale as the "green" investments in his Inflation Reduction Act are predicated upon oil and gas lease sales, thanks to a compromise with Sen. Joe Manchin (R-W.Va.), an oil and gas ally who cast the deciding vote in favor of the legislation. Manchin's terms stipulate that the federal government has to offer 60 million acres of offshore gas and leases during any given one-year period before it's allowed to offer leases for offshore wind facilities.

Michele Weindling of the left-wing Sunrise Movement told [CNN](#): "These drilling projects make a massive impact on our ability to phase out fossil fuels at the scale required. What we're watching is the administration continue to lose credibility with young voters when Biden tries to walk in both lanes."

The outlet further reported:



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Environmental groups in the Gulf and nationally are also pushing for the Biden administration to not approve future export terminals to export America's abundant liquified [sic] natural gas to foreign nations, arguing it drives up US emissions for decades to come.

"It's important that we start transitioning away from this dirty energy economy in general," Raleigh Hoke, campaigns director for advocacy group Healthy Gulf, told CNN. "Despite what the industry says, methane gas is a dirty energy source."

Earlier this year, the Biden administration took heat from leftists after its approval of a major oil-drilling project in Alaska that was first greenlighted during the presidency of Donald Trump. Known as the Willow Project, its origins went all the way back to 2018, when Conoco first submitted its permitting paperwork. Although the Trump administration approved the project, it was initially stalled by a federal judge in Alaska.

The Willow Project comprises 250 wells, several pipelines, a central processing plant, a gravel mine, and an airport. The project is also expected to create 2,500 construction jobs and 300 long-term jobs for the community in the area.

The controversy surrounding these drilling projects presents an ironic conundrum. Biden may need the support of the radical environmental Left to be competitive electorally (he vowed to halt drilling on federal lands and in federal waters as a candidate in 2020), but he also has to grapple with the realities of U.S. energy policy — namely, that fossil fuels such as oil, gas, and coal, while anathema to the left, are essential to keeping the country running.

Exorbitant gas prices have been one of the hallmarks of the Biden presidency that has put him in the crosshairs of the general electorate, and it has been his own doing for following the lead of the climate-change crowd and gutting America's energy sovereignty immediately upon entering the White House.

But with another election on the horizon and a populace reeling from the devastating effects of these "green" policies, Biden and his team are likely making calculations and realizing that, if they want to be competitive in 2024, they will be better off disappointing the environmental extremists than continuing to alienate the nation at large with energy policies making the cost of living unbearable for much of Middle America.

In short, Biden finds himself standing between a rock and a hard place when it comes to drilling rights.



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