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Offshore Oil: The Costs of Drilling

The United States President Barrack Obama once said, “Not only is it real, it’s here, and its effects are giving rise to a frighteningly new global phenomenon: the man-made natural disaster.” Without restriction regarding oil companies, both the environment and people of the U.S. are at risk. Offshore oil drilling has caused catastrophic problems in the ocean due to oil spills. Many tensions between America and third world countries have sparked due to drilling. Evidently, the United States should not continue to conduct offshore drilling due to its long-term environmental effects and its pattern of creating tension with other countries that results in safety issues for U.S. citizens.

Most of the oil used by consumers in the U.S. comes from offshore drilling. To illustrate, by cutting off the supply of offshore oil, the population would suffer a shortage:

One unanticipated natural disaster, such as Hurricane Katrina, could seriously disrupt the energy supply for the entire country. Allowing carefully selected offshore drilling at additional sites, in other geographical areas in the US, would provide insurance against such a disruption happening again. (DiLascio)

The energy shortage triggered by eliminating offshore drilling would cause severe economic problems, particularly for those in the area of the disaster. By keeping these drilling sites, more oil could be produced and contribute to rebuilding the area of disaster. However, there are far more negative than positive effects concerning offshore drilling, such as ecosystems that underwent devastation due to oil spills, which will never be the same: “By May 2011, about 491 miles of the Gulf coast remained contaminated by oil from the Deepwater Horizon explosion” (Auerbach). This explosion alone left an oil plume of 22 miles and damaged deep-sea corals along with other unknown ecosystems. The potential damage from offshore oil drilling in the future could be prevented simply by setting limitations upon oil companies. Indisputably, offshore oiling drilling has its short-term benefits, but it causes more damage than good.

Offshore oil drilling damages the environment in the local vicinity of the rigs, but if a spill occurs, then it can damage ecosystems miles away. To demonstrate, even without disasters, such as the Deepwater Horizon, the ocean still undergoes harsh conditions as stated by Andrew Walter: “It is estimated that even without disasters such as the BP oil spill, or oil rig explosions, 735,000 gallons of oil leak into the ocean annually as a direct result of offshore drilling activities.” Not only does this affect the oil rig’s surrounding environment, but it could also affect the nearby human population by contaminating the water they use. It is essential to cut back the amount of offshore oilrigs in order to keep the Earth less polluted. Furthermore, a Canadian province took action on the limitations of offshore drilling proven when Michael Auerbach states, “The environmental minister of Canada's Prince Edward Island province called for a summit on offshore oil drilling, citing the perceived threat of such practices to the wildlife of the Gulf of St. Lawrence, including whales, dolphins, leatherback turtles, and other species.” If the United States would follow the example of this Canadian province, then the coast could be clear of pollution wherever the U.S. oilrigs are. America relies almost completely on offshore sites to bring oil to consumers; however, the U.S. mainland is rich in oil and could replace the necessity of offshore drilling sites. Undeniably, offshore oil drilling can be replaced by natural, healthy forms of energy, and America will still function as well as it does with it.