

In climate reversal, Biden okays new oil and gas mega auction

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The court decision to ban a pause in leasing area in the Gulf of Mexico for oil exploration represents a significant step back for the White House's ambitious climate agenda and was quickly challenged by a coalition of environmental groups.

US President Joe Biden's administration on Tuesday announced plans to

open more than 80 million acres in the Gulf of Mexico for oil and gas exploration after a court ruled against the administration's pause in leasing.

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The Interior Department's Bureau of Ocean Energy Management expects a final notice of sale in September, "with a lease sale to follow in the fall of this year," the agency said in a statement.

In January, Biden announced a moratorium on new drilling from federal land pending a review, as the Democrat sought to place the [climate crisis](#) at the heart of his presidency.

But in June, a Louisiana judge appointed by former president Donald Trump stepped in to rule that the administration required approval from Congress for its pause.

According to a Record of Decision posted online, the government projects up to 1.1 billion barrels of oil and 4.4 trillion cubic feet of gas from the auction.

It noted a new report by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change "detailing observations of a rapidly changing climate in every region globally," but said it did not present sufficient cause to change the environmental impact statement for the drilling at this time.

Environmental groups led by the Earthjustice advocacy group sued the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management and Interior Secretary Deb Haaland after the notice.

"In the aftermath of Hurricane Ida, it is clear that we need to be doing everything we can to transition away from fossil fuels to reduce the impacts of climate change such as stronger, more frequent hurricanes," said Healthy Gulf's executive director Cynthia Sarthou.

"This lease sale is deeply disappointing. The Biden administration has folded to the oil industry based on its campaign of disinformation and [political pressure](#), ignoring the worsening climate emergency we face," added Brett Hardy, Earthjustice attorney.

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