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Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-0913

April 21, 2020

The Honorable David Bernhardt
Secretary, U.S. Department of the Interior
1849 C Street, NW
Washington, DC 20240

Dear Secretary Bernhardt,

This week marks the 10 year anniversary of the Deepwater Horizon explosion that killed 11 workers and set off the largest oil spill in American history. Oil gushed from the seafloor for 87 agonizing days, spewing more than 200 million gallons of oil into the Gulf of Mexico. I was Governor of Florida at the time. I watched in helpless horror as tar balls washed up along our pristine beaches, tens of thousands of marine animals drowned in oil, and families and small businesses along our coast lost everything. Ten years later, we're still rebuilding our environment and economy – and we still don't know the full extent of the damage.

The recovery along the Gulf Coast is fragile. Another accident could shatter the progress that has been made. This fragility is heightened by the current economic crisis brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic. Due to necessary efforts to flatten the curve, demand for oil and gas has plummeted even though production remains high – leading to excessive and unneeded crude that has nowhere to go. There are reports that storage tanks are filling up quickly, leaving few options for storing excess crude. I fear that the industry may be forced to turn to less safe, non-traditional storage options such as tankers and pipelines – a risky endeavor, particularly as we approach hurricane season.

It is imperative that the Department of Interior do everything it can to maintain safe storage requirements and prevent another Deepwater Horizon from occurring. Please provide answers to the following questions:


1. With a glut in supply, how is the Department of Interior working with other relevant agencies to enforce crude storage safety requirements to prevent a spill or accident at storage facilities?
2. What is the Department's plan if traditional storage options are full? How will the Department, along with other relevant agencies, set potential non-traditional storage options? And how will safety standards be enforced at these non-traditional sites?
3. Does the Department plan to set and enforce limits on leasing, extraction, and production, given the sharp decline in demand and necessity? If no, why not?

Deepwater Horizon showed us the high cost of negligence in the name of economy prosperity. The numbers are astounding: 11 lives lost, nearly \$1 billion in losses for the seafood industry, and more than \$500 million in losses for outdoor recreation, just to name a few. We can't risk

another Deepwater Horizon, especially in light of the current economic crisis brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic. The Department of Interior must take all necessary steps to protect our communities, workers, and environment from a preventable tragedy.

Thank you for your attention to this matter. I am also raising these concerns with the Department of Energy and the Department of Transportation's Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration. I look forward to receiving your response.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Charlie Crist". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "C" and a distinct dot above the "i".

Charlie Crist
UNITED STATES CONGRESSMAN