

Jennifer Stock: You're listening to Ocean Currents, a podcast brought to you by NOAA's Cordell Bank National Marine Sanctuary. This radio program was originally broadcast on KWMR in Point Reyes Station, California. Thanks for listening!

(Musical Intro)

Jennifer Stock: Welcome to another addition of Ocean Currents, I'm your host, Jennifer Stock. On this show we talk with scientists, educators, explorers, policy makers, ocean enthusiasts, adventurers, advocates and more, all uncovering and learning about the mysterious and vital part of our planet, the blue ocean.

I bring this show to you monthly on KWMR from NOAA's Cordell Bank National Marine Sanctuary, one of four National Marine Sanctuaries in California, all working to protect unique and biologically diverse ecosystems.

So I tried to think about an April Fools joke for today's topic, but honestly there is really no joking about the presence of offshore oil and gas in California. It's too pricey a topic to joke about. Offshore oil and gas has been a contentious issue for decades, first over the issue federal versus state ownership, but since 1969 mostly over issues of resource development versus ocean protection. Probable existence of oil off the coast of California dates back to the early explorers who noted oil slicks in the Santa Barbara channel. About ten years ago I had the opportunity to visit the Santa Barbara Channel, and I noticed the water had this very strong oil and gas smell and this sheen on the water, so it's interesting to know it goes way back. There are naturally caused seeps in that region all the way down to Mexico.

Offshore drilling began in California in 1896 when operators in the Summerland Oilfield, in Santa Barbara County, followed the field into the ocean, drilling from piers extending over the ocean. At least 187 offshore oil wells were drilled by Summerland field by 1902. While federal versus state ownership of these submerged lands has always been contentious, Us Congress passed the Outer-Continental Shelf Act, or the Submerged Lands Act, in 1953, the act recognized the state jurisdiction out to three nautical miles. The first of ten federal offshore lease sales was held in 1963. In 1969 tragedies struck, and the Santa Barbara spill, the largest ever in

California, ranking third nationally (the first being the 2010 Deep Water Horizon), had a significant effect marine life in the Santa Barbara Channel. The press covered the public's outrage and was covered in the US media, which sparked the creation of numerous pieces of environmental legislation, including the National Environmental Policy Act, which requires a detailed environmental review and statement before and major or controversial action. In 1990, president George H.W. Bush issues an executive moratorium banning new federal leasing through the year 2000 for many of the offshore areas, including California. In 1998 president Bill Clinton extended the moratorium through 2012, in July 2008; president George W Bush rescinded the executive order.

In addition to the nine active drilling and production stations in state and municipal waters in the Santa Barbara region, there are still 23 drill and production platforms remain in federal waters off of California, which produce 22 million gallons of oil and 22 billion cubic feet of gas per year. These are the statistics as of 2009. But concerned Californians remain vigilant; they love their coast. A 2003 survey by the Public Policy Institute of California, concerned with Californians' personal interest in the ocean, the coast, and their resources, showed that the vast majority, 88% of the state's citizens, were personally invested in the condition of the state's oceans and beaches.

So today we're going to talk with Rachel Binah, she's an environment activist and helped one community fight to keep oil and gas out of their coastal waters. Actually, our coastal waters, here in Point Reyes. The fight was successful, and for the short term the community thwarted the sale of Lease 91, which was slated for gas and oil development between the San Francisco and Oregon border.

So, without further ado—Rachel, you're live on the air with us, welcome to KWMR.

Rachel Binah: Thank you so much for inviting me, it's a big pleasure to be here with you.

Jennifer Stock: It's wonderful, thanks so much for calling and waiting here. So Rachel, I want to back up a bit to 30 years ago, to the 1980's; what were you doing at the time?

Rachel Binah: In 1983 I bought a piece of property and made it into a breakfast inn, two miles south of the village, Mendocino, and my adventure to protect out coast from offshore oil was about as far away from my mind as anything at that time, but something very interesting happened.

After the inn was remodeled and opened, in 1984, I got a call from a man in Louisiana, who was coming to Mendocino for a hearing on exploring the Mendocino Coast for possible development for offshore oil. His name was Pete Supco, and he was an engineer for an offshore engineering company from Louisiana.

Jennifer Stock: So, he didn't know who he was talking to, did he?

Rachel Binah: He did not. He asked me for a room with an ocean view, and I gave it to him. I made the reservation, and immediately started scrambling around to find out what was going on, and found out there was going to be a hearing about the possible exploration off of the Mendocino village. And there was a hearing in Mendocino, and I went to it, and I testified against this man, and what I said was, "Everyone wants a room with an ocean view, but will he come back after his company has ruined that view?"

At that time the major issue was drilling muds, they used very heavy cadmium and mercury poisons to actually do the drilling, I found out a lot about it from going to the hearing and testifying against this man... and they were denied a permit! Which made it all feel very successful in the short term, but in the long-term? Well I didn't realize it was going to last so long.

Jennifer Stock: So that's the start of what happened next. So the first permit was denied.

Rachel Binah: Yes.

Jennifer Stock: Can you back up and tell us how gas and oil leases are designated?

Rachel Binah: Well they're designated through the Department of Interior Mineral Management Service. And what happened was they had a final hearing scheduled for February of 1988, after they had gone through the process. In the meantime, I'd been very concerned

about this and went to Washington to meet with my congressman Doug Bosco at the time, who was very disinterested in this, in fact he thought that there should be a rig in every basin, he thought that was only fair. He thought that every basin, which means every inland, every area of every bay on the California Coast, should have at least one rig. Well, if you give them one rig you they'll be five, or 10, or 20, or the whole coast will be taken. We were very upset about that. And at that time I met with Barbara Boxer, whom I had never met before, and she was the congressman for your area, and she was extraordinary! She said, "Oh, I'm so glad you've come. I've wanted to introduce a bill to protect our coast; what do you think should be in it?" Well I was flabbergasted that anyone would ask me what I thought about anything, but I said, "Well we need to permanently protect our coast from offshore oil development because it's very dangerous and it's dangerous to the environment, to the marine life, and also...it's ugly!"

So she went on to introduce several bills, but she was really marginalized by her colleagues at that time because no one realized how significant an issue it was, and people were worried about the price of gas, as they are now. But anyway, she was very, very involved in it, and has continued to be our spear-carrier in this fight.

What happened was I also met someone else who was very important to me, and I didn't realize it at the time. And she was another congresswoman, Sala Burton, she was the congresswoman for San Francisco, and she took over from her husband, who had been the congressman for that area, his name was Phillip Burton, and he was famous for districting issues, and other things. He was a wonderful, he died of a heart attack, and she ran for his seat and got it, and unfortunately she dies later, of cancer. And Nancy Pelosi got that seat, and the rest of it is history, she's done a wonderful job on the same kinds of issues.

But anyway, what Sala Burton said to me was, "There are so many important environmental issues, but if you want to be successful you really need to focus on this issue of offshore oil development." In fact, each time the sub-department from Department of Interior dealt with the moratorium for the congressional moratorium on offshore oil development, she'd be there, in the front row. And she said to me, "I go to these meetings, I don't ever say anything, I just sit there. They know why I'm there, because I want to protect the

coast of California.” And she said, “You must do the same thing, you must talk about this one issue, and if you do people will know what the issue is just by looking at you. Not necessarily by listening to a speech or anything else. They will just know if you’re in the room it’s because you care about protecting the coast from offshore oil.” And it was absolutely the best political advice I ever got.

Now at the time most people didn’t see this as a political issue, they saw it as an environmental issue, and they thought the decision to drill along the northern coast of California would be based on the merits of the issue. And I could tell right away that this was not going to be the case, these things are determined by politics, and it’s very important for constituents to always let their state legislator know exactly what they think about issues. But it’s important not to be so scatterbrained about it; you have to stick to some issues to get more credibility. You can’t just be against everything because you’ll dilute your impact.

Jennifer Stock: Yeah, we’ll get to that in a little bit, and more as well. It sounds like as soon as you got involved in this issue you went straight to DC and found some mentors who helped you in the process of participating and letting people know what your concerns were. How did you bring that back to the Mendocino, For Bragg community and get the community engaged?

Rachel Binah: Well first of all, I was not the only person who went to lobby. In fact, I met some remarkable people in that process, one of whom is now our assemblyman, after having been a state senator. That’s Leslie Chesbro, who was lobbying at the same time—I was not the only one. I went with two other women from my community here, so I just want to get that straight.

Jennifer Stock: Sure

Rachel Binah: But what happened was in 1987, we were told right before the Christmas holidays, that there was going to be the final hearing on weather leases would be sold off of the California coast. It was called Lease Sale 91. And what happened was, I decided this was something we needed to make very exciting and very important, and we need to figure out a strategy that will not be the typical strategy of just going to a hearing and talking at a hearing we need

to have some kind of a theme, we need to have some kind of an organization, we need to make sure people are included, and we need to get people excited about this, because most people do a lot of things in their lives and they're not that interested about going to a hearing. It sounds pretty boring.

So I had a group of people come to my house, which was the Inn, and we had a discussion. The people I invited were not necessarily environmentalists, they were not necessarily scientists; there was an advertising executive, there was an attorney, they were very articulate. There were people who were painters, or theater people, all the people in the community who I thought were really interesting creative thinkers, who might come up with something new. So we met, everybody talked, and it was in that time when one had meetings and had paper all around the room, and anybody could say anything and it was all written down, and at the end of the meeting it was just chaos. It was total chaos and I thought, "oh, this is never going to work."

(Laughing)

And I was with a few of my friends and we went into the sitting room and I noticed a book, that one of the people who had come to the meeting, the supervisor for us then, well his son had come to the meeting, and was reading a book he'd found in my library, and it was the Guinness Book of Records. And in that book, which I turned to quite by accident... I had the book in my lap, I opened it up, and I glanced at it while everybody was talking and what was it about? It was about Wayne Morse, a senator from Oregon who had the second longest record of filibustering for 22 hours and 26 minutes. He was filibustered the senate against an oil tidelands legislation that was before them, and I thought, "Oh my God! We'll filibuster, that's what we have to do." Because you see, you can't tell people what they want to do; everyone wants to do what they want to do. So, with the filibuster we decided we would talk about this issue as long as we could until they agreed that they wouldn't do it.

Jennifer Stock:

So you basically came up with the idea to rally around one goal in creating a mass turnout to create a filibuster.

Rachel Binah: Exactly. So what happened so after that was Jane Kay, who it still a wonderful science and environmental writer, wrote a large article for the San Francisco Examiner about Lease Sale 91. And Warner Shabo, who lived in Marin County, designed a map, from Oregon to Sonoma, with a grid laid over the ocean, which showed the places they wanted to lease, and they were in front of Point Reyes, Mendocino, Elk Arena, Eureka, and Arcata, and when people saw this map, they went ballistic. It was such a graphic interpretation of what would happen if we didn't overturn this lease sale.

So what happened was somebody in the community of Mendocino volunteered to lend us an office in the middle of the town, and a lot of people came forward to organize that office to collect the names of people who wanted to testify at this hearing.

Now the mineral management service made a very big miscalculation—they rented a hall in which to have this hearing in Fort Bragg, and it was a tiny hall, because traditionally people to don't come to these meetings, a few people come, they'll be ten or twenty people, at most! At one of these meetings, these public meetings, so our group, they came to me and said, "Well we got to get a bigger place to do this, we need thousands of people inside." I said, "Nonononono, you don't understand. We want thousands of people outside who can't get in. And we want the place to be jammed inside, and they will make it possible to make it look like there are more people here than there really are!"

So, we went along with that.

Jennifer Stock: I want to interrupt for a second. For listeners, you're tuned to KWMR, and this is Ocean Currents, and I'm talking with Rachel Binah, who's telling us the story of how the communities of Mendocino and Fort Bragg rallied against Lease Sale 91, which was slated to have some oil and gas development right off the Mendocino coast.

Rachel Binah: All right, so they made this major miscalculation, they had a small hall. And they had scheduled this, they had told us about it, just within the guidelines of the law, just after Christmas, with no time for people to plan, because most people are not involved in political activity around the Christmas season. And they were

surprised because we were able to get 1400 people to sign up to testify, to come to this hearing.

We also developed flyers, brochures, and different people did different aspects. Don't for one moment think that I did this all by myself, I did not. There were many, many, many people involved in this process. I would say 99.04% pure, was the amount of people involved with this process.

Jennifer Stock: How did you rally everyone? This was a time when before the Internet and cell phones.

Rachel Binah: That's correct. I think the map started it, and all the other things we did. One thing that a woman did was draft a letter that could be sent to every inn and hotel on the coast, so that it could go out to the larger population of the country. Because, you know, this is tourist country and we get people who come from all over the world, and they come for one reason, and that's because it's beautiful. And because the ocean's pristine, and because it's dramatic, and because it's spiritually uplifting. So each in sent these letters out and we offered people a reduced rate if they would come and testify on our behalf. And in Sonoma County we started a campaign called Save The Kansas Coast.

Jennifer Stock: (giggles)

Rachel Binah: A picture of the coast, with the rocky islands, and our position was that this is not just our coast, this coast belongs to the people of Kansas and Arkansas and everywhere else. This is not just for us, no. We're protecting it because we live here, but you must protect it also, because it's a national treasure. Just like the Grand Canyon, or Yosemite, or the State of Liberty, and that was a very strong statement, and we had a brochure that was called Save the Kansas Coast, which we sent out to everybody we could think of. But I'd like to say that at that time we were what you might call selectively naive. We believed that we could do it, we believed that it would happen quickly, we believed. I said to myself, "give it six months and then it'll be done, permanently." "We wanted permanent protection, we're going to get it through legislation, we're going to get it through public sentiment, the Mineral Management Service is going to back off, it's all going to be wonderful." Well, I've

been working on this issue for 30 years, and I can tell you—It's not done.

The oil companies will continue to have power: money, attorneys, patience, and they get paid to do this. I mean a lot of money! So, we're at a disadvantage. But what we organized everybody, we organized the speakers to testify, we had committees that handled various aspects, like one that dealt with the press. We called all kinds of media people, in television, in radio. We sent out a press release saying this is not going to be your ordinary hearing, it's going to be spectacular you should really come because it's going to be wonderful. We invited all the politicians we could think of. I was involved with inviting all the presidential candidates, so they could come and state their position. These were the democrats, because I'm a democrat and felt that the democrats could be more responsive to this issue, and of course I'm right about that.

Jennifer Stock:

(giggles) Well...

Rachel Binah:

And we set up special rates for people to come to the hearing, and we also orchestrated where the celebrities stayed. Diane Feinstein came, at a particular hotel, with a particular press person, someone who would be very eager to interview her. In my inn I had Peter Douglass, the executive director of the Coastal Commission, as well as Jane Kay from the San Francisco Examiner, whom I previously mentioned. And Leo McCarthy came, and he was Lieutenant Governor at the time, and also a member of the state land commission, because as you mentioned earlier, in the beginning of this program, there are state waters and there are federal waters. The state has jurisdiction from the mean high tides to three miles, and then the federal jurisdiction starts at three miles and then goes to 200 miles. So it was very important that our state officials, as well as our members of congress, came.

And people did come; I'm looking at a newspaper clipping right now, that show 5,00 people in front of this tiny hall. They're holding signs, and there was a big banner on top, that read "Ocean Sanctuary Now!" And this picture of Dianne Feinstein testifying, before the committee hearing the case, and we had such a great pressroom. As you said, there were really no computers for ordinary people, but some press people did have computers, and some press people just used telephones, so we had this bank of

telephones, and this bank of plugs. It was really quite wonderful, and looks of food for them to eat.

Well we had 13 cameras in the room, they came from ABC, NBC, CBS, and CNN was there. All over the country, it was national television channels on top of the local affiliates, from Los Angeles and San Francisco. And there were 13 of these television cameras in the room. And there was press from all over the world; I was interviewed by a German newspaper and also a French newspaper, as well as NPR and all the rest of them. It was amazing.

Jennifer Stock:

That's amazing that the word got out about this small place in the world.

For folks tuning in, you're listening to KWMR, 90.5 Point Reyes station, and 89.9 Bolinas, you're listening to Ocean Currents, and Rachel, I want you to continue, I want to hear the end of the story for the hearing and the success of that. We have about 15 minutes to cover some of that territory. So, tell us about the hearing. You had 1400 people registered to testify—how was this received by the mineral management service?

Rachel Binah:

Well, they were absolutely astonished. Actually, they were frightened, it was so bizarre to them, they couldn't even imagine it. And they were totally unprepared for it. We had people from the scientific community who had gone through the draft environmental impact statement, which I believe was about five or six inches thick! And they had gone through it, picking out specific criticisms of the analysis of the potential oil leases. We had fishermen, we had school children who gave pictures, we had the Presbyterian Women's Choir sing a song to them, we had Native America tribal dancers, we had people in costume, we had a doctor who talked about the quality of life here and how important it was to his patients, and how we did everything in relation to the ocean. How we married in front of the ocean, and we even scattered our ashes into the ocean when people we loved died.

So, it was very profound. And it was entertaining, and it was bizarre, and it went on and on, and at about one or two in the morning they said, "well, we have to sleep. But we'll come back tomorrow!" And eventually, our filibuster lasted for 24 hours, which beat Wayne Morris, of the senate.

Jennifer Stock: So, a new world record.

Rachel Binah: It was certainly a world record, I don't know if it was ever recognized as a world record but people talk about that hearing with great astonishment, because it really was incredible.

Now, when it was time for these people to leave, they had to leave. They were frightened. They thought it'd be something terrible, because only a couple hundred people had spoken. And I think it was Richard Charter, who had a t-shirt made, or someone did anyway, for each one of the hearing officers, and they were given these t-shirts, and they said, "I survived the Mendocino hearing."

And there were people, who were very upset they didn't get a chance to speak, and it was my job to calm everyone down, I was really terrified because I thought something terrible was going to happen.

But somehow it all worked out. And we had a video camera and we had each person that wasn't able to speak register on this video, saying, "I wanted to speak but wasn't allowed to." Because they had promised that they're let everybody speak.

Jennifer Stock: Well that's good.

Rachel Binah: Some people were very upset about that, in fact most people were, but most people were satisfied because it had worked.

Now the aftermath of this is, and some of the political consequences are, that our congressman was defeated, and it was over this issue. It was a third party candidate and people voted for that third party candidate, and not for him, because he had refused, he had said that he didn't want to grandstand over it. And that was the end of his political career.

It became obvious to me that needed to have protection in state waters if we were ever going to get protection in federal waters, we had to make sure that the state waters were protected too. And my assemblyman, and state senator at the time, Dan Houser, from Eureka, and Barry Keen, from Benicia, introduced legislation to

protect the ocean in state waters, permanently from offshore oil. And it was very, very difficult, I testified 11 times in Sacramento for this bill and couldn't get it out of the committee for years, finally it did get out of the committee and it was passed, but at the very, very end of this hearing, before the final committee in Sacramento, they made a deal with the oil company. And the deal is this, and it's a kind of poison pill if you look at it. And it's that should there be oil found in federal waters, that the state and governor declare a national emergency, or a statewide emergency because of energy, he would then have power to lease acreage in state waters. And so, that passed.

And it became law. And it's very unfortunate because we don't have permanent protection of state waters we have temporary protection,

Jennifer Stock: Mmm-hmm

Rachel Binah: And another thing is a man named Dan Hefley, who lived down in Santa Cruz...

Jennifer Stock: Yeah, he's still down there.

Rachel Binah: Is he?!

Jennifer Stock: Yes.

Rachel Binah: He got the idea of forbidding on shore support systems for of shore oil, implemented through local ordinances and governments all along the coast from Los Angeles up to Oregon. Well what a brilliant idea! If you can't get on shore with your pipeline, if you can't get an airport to go back and forth to the rigs, if you can't have a refinery, if you can't have anything that could be construed as a support system for offshore oil development, then you can't do it. Or it certainly slows you down, let's put it that way.

Jennifer Stock: And did those ordinances get passed?

Rachel Binah: Yes. I think they were passed everywhere they were tried. What they say I think, if I'm correct, is that you can't develop an onshore support system for offshore oil development without the support of the people, without voting for the people to allow it. Because the

people in these coastal communities are so opposed to offshore oil development, which made it an easy thing to get, I think.

Jennifer Stock: Well that's really a positive thing! In the end this whole effort really stimulated so much more activism in terms of coastal communities and governments working together

Rachel Binah: And it also stopped the government from going ahead with this lease sale, and it was taken off the agenda by Donald Hodel, who just removed it. And George HW Bush started this moratorium, and then Clinton did, because they realized it was a toxic issue politically, Nobody could run for office in this state without caring about the ocean. The ocean it too important to us all, to ignore, and I think that has carried on to a certain extent, but every time the price of gas and oil is manipulated, and I do believe it is manipulated by the oil companies for political purposes, not to mention making money, people get frightened, and they will say, "Drill Baby, Drill."

Jennifer Stock: You mentioned a book to me that is very insightful about that power that you are taking about what's the name of that book?

Rachel Binah: The book is called Oil In Troubled Waters, it's by William Freudenberg and Robert Gramling. Freudenberg was, at the time, with the University of Madison, in Wisconsin, and he was a professor of rural sociology, and Gramling is a professor of sociology, and the director of the Society For Socioeconomic Research at the University of Southwestern Louisiana. Both of these men previously worked for the Department of Interior, or the National Academy of Sciences, and the book is about what makes peoples reaction to offshore oil development different in California than in say, Louisiana, where they have just about destroyed everything in sight.

Now on the cover of this book is what the coastline looks like in Louisiana, it's been completely destroyed with channels and oil development paraphernalia and equipment that has really destroyed it. But the real reason there's a difference between the gulfs and here is that we live along this coast. It's like that doctor said, Dr. Han, he said, "everything we do is in proximity to the coast." We drive up and down it, the roads go North and South, most of them, along the coast, and there are a few that go East-

West, but most go North-South. And we see it all the time, we experience it all the time, and it's a place we come for recreation, even if we don't live on the coast, So we feel passionate about it, it's part of our identity as a people. The coast is important to everyone, the ocean is important to everyone, and it's passionately important to everyone.

Jennifer Stock: Well said, well said. Rachel one of the things you mentioned, is that you have gone from being an active warrior on this issue, which is so clear in how you talked about this whole time period, to an active worrier...

Rachel Binah: (chuckles) Yeah.

Jennifer Stock: ...and that's something I really picked up on as an educator, in terms of carrying on the legacy of how stories like this get passed on. Can you talk a little bit about how you're passing this on? Passing the torch.

Rachel Binah: Well, two things. First of all, I'm a mentor in a program called the Partnership Scholars, and it's a program involving myself with young people in junior high and high school. And I try to teach them about the important of al of this. But I also realized that I'm getting gold, I'm 70 years old, and I'm not going to be able to do this for the rest of my life. So it's important for me to pass the torch.

So I started a little group in this community, who are vested in this community. People who are professionals here, or own land, or farm, or who are educators, teachers, or who are raising a family. And these are the young heirs, of those people who were so involved with me, people who were involved in protecting the coast in 1988, and some of those children were actually involved in the hearing itself. Some of them were part of the school children what came to the hearing and felt empowered by it. Some of the came to my house and I invited to talk about it and pass the torch, they were very excited to talk about it, but it all dissipated. The truth is, there's no overt threat at the moment, and if there was, they'd come right up to the mic (Sic. microphone) and talk. But it's very hard for people who are involved in other things to throw themselves into this fight, and it is a fight, it's going to be a fight forever.

Jennifer Stock: Right, and it's that whole point of activating a community, and using your voice, and getting knowledge to act on an issue.

Rachel Binah: Well, I think it's very important to, number one, focus on something that they think is important. I'll pass on what Sala Burton said to me, "Don't be against everything." Figure out something that's important, and I hope it's the ocean, and I hope it's about protecting it from the various things that can happen. And pursue it, and think about it, and write letters about it, and meet your elected officials about it.

Now there's a new woman who was just appointed by the president to be the new Secretary to the Interior, Sally Jewel, whom he thinks we will be a good steward to the environment, but she also has a background in the oil industry, So I think she needs to hear from people, I think people should write to this woman when she is finally confirmed, which she will be. Sally Jewel, write to her, tell her what you think.

Assemblyman Wesley Chesbro is very, very involved in ocean issues and he's the chair of the resources chair in the assembly, he's our assemblyman. Let him know how you feel. State senator Noreen Evans is also very involved is also very involved in issues like this, and need to be contacted. Call your representatives; let them know you have a relationship with them. Do not attack them, please.

Jennifer Stock: Good point.

Rachel Binah: Them may do something that you don't like, tell them about it privately, don't attack them. It's very important to have a cordial relationship with people who are in power. And it's possible to get them to do things that they didn't think they would do, based on your persuasive abilities, but don't attack them. Try to relate to them, we gotta get along if we're going to protect this coast.

Jennifer Stock: Speaking of protecting the coast, there is a process in place right now, to expand the Gulf of the Carillons and Cordell Bank Sanctuaries. What do your thoughts about it?

Rachel Binah: I think it is a magnificent idea; I am so excited about it. My only concern is I'd like to see it go all the way up the coast. The expansion of any space like this is so important, because it allows us to protect parts of the coast from any kind of environmental damage that everyone is so hell bent to perpetrate. If this happens, it will stop oil companies from having anything to do with that particular area, and because the coast Ocean Currents, pardon the pun, go from North to South, it means that if the Northern part of our coast is developed, any oil spills will go into that sanctuary, which would be a disaster, so it gives us another layer of protection even North of where it's proposed to be.

Another big thing happening is this push to have the president declare the coastal monuments to extend on land in particular places, and that will be a really wonderful thing, so you might want to write to the president and ask him to preserve the lands in southern Mendocino County. Everything we can get, even if it's only by inches, is better.

Jennifer Stock: Absolutely. Well you live on a treasured coastline, and as you mentioned, you really pointed it out earlier, people come from all over the world to visit this really beautiful place. So, it's because of people like you, engaging with people on deep, deep levels, that it continues to be beautiful. So I want to thank you for your complete passion and sharing it with so many people.

Rachel Binah: I'm delighted. Thank you very much for your kind words. Everyone will have an opportunity to be involved with this, believe me.

Jennifer Stock: Well I wanted to mention that you also express your ideas about this issue through art, and you have an art exhibit coming up...

Rachel Binah: Yes, at the Partners Gallery in Fort Bragg, I'll be having a show. I specialize in collages, and my last show was called Crude Cover-Up, and it was about the terrible destructive explosion in the Gulf of Mexico, I was so upset by it, and the consequences of it, and all of this oil just vomiting into the ocean, into the gulf there, I couldn't even watch the images of the sea life being smothered in oil, but what I did do was develop a very, very large series of collage paintings about the cover up, and they're about the sadness and futility of the oil spill and culpability of the British Petroleum,

and the Mineral Management Service, for allowing the oil companies to do whatever they want. You know, 11 people were killed in that explosion and the damage to the environment just continues! Even now. So the oil companies made billion dollars but failed to plan for contingencies or the devices that would have prevent these accidents from happening. So the pieces, I made many, are all about Crude Cover-Up, one was called White Wash, one of them was called Houston, We Have A Problem, about British Petroleum in particular. And also Dispersed, I did a series about dispersion. I am facilitated by the perception that if something is hidden or if it's obscured from view, that the consequences of it will disappear. So they put these chemicals on, which can cause more damage than the oil. And the oil particles become smaller and smaller and fall into the ocean, but they're still there. And the destruction of the oil, and the chemicals, and the hiding, and the obfuscation, just goes on and on and on, so my main concern was about those issues.

And I did two pieces that were about red tags, you know, when someone has a building violation they put a red tag on the property?

Jennifer Stock: Mm-hmm.

Rachel Binah: So one of mine is called Red Tagged Oil Rig. And the other one, which has just has hundreds of red tags is just called Violations, because what I feel like they've done is violated us.

Jennifer Stock: And where is this going to be and when does it start?

Rachel Binah: Well this show is going to be for the month of May and it's going to be in Fort Bragg at the Partners Gallery.

Jennifer Stock: Great. Well it's wonderful communicate in another way to another audience about the issues that you work on. Is there a specific organization or website that you would recommend for people who would like to learn more?

Rachel Binah: Well I think the major organization in the country—the Sierra Club; they are very involved in these kinds of issues. So is Green Peace, you know all the major organizations. I think that people just need to do a little bit of research on this, and just put into your

computer, “Anti Offshore Oil Organizations” and you’ll get a list of things that’ll make your head spin.

Jennifer Stock: Yes indeed. Well I need to wrap things up right now, I have some other announcements to make, but Rachel I want to thank you again for coming on the show today and working so hard on this issue.

Rachel Binah: It was my pleasure Jennifer; thank you for all that you do.

Jennifer Stock: Thank you, have a great week.

Rachel Binah: Thank you, Bye bye.

Jennifer Stock: Bye bye

We have been talking with Rachel Binah, an activist who was very involved in organizing communities of Mendocino and For Bragg area during Lease Sale 91 in the 80’s, and successfully fought off that opportunity. And I love that these are real people just like you and I, that are getting involved, that work hard and were able to influence an outcome. And as she mentioned, it’s not permanent and so there’s still vigilance that needs to happen, and she encouraged, and we encourage you to stay up to date on these issues by staying in touch with your elected officials as well as organizations that track these issues, like the Sierra Club and NRDC as well.

Very interesting story and very thankful for people like that, which allow us to have the coastline we have up and down here,

And I’d like to just say thank you for tuning in. Ocean Currents is the first Monday of every month, and I have a podcast, you can go to iTunes and look for Ocean Currents, or subscribe via my website, www.cordellbank.noaa.gov, to get past episodes. And I love hearing from past listeners! Thanks again for tuning in to KWMR and Ocean Currents, have a great week.

(Exit music)

Jennifer Stock: Thank you for listening to Ocean Currents. This show is brought to you by NOAA’s Cordell Bank National Marine Sanctuary, on

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