Offshore Oil Platform Decommissioning in California

California Ocean Day 2023

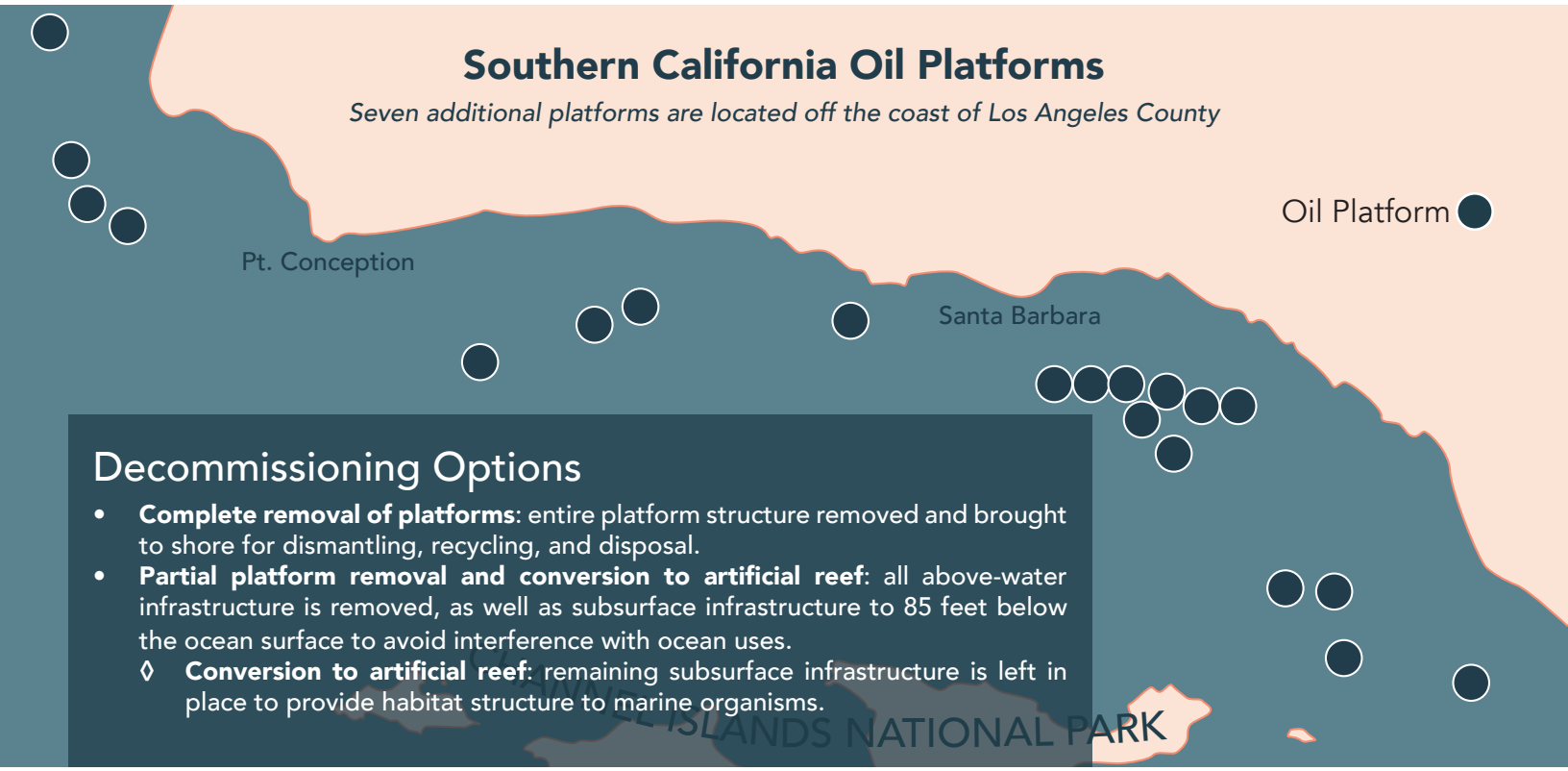
Quick Facts

- 34 oil & gas platforms installed offshore of California between 1968-1989
- 27 remaining: 4 in state waters; 23 in federal waters
- Water depth range of platforms: 30-1,198 ft
- Platform distance from coast: 0.5-10 miles

As many of these oil rigs begin to reach the end of their useful life, decision-makers will face the challenge of how to decommission rigs to minimize risks and maximize benefits.

Southern California Oil Platforms

Seven additional platforms are located off the coast of Los Angeles County



Decommissioning Options

- **Complete removal of platforms**: entire platform structure removed and brought to shore for dismantling, recycling, and disposal.
- **Partial platform removal and conversion to artificial reef**: all above-water infrastructure is removed, as well as subsurface infrastructure to 85 feet below the ocean surface to avoid interference with ocean uses.
  - ◊ **Conversion to artificial reef**: remaining subsurface infrastructure is left in place to provide habitat structure to marine organisms.

Key Considerations

Platform infrastructure is ecologically valuable. Reefs established on oil platforms support fish communities with more fish and larger individual fish than surrounding natural reefs.

Removing all of California's platforms would exceed any platform decommissioning project ever performed in terms of scale. California platforms present a unique challenge due to their size at depth, which determines how much material there is beneath the surface.

Decommissioning offshore platforms is expensive. A 2020 report estimated that complete removal of the 23 platforms in federal waters alone would cost upwards of $1.6 billion in total, while a 2007 report estimated that partial removal of the platforms could cost about half that amount.

Bottom line: Differing values and uncertainty about environmental, social, and economic effects of decommissioning options mean there is no single option clearly preferred by all stakeholders.

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[1]Bureau of Safety and Environmental Enforcement. 2020. Decommissioning Cost Update for Pacific Outer Continental Shelf Region Facilities.

[2]California Ocean Science Trust. 2007. Evaluating Alternatives for Decommissioning California's Offshore Oil and Gas Platforms: A Technical Analysis to Inform State Policy.