



# Gulf States' Seaward Boundaries: How Did We Get Here?

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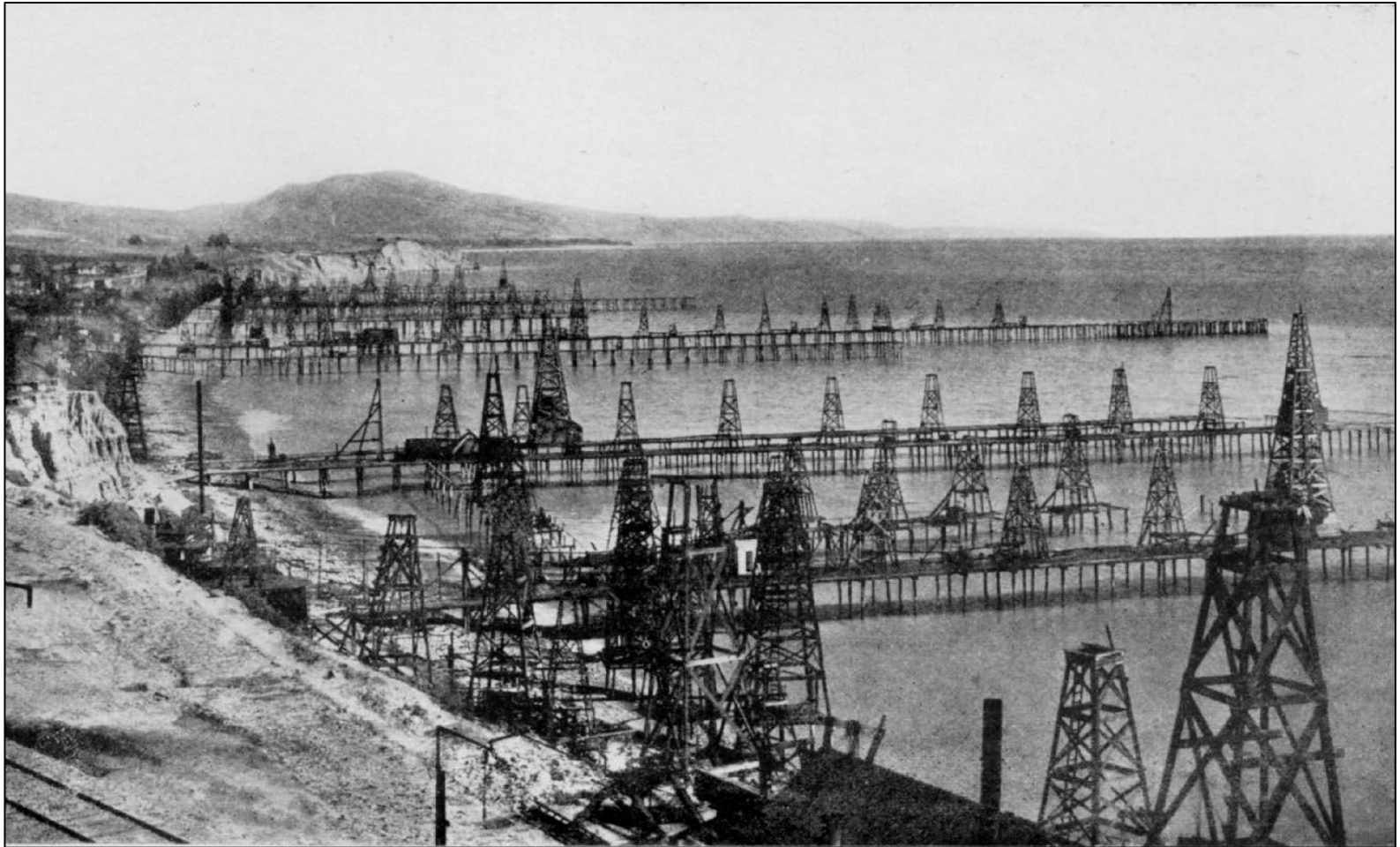
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# In the beginning, there was oil ...



Oil wells at Summerland, California. Photograph by G.H. Eldridge. Published in *Nature and Science on the Pacific Coast*, Pacific Committee of the American Association for the Advancement of Science, 1915, p. 86.

# U.S. Stakes its Claim

- U.S. v. California, 332 U.S. 19 (1947)
  - U.S. Supreme Court ruled that California had no claim to any submerged lands offshore.
- Three years later, the Supreme Court said the same was true for Louisiana and Texas.
  - U.S. v. Louisiana, 339 U.S. 699 (1950)
  - U.S. v. Texas, 339 U.S. 707 (1950)

# Congress Responds

- Submerged Lands Act of 1953
  - Congressional grant of state title to, and jurisdiction over, certain offshore areas.
- SLA established that the coastal boundary for each state will extend 3 geographical miles from their respective coastline.
- Boundary may be extend beyond 3 miles if state qualifies under one of two limited exceptions:
  1. Law or constitutional provisions in existence before state entered the Union established a seaward boundary beyond 3 miles.
  2. Congress approves an extension beyond 3-mile limit.

# Supreme Court Speaks Again

- U.S. v. Louisiana, Texas, Mississippi, Alabama, and Florida, 363 U.S. 1 (1960).
  - Court found that Alabama, Mississippi, and Louisiana were not entitled to an extended boundary.
  - Texas was granted an extended boundary – 3 marine leagues (about 10 miles).
  - The Court also determined that Florida was entitled to an extended boundary of 3 marine leagues – but only on its west (Gulf) coast.

# Always Hope!

- Despite the 1960 Supreme Court ruling, the door isn't completely shut on the Gulf States.
  - Congress could approve an extended boundary (2<sup>nd</sup> SLA Exception)
  - Supreme Court could revisit its earlier rulings.