

DRILL:

The ban on offshore drilling has been in place since 1990.

FROM A1

dangers of offshore drilling — or drilling in the Arctic National Wildlife Reserve, for that matter — are overstated.

“The impact of offshore drilling in California is considerably less than tourist boat (pollution),” Langenkamp said.

Opposition to offshore drilling began building in 1969, after a well blowout off the Santa Barbara coast. Crews capped the blowout, but the resulting subsurface pressure forced oil through fault lines on the ocean floor, spread-

ing 200,000 barrels of crude across 35 miles of beaches. The spill killed several thousand birds and was largely responsible for the first Earth Day the following year.

Twenty years later, the tanker Exxon Valdez ruptured on a reef off the coast of Alaska, spilling nearly 11 million gallons of crude. Although the Exxon Valdez accident was not related to offshore drilling, it heightened public interest in environmental concerns, Langenkamp said.

“In a Democratic administration, with a liberal president (Jimmy Carter), we had an offshore drilling program,” Langenkamp said. “Now you can’t even talk about it.”

In 1990, President George H.W. Bush, a Republican, placed a moratorium on all offshore drilling except in the western Gulf of Mexico and some of the north coast of

Alaska. The ban has remained in place through Democratic and Republican administrations and majorities in Congress.

The Sierra Club says oil spills from offshore wells remain a problem despite improved technology and safety. Citing the U.S. Coast Guard, the environmental group says about 7 million gallons were spilled into the Gulf of Mexico during Hurricane Katrina.

But pressure is mounting. On Monday, presumptive GOP presidential nominee John McCain said he favors loosening offshore restrictions.

On Thursday, the Sierra Club endorsed Democrat Barack Obama, in part because of McCain’s position on offshore development.

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GANGS:

Volunteers are trained to recognize firearms and drug deals.

FROM A1

Police Department gang summary report.

Gangs were also contributing to an increase in violent crime, police said.

In 2007, gangs were involved in an eight-year high of 97 cases of shooting with intent to kill, according to police data. That number was 22 more than the 75 that were reported in 2000.

Of 64 homicides that were committed locally in 2007, 17 — or about 27 percent — involved either suspects or victims who had some type of gang association, the report states.

The Confidential Reliable Citizens Program was different from past initiatives in that it trained volunteers to recognize and report gang-related crime with minimal risk of retaliation, said Monroe Nichols, a mayoral aide who serves as a gang liaison between City Hall and the police.

“When things happen in a community, it’s hard to get information as to what happened because many fear retaliation, and maybe there is a mistrust of police,” Nichols said.

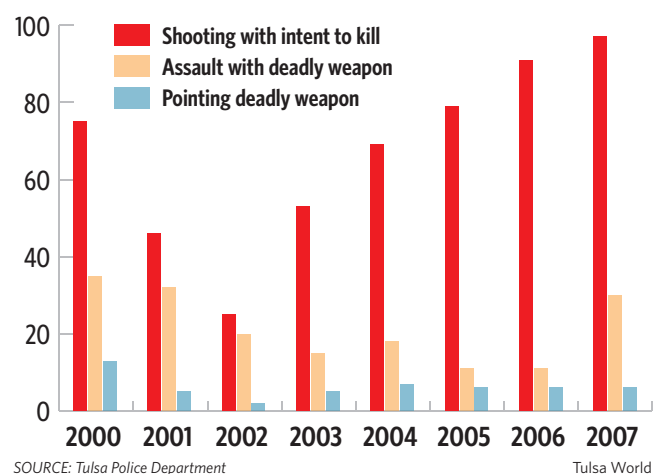
To guard against possible retaliation, volunteers receive code names so their identities will not be revealed in police reports and court records that are open to the public.

The program just entered its second year, and much of the fear and mistrust has been reduced by its success, Nichols said.

U.S. Attorney David O’Meilia said tips from the program’s volunteers have resulted in an average of one arrest of a gang member per month.

Nichols said the first arrest took place in north Tulsa, where the program started

Tulsa Police Department Gang Unit case assignments



To help

Anyone who is interested in serving as a volunteer in the Confidential Reliable Citizens Program can call the Crime Commission at 585-5209.

normal person would not recognize,” O’Meilia said.

“We still have street gangs, but the level of violence has diminished,” he said.

Nichols said the program started with 12 volunteers in north Tulsa, but it has spread to more than 60 who are keeping an eye on gang activity in all parts of the city.

Classes to train more volunteers for the program are planned.

Volunteers must go through background checks and be representative of the city’s demographics.

“You’ve got older citizens who were hesitant to report a crime, and you’ve got young people who want to live in their community,” O’Meilia said.

Although authorities think that anti-gang programs have been effective in cracking down on crime, they remain cautious.

Summer often brings an increase in crime because youths who are out of school have more idle time, and more people tend to be out on the streets.

“It’s a good time to get involved for the summer, as we’re still taking applications,” Nichols said.

“It’s really about the community and law enforcement working together to make sure we are living in a safe community.”

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