

February 12, 2015

Now is the time

Late last month the Obama administration announced a proposal to open waters in the Atlantic Ocean from Georgia to Virginia for gas and oil drilling.

The proposal is part of a five-year plan for the period 2017 to 2022 from Interior Department dealing with proposals to sell federal leases for oil and gas development. The plan will likely be the subject of months, if not years, of public hearings before there any real possibility of drilling platforms being seen headed toward Gray's Reef.

But that doesn't mean it can't or won't happen.

The question is why even consider it.

According to Sen. Ben Cardin, D-Maryland, gas and oil reserves off the Atlantic Coast "are minimal compared to the risk."

The Bureau of Ocean Energy Management said last year that there are less than 5 billion barrels of recoverable oil off the entire East Coast. On the other hand, in the Gulf of Mexico, there are an estimated 50 billion barrels.

Alice Keyes, associate director of One Hundred Miles, a Brunswick based environmental group says that estimates from the Federal government indicate the "retrievable Atlantic fossil fuel reserves could only meet current domestic oil demand for 132 days...."

That is simply too little reward for too much risk.

The Deepwater Horizon catastrophe, aka the BP oil spill, created a sea-floor gusher that went un-stemmed for 87 days and spread oil over 1,000 miles of Gulf of Mexico coastline. That's about the same as the distance from Miami to Atlantic City, N.J.

There is absolutely no reason to put the barrier islands, beaches and marshes of our coastline at that sort of risk for that little of a return.

Just the possibility of gas and oil drilling in the waters off our coast is not only not a good idea; it is a very bad idea.

And while it might be years away, now is not the time to take a wait-and-see approach.

Now is the time for citizens concerned about the welfare of the coast of Bryan County to let our local elected officials know that we would like to see the city of Richmond Hill and Bryan County to pass resolutions denouncing drilling off our coast.

Saying nothing or waiting to see what will happen only adds to the momentum of those who support East Coast off-shore oil drilling.