

## **Oceana Guide – Collecting Petition Signatures**

### ***Prepared for Proposed Incidental Harassment Authorizations (IHA) Public Comment Period for Seismic Airgun Blasting in the Atlantic***

THANK YOU for your interest in helping Oceana stop seismic airgun blasting! Here you will find everything you need to gather petition signatures in your community, including when, where, and how to ask for signatures on this petition as well as a short script, commonly asked questions, and helpful tips.

This guide is designed specifically for use during the 30-day public comment period for draft [Incidental Harassment Authorizations issued by the National Marine Fisheries Service \(NMFS\) on 6/6/17](#), but the issue information and canvassing tips can be used whenever you are talking to your community about Oceana campaigns.

## **HOW TO COLLECT PETITION SIGNATURES**

### **Step by Step Guide:**

1. Choose your petition location (door to door, walking, or stationary), decide when and for how long you'll work, and recruit a buddy. Bring your clipboard, petition sheets, quarter flyers, other literature, pens, and anything else you'll need (sunscreen, water, snacks, cell phone charger, map, etc.).
2. Set a goal: how many signatures will you collect during your canvass time?
3. Get out there and meet your goal! Follow the script below for guidance, but speak from the heart and have fun.
4. After someone signs the petition, make sure you give them the quarter page flyer with instructions on how to submit their comment directly to the administration – this is an important step that we don't want them to forget.
5. Scan your completed petition pages and email them to your local Oceana organizer as soon as possible.
  - New Jersey, Delaware, Maryland, Virginia, DC: Caroline Wood, [cwood@oceana.org](mailto:cwood@oceana.org)
  - North Carolina: Randy Sturgill, [rsturgill@oceana.org](mailto:rsturgill@oceana.org)
  - South Carolina, Georgia: Samantha Siegel, [ssiegel@oceana.org](mailto:ssiegel@oceana.org)
  - Florida: Erin Handy, [ehandy@oceana.org](mailto:ehandy@oceana.org)
  - All other states: Oona Watkins, [owatkins@oceana.org](mailto:owatkins@oceana.org)

### **How to ask for petition signatures:**

Start with a hook – something that will catch people's attention and convey what you want succinctly. For example, if you are standing in a busy area or walking along the beach or boardwalk, catch someone's eye and say:

**“Hi! Could you sign our petition to protect whales and dolphins (or sea turtles, or fish, or marine ecosystems)?”**

If they hesitate or seem interested, you can offer them the clipboard and pen as you say:

**“We just need your signature – we’re not asking for money or a subscription.”**

If they begin to sign the petition or ask a question, you can offer them a little more information:

**“We’re volunteering with Oceana to fight seismic airgun blasting and offshore drilling off the coast of [YOUR STATE]. Are you familiar with our campaign?”**

From there, they may ask for more information – if so, take a moment to tell them about our campaign or give them some literature! When they are ready to go on their way, it’s essential to thank them and give them the quarter page flyer:

**“Thank you so much for signing our petition. It’s critically important that the federal government also hears from you directly. You can take this flyer home with you, write a short comment using the talking points on the back, and email the administration directly at this email address. Thanks again!”**

### **Tips for collecting petition signatures:**

#### **When should I canvass?**

Always put safety first – ONLY collect petition signatures during the daylight (we recommend 9am to no later than 8pm during summer hours). Choose a time when there will be plenty of people around; for example, after class gets out on campus or at 5:00pm downtown when people are leaving their offices.

#### **Where should I canvass?**

Again, always put safety first. If you are going door to door, choose a neighborhood that you are familiar with. If you choose to stand in a busy area, be sure that you are on public property and do not block foot traffic. Choose a time when people will feel relaxed and friendly. We recommend collecting petition signatures at the following areas:

- Along the beach, boardwalk, or local public park
- Themed gatherings, like rallies, fairs, or parades
- Your local farmer’s market
- Outside a local spot such as a restaurant, grocery store, or museum
- Most importantly: smile, make eye contact, and remain warm and positive. This should be fun for you *and* for the person you are talking to.
- Keep an eye on the weather and always bring water, a snack, and comfortable, weather appropriate clothing. Don’t forget your pens!

- Speak from the heart – people respond to authenticity. Why do you care about this issue?
- Engage people meaningfully if they are interested – ask them why they care and encourage them to take further action with Oceana.
- Don't make hasty judgments about someone based on their appearance, but do pay attention – if someone is wearing a “drill, baby, drill” sticker, looks angry or uncomfortable, or reacts negatively to your initial eye contact, let them pass.
- If someone ignores you or politely declines to engage, let them go.
- Don't pretend to be an expert if you're not – it's ok to tell someone you don't know the answer to their question.
- BRING A BUDDY! It's way more fun to collect petition signatures with a friend.
- Stay in contact with a friend who's not with you in case you have an emergency.

*Remember, you can also carry your clipboard with you to work, school, and to your recreational activities – anyone you encounter is a potential ocean defender!*

### **Additional Resources:**

- [CLICK HERE](#) for a printable version of the petition.
- [CLICK HERE](#) for the quarter page flyer with instructions on how to submit comments directly to the administration. Our petition is important, but so is generating comments to the federal government. Hand these out after people sign the petition. Print double sided and cut to save paper!
- [CLICK HERE](#) for our seismic brochure.
- Visit [www.stophedrill.org](http://www.stophedrill.org) to learn more!

### **Commonly Asked Questions:**

#### **1) What is seismic airgun blasting?**

Seismic airgun blasting is part of the process that the oil and gas industry uses to identify and map oil and gas deposits under the seafloor. Airgun blasts are so loud that they can disturb and injure marine life, and can be heard up to 2,500 miles away from the source (further than the distance between Washington, DC and Las Vegas). The blasts are repeated every 10-12 seconds, 24 hours a day, for weeks to months at a time.

#### **2) Why do we care?**

Along the Atlantic coast nearly 1.4 million jobs and over \$95 billion in GDP rely on healthy ocean ecosystems, mainly through fishing, tourism, and recreation. Seismic airgun blasting can scare away commercial fish species and disrupt coastal economies. The practice could injure as many as 138,000 whales and dolphins and disturb millions more. And seismic airgun blasting is the first step towards dirty and dangerous offshore drilling.

#### **3) Who opposes seismic airgun blasting?**

As of today, 125 East Coast municipalities, over 1,200 elected officials, and an alliance representing over 41,000 businesses and 500,200 fishing families have publically opposed seismic airgun blasting and/or offshore drilling, citing threats to marine life, coastal communities and local economies. See [opposition web page](#) for examples that are local and relevant to your area to highlight.

#### **4) What is an Incidental Harassment Authorization (IHA)?**

The National Marine Fisheries Service just released draft “Incidental Harassment Authorizations,” or IHAs, for public review. These IHAs are permits to harm whales and dolphins while searching for offshore oil and gas using seismic airguns. IHAs are required in order for geophysical companies to do seismic surveys, as the seismic airguns will undoubtedly disturb and injure marine mammals. You can read more about IHAs [here](#).

#### **5) Why are we asking people to sign a petition about IHAs?**

Marine mammals already face numerous threats, from climate change and ocean acidification to pollution, ocean noise and habitat degradation. These IHAs are the first step to allowing seismic airgun blasting in the Atlantic, which could begin as soon as this summer. We simply cannot allow our marine wildlife to be subjected to this practice, especially when it fuels a desire to drill off our coast.