



The Greater Ocean City, Maryland Chamber of Commerce, Inc.

January, 25, 2016

Dear Governor Hogan:

On behalf of the Greater Ocean City Chamber of Commerce, I would like to express my strong opposition to any proposal that would open the Atlantic Region Outer Continental Shelf to oil and gas exploration as well as drilling. Maryland's irreplaceable natural resources would be unnecessarily compromised during both phases of this process of exploration/testing and ultimately drilling. We have some of the most nationally recognized pristine beaches in the world as well as the commercial and recreational impact of the Chesapeake Bay. Any disturbance to marine life and the inevitable spillage of drilling would severely impact our tourism based economy. Further, the Assateague Island National Seashore includes more than 37 miles of high quality Ocean beaches in Maryland and Virginia, and is one of the few remaining undeveloped barrier island environments along the mid-Atlantic coast. Assateague Island State Park has been named in the Top 10 in the nation and the seashore is an important regional destination with more than 2 million visitors each year, resulting in an economic benefit of \$84 million annually. Here in Ocean City, we boast 10 miles of shoreline host upwards of 8 million guests annually with tourism spending topping 1 billion.

Conducting seismic airgun surveys in MD would be completely unnecessary. MD was not included in the proposed program for 2017-2022, so legally there cannot be any drilling for oil and gas off Maryland's coast. So, why conduct such harmful surveys (putting fisheries and marine mammals and the industries that rely on them at risk) to locate oil and gas, when drilling for the oil and gas is prohibited? When the next planning period comes around, there may be less invasive technology available. It would be premature and irresponsible to conduct surveys now.

The current program for oil and gas leasing, which includes VA, NC, SC, and GA, puts Maryland at great risk with zero chance of any benefits. Even if Congress does pass a revenue sharing bill (which is unlikely), only the four states in the plan would benefit, and

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any jobs created to support drilling would be far from Maryland. Unfortunately, a spill off the coast of any of these states could be devastating for the Atlantic coast of MD and the Chesapeake Bay – oil does not respect state boundaries. When you also consider the amount of day to day pollution (wastewater, shavings, drilling sludge, etc.) and even daily oil leaks and spills which are routine, it would truly be a terrible deal for Ocean City and Maryland as a whole.

The cost of these efforts are simply too great and far outweigh any potential benefits, especially given the number and amount of off-shore leases in other regions of the country. The federal and state government has long maintained protections for the Atlantic region and has prohibited oil exploration in this critical and sensitive area. We sincerely encourage you to keep such protections in place.

Kindly call me directly at 410-213-0144 ext 102 with any questions regarding our position in opposition of offshore drilling and seismic testing.

Sincerely,

Melanie Pursel

Executive Director