

Lee Hewitt
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Committee:
Agriculture, Natural Resources and
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House of Representatives
State of South Carolina

July 31, 2017

Dr. Walter Cruickshank – Acting Director
U.S. Bureau of Ocean Energy Management
1849 C Street, NW
Washington, DC 20240

Dear Dr. Cruickshank,

I am writing to express my strong opposition of including the Atlantic in the 2019-2024 National Outer Continental Shelf Oil and Gas Leasing Program.

I represent South Carolina House District 108, which is a coastal district along Georgetown and Charleston counties. I've heard loud and clear from constituents that they do not want oil and gas drilling off the South Carolina coast because of the very real threat of a drilling disaster and the resulting severe environmental and economic harm it would bring to our area.

All of the municipalities in the district – Pawleys Island, McClellanville, Awendaw and Mt. Pleasant – plus Georgetown County, have passed resolutions opposing offshore oil and gas drilling. According to media reports, all of the current mayors of South Carolina coastal cities and towns have taken positions opposing drilling.

It is clear the coastal areas of South Carolina are very concerned about the impacts of oil spills on the beaches, marine life and the tourism industry, and understandably have taken strong positions opposing drilling. There is no way offshore oil and gas drilling can be conducted that will guarantee no oil spills and no resulting environmental and economic disasters.

The district I represent has beautiful beaches, bays, and estuaries that attract tourism and are also ecologically important. They provide vital habitat for marine life and birds, particularly for juvenile offshore fish that are vital to our commercial and recreational fisheries.

In the last year, commercial fishermen in ports adjacent to and in the district landed nearly 1 million pounds of snapper-grouper species and recreational fishermen along the South

Carolina coast are estimated to have caught 18 million fish. Our commercial and recreational fishing industry cannot afford an oil spill disaster.

State tourism produces as much as \$19 billion annually and provides one in ten South Carolinians jobs. We cannot afford to risk harming such a major part of our economy by effectively playing Russian roulette with oil rigs off our coast. Sooner or later our coast will catch a bullet in the form of a major oil spill disaster.

Again, on behalf of my constituents, I oppose oil and gas development off the South Carolina coast, as well as all waters of the Atlantic in the 2019-2024 National Outer Continental Shelf Oil and Gas Leasing Program and ask that the Atlantic be excluded from the program.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Lee Hewitt". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized "H" at the end.

Rep. Lee Hewitt