

The Honorable Sally Jewell  
Secretary  
U.S. Department of the Interior  
1849 C Street NW  
Washington, DC 20240

August 2, 2016

Dear Secretary Jewell:

As you know, the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (BOEM) initiated the permitting process for geological and geophysical (G&G) exploration along the Atlantic Outer Continental Shelf (OCS) in 2012, prior to the announcement of the 2017-2022 OCS Oil and Gas Leasing Draft Proposed Program. In March 2016, after a long period of public comment and internal review, BOEM removed the lease sale in the Mid- and South Atlantic from consideration. We are writing to request that you continue to protect our coast and deny permit applications for G&G exploration in the Atlantic Ocean, particularly off the coast of Delaware which was never considered in the drilling program.

A significant body of peer-reviewed science indicates that seismic airgun blasts used during oil and gas exploration can cause catch rates of some commercial fish to decline, harm whales, including the critically endangered North Atlantic right whale, and displace various fish species and other marine wildlife. Coastal Delaware is heavily dependent on fishing and coastal tourism; these industries support not only Sussex County, but the entire state. More than 7 million tourists visit Delaware each year, many of them drawn to our scenic beaches. Tourism is the fourth largest private employer in the state, employing 60,000 people and generating nearly \$7 billion annually. Saltwater sport fishing, another valuable and renowned Delaware industry, resulted in \$35 million in wages and supported 1,100 jobs in 2013. Seismic airgun blasting to search for oil and gas deposits would unnecessarily put our coastal economies and the communities that depend on them at risk.

Our position is supported and informed by seven Delaware coastal towns, including Lewes, Rehoboth Beach, Dewey Beach, Bethany Beach, South Bethany, Fenwick Island, and Milton, which have passed resolutions opposing seismic blasting and offshore drilling; the Rehoboth Beach Homeowners Association; the Marine Education, Research & Rehabilitation Institute based in Lewes, DE; Delaware Mobile-Surf Fishermen; the Delaware Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Control; and the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council; as well as numerous stakeholders and experts. Just last year, 75 leading marine scientists wrote a letter to President Obama stating that “opening the U.S. East Coast to seismic airgun exploration poses an unacceptable risk of serious harm to marine life...the full extent of which will not be understood until long after the harm occurs.”

Due to the previously mentioned concern and opposition from the scientific community, fishery management experts, Delaware’s coastal communities, and stakeholders in the fishing and tourism industries, and because we do not support offshore drilling off the coast of Delaware, we respectfully request that you protect our coastal assets and deny the pending permit applications for G&G exploration in the Atlantic.

Sincerely,

**Diane Hanson**  
Mayor, Dewey Beach, Delaware

**Ted Becker**  
Mayor, Lewes, Delaware

**Karen Peterson**  
Senator, District 9

**Ernesto Lopez**  
Senator, District 6

Bruce Ennis  
Senator, District 14

Bethany Hall-Long  
Senator, District 10

David Sokola  
Senator, District 8

Bryan Townsend  
Senator, District 11

Paul Baumbach  
Representative, District 23

Ronald Gray  
Representative, District 38

Deborah Hudson  
Representative, District 12

John Kowalko  
Representative, District 25

Edward Osienski  
Representative, District 24

William Outten  
Representative, District 30

Charles Paradee  
Representative, District 29

Peter Schwartzkopf  
Representative, District 14  
Stephen Smyk  
Representative, District 20

Kimberly Williams  
Representative, District 19

Hanifa Shabazz  
Council Member, Wilmington City Council,  
District 4

Maria Cabrera  
Council Member, Wilmington City Council,  
At-Large

Dennis Reardon  
Councilperson, Lewes Town Council

Rob Morgan  
Councilperson, Lewes Town Council

Mike Dunmeyer  
Commissioner, Dewey Beach Town Council

Dale Cooke  
Commissioner, Dewey Beach Town Council

Stan Mills  
Rehoboth Beach Board of Commissioners

Kathy McGuinness  
Rehoboth Beach Board of Commissioners

Patrick Gossett  
Rehoboth Beach Board of Commissioners

Lorraine Zellers  
Rehoboth Beach Board of Commissioners

Toni Sharp  
Rehoboth Beach Board of Commissioners

Paul Kuhns  
Rehoboth Beach Board of Commissioners

Jack Gordon  
Mayor, Bethany Beach

Rosemary Hardiman  
Councilmember, Bethany Beach Town  
Council

Pat Voveris  
Mayor, South Bethany Town Council  
Sue Callaway

Mayor Pro-Tem, South Bethany Town  
Council

Tim Shaw  
Councilmember, South Bethany Town  
Council

Don Boteler  
Councilmember, South Bethany Town  
Council

Carol Stevenson  
Councilmember, South Bethany Town  
Council  
Wayne Schrader

Councilmember, South Bethany Town  
Council

Frank Weisgerber  
Councilmember, South Bethany Town  
Council

Gene Langan  
Mayor, Fenwick Island

Roy Williams  
Councilmember, Fenwick Island Town  
Council

Ted Kanakos  
Mayor, Milton

Sam Garde  
Councilman, Milton

CC: Penny Pritzker, Secretary, U.S. Department of Commerce  
Dr. Kathryn Sullivan, Administrator, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration  
Abigail Ross Hopper, Director, Bureau of Ocean Energy Management  
Jack Markell, Governor, Delaware  
U.S. Senator Tom Carper  
U.S. Senator Chris Coons  
U.S. Representative John Carney