

November 1, 2016

President Barak Obama  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW  
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Obama,

We, the undersigned Georgia mayors, applaud your Administration's decision to remove the Atlantic Outer Continental Shelf from the 2017-2022 Proposed Leasing Program for oil and gas development.

Today, we are writing to express concerns about the pending federal permits that would allow for seismic airgun blasting to survey the Atlantic seabed for oil and gas deposits. We ask that the Administration deny all eight of these permits for the reasons outlined below.

Seven Georgia municipalities, representing nearly 250,000 residents, have adopted resolutions/proclamations expressing opposition to offshore drilling and seismic testing. These communities include the cities of Savannah, Tybee Island, Brunswick, Hinesville, St Marys, Kingsland and Porterdale. Over 100 communities throughout the Atlantic coast have passed resolutions to express concerns about the impact these activities would have on the economy, the environment, and the quality of life for coastal residents.

Leading marine scientists and research institutions have raised serious concerns about the impacts of seismic testing to wildlife, including Georgia's North Atlantic right whale, and to commercial and recreational fishing. These harmful impacts may be magnified by overlapping permit survey areas, as multiple companies cover the same ground searching for oil and gas deposits. Additionally, the information gathered by proposed seismic testing is considered proprietary, and therefore would not be shared with the public.

The end goal of seismic testing is offshore oil and gas development, an economic investment that conflicts with much of the drivers of our local economies, especially tourism, fisheries and the military operations in coastal Georgia. In 2012, Georgia's ocean economy supported nearly 24,000 jobs, provided residents with nearly \$600 million in wages, and contributed more than \$1.2 billion to our state's economy. The tourism sector alone contributed more than \$518 million to Georgia's economy, and was responsible for employing nearly 15,000 Georgians. The fishing and seafood industry also made a significant impact on the ocean economy employing almost 1 million people and contributing \$130 million to the state's economy. Finally, military operations at Kings Bay Naval Submarine Base, Ft. Stewart Army Air Base and Hunter Army Air Field employ nearly 10,000 civilians and are cornerstone economic operations of our coast, not to mention national security and preparedness. All of these industries are dependent on healthy and thriving marine systems that would be put at jeopardy were oil and gas development allowed to go forward in any form.

Again, we appreciate your Administration's decision to exclude the Atlantic from the 5-year lease program. We ask that you remain responsive to the overwhelming opposition to oil and gas development from our coastal communities, local governments and businesses, and deny all pending permits for seismic testing in the Atlantic Ocean.

Sincerely,

*Allen Brown*

Allen Brown  
City of Hinesville Mayor

*Arline Chapman*

Arline Chapman  
City of Porterdale Mayor

*Cornell Harvey*

Cornell Harvey  
City of Brunswick Mayor

*Kenneth E. Smith*

Kenneth E. Smith  
City of Kingsland Mayor

*Edward "Ted" Terry*

Edward "Ted" Terry  
City of Clarkston Mayor

*ECC: The Honorable Sally Jewell  
Christy Goldfuss  
Brian Deese*

References:

- Statistics on Georgia's ocean economy can be found in [The Economic Effects of Outer Continental Shelf Oil and Gas Exploration and Development in the South Atlantic Region: Issues and Assessment](#), a report from the Center for the Blue Economy at the Middlebury Institute of International Studies at Monterey.
- The number of civilian jobs figures for the various military bases were calculated using public records.