



**Submitter Name:** Mark Smith

**Organization Name:** Gullah/Geechee Fishing Association

<https://www.regulations.gov/#!documentDetail;D=BOEM-2014-0085-2002>

The offices of the Gullah/Geechee Fishing Association ([www.gullahgeecheefishing.net](http://www.gullahgeecheefishing.net)) OPPOSE including South Carolina, Georgia, and North Carolina in the oil leasing proposal. Please make sure to do a full examination of the Gullah/Geechee fisheries and the Sea Islands that are already sustaining massive environmental damage as you proceed with your EIS. We cannot afford the loss of any more of our coastline or anymore of the seafood the sustains us, our families, and the Gullah/Geechee Nation's economy. Seismic gun activity, testing or drilling for oil will all have negative impacts on our cultural community and our sensitive coastal area which is already rapidly eroding due to a number of factors. Please do NOT allow oil drilling to be a contributing factor to the losses that our cultural community is already enduring and those that we have suffered through. There are many things that cannot be replaced if they are damaged or harmed and one of those places is this sacred area called the Sea Islands and the Gullah/Geechee Nation for Jacksonville, NC to Jacksonville, FL.

We want to insure that our voices are heard are cultural resources are being considered! So, please make sure to include our comments and also to contact us in regard to this.

We thank you for taking the time to insure that Gullah/Geechee culture and our water way traditions are continued. We have continued them in the way that our ancestors passed down our subsistence fishing and water way harvesting traditions. Oil would not be compatible with these traditions nor our lifestyle which has been nationally recognized by the US Congress and US President and by the international world as well.

Please EXCLUDE the Carolina and Georgia Sea Islands and the Gullah/Geechee Nation's coast from your proposal for the Outer Continental Shelf, 2017-2022 Oil and Gas Leasing Program!

**Submitter Name:** Queen Quet

**Organization Name:** Gullah/Geechee Nation

<https://www.regulations.gov/#!documentDetail;D=BOEM-2014-0085-1594>

I am Queen Quet, Chieftess of the Gullah/Geechee Nation, Founder of the Gullah/Geechee Sea Island Coalition, and Founder of the Gullah/Geechee Sustainability Think Tank. I am commenting in my capacity as the leader of each of these entities.

I and other leaders of the Gullah/Geechee Nation attended scoping meetings in South Carolina and Georgia. We did not become aware of the information for the Florida scoping meeting until it had already passed. Nonetheless, within the materials that we received there was no reference to the Gullah/Geechee Cultural Heritage Corridor which is a United States National Heritage Area that runs through the Gullah/Geechee Nation from Jacksonville, NC to Jacksonville, FL. This Sea Island and Lowcountry area is not only an environmentally sensitive area, but also an area of world renown cultural heritage including cultural heritage landscapes that would be irreversibly harmed by the seismic gun testing and oil drill testing mechanisms that are proposed. There is no question that any leakages of oil if it were found or any oil spills would have extremely negative impacts on not only the sea life of the Sea Island and the Lowcountry, but also on the Gullah/Geechee people that live in this region and continue to hold onto this unique global culture which requires us to live from the land and the waterways.

Gullah/Geechee fisheries are already inundated with issues of climate change, sea level rise, ocean acidification, hurricanes, and environmental pollutants due to overbuilding and industrial endeavors along watersheds in the region. Adding the use of seismic gun activity which would now cause fish and other sea creatures that are necessary staples of the Gullah/Geechee diet to leave the area would be devastating to the community culturally, spiritually, and economically.

The appreciation of the Gullah/Geechee culture and our coastal environment that people from around the world come to visit is part of the reason that numerous townships along the Gullah/Geechee Sea Island coastal region have voted on resolutions AGAINST oil drilling. We stand with them and want the Georgia and Carolina coastal areas removed from the 2017-2022 Outer Continental Shelf Oil and Gas Leasing Program.

What is being considered is in direct opposition to the Gullah/Geechee Cultural Heritage Corridor General Management Plan which was accepted and approved by the United States Department of the Interior due to the "Gullah/Geechee Cultural Heritage Act" which was voted on by the United States Congress and signed into law in 2006. This document needs to be included in the EIS that your agency is writing.

Gullah/Geechee culture is inextricably tied to the land and waterways that are under consideration in the southeastern United States. The Gullah/Geechee culture and Nation are

recognized internationally for our tangible and intangible cultural heritage resources which are in jeopardy due to the current proposed leasing program. The "Gullah/Geechee Cultural Heritage Act" confirms that the United States Congress agrees that this culture is a national treasure that numerous federal agencies are now assisting Gullah/Geechee communities to protect. Oil drilling or oil testing or oil leases in this area will be in direct opposition to the work that is underway and to this culture that has existed on the Sea Islands since the 1600s.

Not only is this coastline a place of physical nourishment for the Gullah/Geechee population, it is also a place of spiritual nourishment and place of continuing traditions such as sweetgrass basket material harvesting from the Intercoastal Waterway. We are already experiencing human health issues due to the droughts that have had negative impacts on our oysters and some fish species in addition to the harm that has already been done to the shrimp and blue crab populations and to some of the dolphins along the coast. Water quality issues are already an issue that we are working to overcome along the east coast. So, adding oil drilling to this mixture would only further lower the quality of life for humans along the coast. What affects the coast will eventually have an impact on the mainland as well.

I am attaching a map of the Gullah/Geechee Nation as well as images of the climate change impacts that are already visible along our coast. I thank you for taking the time to truly examine these and to include an exclusion of the Gullah/Geechee Nation and Cultural Heritage Corridor from Georgia to North Carolina from consideration as potential areas for oil exploration, leases, or drilling. We thank you for already removing the entire state of Florida from the proposed area. We OPPOSE inclusion for any of these oil drilling related activities due to the negative impacts that any of them will have on our culture and our people being able to remain alive.

Thank you for the work you are doing and for the time you have taken to consider these comments.