

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

September 1, 2016

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

Dear Secretary Jewell:

We are writing concerning the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management's (BOEM) recent 2017–2022 Atlantic Outer Continental Shelf (OCS) Oil and Gas Leasing Draft Proposed Program. We appreciate BOEM's decision to remove lease sales from consideration in the Mid-Atlantic region. However, we continue to have concerns about the agency's proposal to allow new seismic testing for fossil fuels in the Mid-Atlantic region, against the wishes of many of the state and local governments in the region.

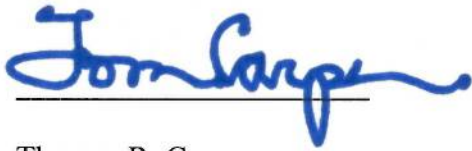
The current scientific evidence suggests that seismic airgun blasting—traditionally used for oil and gas exploration—may negatively impact commercially important fish and other marine wildlife, including endangered North Atlantic right whales. These effects would not only be damaging to the environment, but could also negatively impact the economies of coastal states like Delaware, which heavily depend on revenues from fishing and coastal tourism. In Delaware, tourism alone generates nearly \$7 billion annually, much of that generated by tourists visiting the state's scenic beaches and participating in saltwater sport fishing. Because of this, six Delaware coastal towns and Delaware's Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Control strongly oppose fossil fuel seismic testing in the Mid-Atlantic region.

Although the OCS is a federal resource, we believe states should play a critical role in deciding what types of energy development occur on and off their shores. As BOEM finalizes the 2017–2022 OCS Oil and Gas Program, we encourage the Department of the Interior to consider the concerns raised by Delaware officials regarding seismic testing and remove the fossil fuel seismic testing permitting process from the Mid-Atlantic region. In addition, we believe the Department should do more to explore and support seismic testing techniques that are less invasive to marine wildlife.

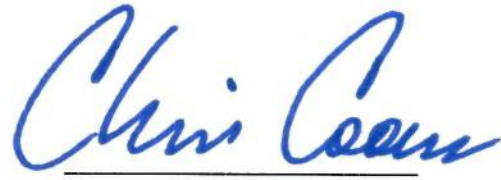
We appreciate your efforts to use the best science available when weighing the economic and environmental concerns of any major energy project and thank you for your consideration of this request.

With best personal regards, we are,

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Tom Carper". The signature is written in a cursive style with a horizontal line underneath.

Thomas R. Carper
United States Senator

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Chris Coons". The signature is written in a cursive style with a horizontal line underneath.

Christopher A. Coons
United States Senator