

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

July 26, 2106

Dear Secretary Jewell:

We the undersigned members of the North Carolina, South Carolina and Georgia General Assemblies, thank you for removing the Atlantic lease sale from the 2017-2022 Outer Continental Shelf Oil and Gas Leasing Proposed Program. We are writing to urge the Department of the Interior to deny all permit applications for geological and geophysical (G&G) exploration for oil and gas resources off the southeast coast.

Allowing G&G exploration, including seismic airgun surveys, to move forward in the Atlantic Ocean would be unnecessarily risky to our state's economies and marine resources.

We have several concerns about the proposed activities, including:

- It is our understanding that data gathered by geophysical companies is proprietary; therefore, any information gathered about offshore energy resources in the Atlantic will *not* be available to states, the public, or other companies. Our constituents would not be able to make a cost-benefit analysis as to whether the risks posed by offshore oil and gas exploration would outweigh any potential benefits derived from offshore drilling.
- Marine scientists have expressed concern that seismic airgun surveys for oil and gas deposits may be disruptive to the marine environment. Peer-reviewed studies have concluded that seismic airgun blasting results in displacement of fish, reduced catch rates of some commercial fish species, and disrupts vital feeding and breeding behaviors in marine mammals. Many of these scientists have urged the administration to reject the Department of the Interior's decision to move forward with G&G permitting in the Atlantic, including scientists from the esteemed Duke Nicholas School of the Environment and the University of North Carolina, Wilmington.
- Over 60 coastal municipalities in the Carolinas and Georgia have formally opposed offshore oil and gas drilling *and* exploration, including all six major port cities (Savannah, Brunswick, Charleston, Georgetown, Wilmington, Morehead City) and the tourist destinations of Dare County, Myrtle Beach, Hilton Head and Tybee Island.
- Hundreds of small businesses and business interests have also expressed opposition to these activities including the South Carolina Small Business Chamber of Commerce, Outer Banks Chamber of Commerce, Carteret County Chamber of Commerce, New Hanover County Tourism Development Authority, and Dare County Tourism Board.
- Both the Mid and South-Atlantic Fishery Management Councils, the Southeastern Fisheries Association and the Gullah-Geechee Fishing Association have all expressed concern with G&G activities in the southeast, particularly with seismic airgun use.

- Our coast is dominated by residential and resort development, wildlife refuges and extensive protected ecosystems such as the Cape Hatteras National Seashore, ACE Basin, Santee Delta and Cumberland Island National Seashore. In our three states alone, nearly 144,000 jobs and over \$7.7 billion in gross domestic product rely on healthy ocean ecosystems, mainly through fishing, tourism and recreation. The quality of life we enjoy in coastal North Carolina, South Carolina and Georgia is a major driver of economic growth opportunities, attracting international manufacturers as well as new residents. Even a cursory look at the oil industry in the Gulf of Mexico clearly demonstrates the onshore infrastructure necessary to support offshore drilling - such as refineries, marine construction facilities, laydown yards and oil terminals - are wholly incompatible with existing land uses along our beautiful coast.
- The coastal constituents many of us represent would bear the brunt of the “quality of life costs” associated with offshore drilling’s coastal industrialization. Because we will be uniquely and heavily impacted, we respectfully request our concerns be afforded particular deference.
- Seismic airgun blasting is the first step in the process of offshore oil drilling. Since we are opposed to drilling off our coast, we object to the testing that is its precursor.

Given that we would not support the commercial oil or gas drilling off our coast following the exploration process, surveying activities would be a wasteful investment of time and resources. On behalf of our constituents, we are writing to request that you deny permit applications for offshore oil and gas exploration in the South Atlantic.

Thank you for consideration.

Respectfully,

Representative Pricey Harrison
Senator George E. “Chip” Campsen III
Representative Jeff Jones
Senator Lester G. Jackson

Representative Gale Adcock
Representative John Ager
Representative Kelly Alexander
Representative Nathan Baskerville
Representative Larry Bell
Representative Beth E. Bernstein
Representative Cecil Brockman
Representative Robert L. Brown
Senator Angela Bryant
Representative Becky Carney
Senator Jay Chaudhuri
Senator Ben Clark
Representative Tricia Cotham
Senator John Courson
Representative Carla Cunningham
Senator Tom Davis

Representative Karla Drenner
Representative Beverly Earle
Representative Susan Fisher
Representative Valerie Foushee
Representative Pat Gardner
Representative Rosa Gill
Representative Ken Goodman
Representative George Graham
Representative Charles Graham
Representative Duane Hall
Representative Larry Hall
Representative Susi Hamilton
Representative Ed Hanes
Senator Steve Henson
Representative Scott Holcomb
Representative Yvonne Holley
Representative Howard Hunter III
Representative Verla Insko
Senator Darren Jackson
Representative Charles Jeter
Senator Marlon E. Kimpson
Senator Joel Lourie
Senator Paul Lowe
Representative Marvin Lucas
Representative Paul Luebke
Representative Grier Martin
Senator J. Thomas McElveen
Senator Floyd B. McKissick Jr.
Representative Graig Meyer
Representative Mickey Michaux
Representative Mandy Powers Norrell
Representative Garland Pierce
Representative Joe Sam Queen
Representative Robert Reives
Representative William Richardson
Representative Bobbie Richardson
Senator Gladys Robinson
Representative Brad Salmon
Representative Chris Sgro
Senator Jane Smith
Representative James E. Smith Jr.
Representative Erica Smith-Ingram
Representative Leon Stavrinakis
Representative Brian Turner
Senator Terry Van Duyn
Representative Ken Waddell
Representative Shelly Willingham
Senator Mike Woodard
Representative Michael Wray

CC: Penny Pritzker, Secretary, U.S. Secretary of Commerce
Dr. Kathryn Sullivan, Administrator, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
Abigail Ross Hopper, Director, Bureau of Ocean Energy Management