



November 2, 2016

Christy Goldfuss
Managing Director
Council on Environmental Quality
722 Jackson Place, N.W.
Washington, DC 20503

Brian Deese
Assistant to the President and Senior Advisor
The White House
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Director Goldfuss and Senior Advisor Deese,

Thank you for removing the Atlantic Ocean from the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management's 2017-2022 Outer Continental Shelf Oil and Gas Leasing Program.

No fewer than 120 municipalities in East Coast states have formally voiced opposition to oil and gas development in the Atlantic. Together, these municipalities represent 90% of the coastline that would be at direct risk from seismic airgun blasting and offshore drilling from Cape May, New Jersey, to Cape Canaveral, Florida. Additionally, over 1,100 business interests and over 1,200 federal, state and local legislators have opposed oil and gas exploration or development in the Atlantic. The Garden Club of Virginia is one of these voices.

The Garden Club of Virginia is an active association of 47 clubs, whose members form a group of more than 3,300 civic leaders from around the commonwealth. The Garden Club of Virginia has served Virginia for almost 100 years. Currently we contribute a combined \$11 Million economic impact to Virginia's communities through our annual Historic Garden Week, restoration of historic public gardens and environmental conservation advocacy.

We oppose offshore drilling and seismic airgun blasting for the following reasons:

- The risk of a disaster spill like the Deepwater Horizon.
- The certainty that day-to-day operations of oil drilling cause persistent release of toxic chemicals.
- Generates oil spills that are the source of chronic pollution of the ocean, beaches, wetlands, and shoreline waterways

- We agree with the seventy-five leading marine scientists from around the world who sent a letter to your administration in March 2015 stating that “the proposed seismic activity is likely to have significant, long-lasting, and widespread impacts on the reproduction and survival of fish and marine mammal populations in the region, including the critically endangered North Atlantic Right Whale, of which only 500 remain.”

We are grateful that the Atlantic is no longer considered for offshore drilling in the upcoming five-year program. However, our ocean is priceless and our coastal assets are far too valuable to ever put at risk from oil and gas development. We urge you to use your presidential authority to permanently protect the Atlantic Ocean and our communities from offshore drilling and seismic airgun blasting.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Wendy C. Vaughn". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned below the word "Sincerely,".

Wendy C. Vaughn, Chairman of Conservation and Beautification Committee
Garden Club of Virginia