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May 7, 2014

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Via Electronic Mail to ggeis@boem.gov

Mr. Gary D. Goeke, Chief
Regional Assessment Section
Office of Environment (MS5410)
Bureau of Ocean Energy Management
Gulf of Mexico OCS Region
1201 Elmwood Park Blvd.
New Orleans, LA 701123-2394

RE: *Final Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement*

Dear Mr. Goeke:

I write to address the Final Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement (PEIS) regarding the potential environmental impact of geological and geophysical survey activities in federal waters of the Mid and South Atlantic Outer Continental Shelf (OCS) and adjacent state waters during the years 2012-2020. The City of Jacksonville has a vested interest in any activity in the South Atlantic OCS that would potentially impact our waters and beaches.

Jacksonville's economy is strongly tied to tourism. Visit Jacksonville, formerly known as the Jacksonville & the Beaches Convention and Visitors Bureau, is the official destination marketing organization of Greater Jacksonville. It recently released a study which showed that tourism had a more than \$2 billion economic impact here in 2013.

Since our beautiful beaches and other natural treasures are a major attraction for visitors and a source of visual, recreational and environmental enjoyment for area residents and visitors alike, we are naturally concerned about the possibility of any activities that could damage those treasures.

I am also concerned about the proposed seismic airgun testing in the Atlantic Ocean – testing which a bipartisan coalition from the Florida Congressional delegation says will put nearly 100,000 commercial and recreational fishing jobs and nearly 300,000 tourism and recreation jobs in jeopardy. Moreover, as the delegation members state in the attached letter, U.S. Department of Interior estimates show the proposed testing would injure up to 138,000 marine mammals.

Given these potentially destructive impacts on our economy, marine wildlife, coastal ecosystems, and beachside communities, I would respectfully ask the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management to extend the comment period for the PEIS for at least thirty (30) days. Additionally, please do not permit the requested seismic testing, especially since the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Association (NOAA) is in the process of updating critical information pertinent to that testing. Instead, we must all work together to ensure the vitality of coastal communities like the Jacksonville area.

Sincerely,

Alvin Brown
Mayor

MAB/cjh

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

April 17, 2013

President Barack Obama
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Mr. President:

We write to express our concerns regarding your administration's final Five Year Outer Continental Shelf Oil and Gas Leasing Program for 2012-2017. While we appreciate your decision to not make any areas off the Atlantic coast available for offshore oil and gas leasing at this time, we oppose the proposal for seismic airgun testing in the Atlantic Ocean included in the plan.

Seismic airgun testing poses numerous dangers for the Atlantic coast. We urge you to disallow this dangerous practice because it brings the Atlantic coast closer to the risky practice of deepwater drilling. Florida boasts 300,000 jobs in tourism and recreation, and 100,000 direct jobs in recreational and commercial fishing. In Florida alone, seismic airgun testing puts 92,189 commercial and recreational fishing jobs and 293,385 tourism and recreation jobs in jeopardy. We now know what a worst case scenario oil spill looks like. As we approach the third anniversary of the *Deepwater Horizon* disaster, we must keep in mind that another oil spill closer to Florida's coasts can irrevocably harm sea life, ecosystems, fisheries, beaches, tourism, public health and our coastal communities.

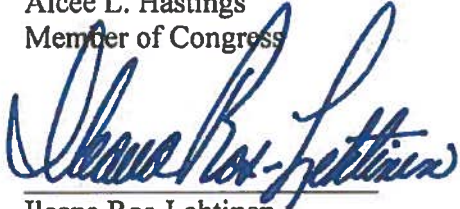
Additionally, the type of seismic airgun testing used to search for oil and gas is incredibly harmful and could injure or kill thousands of marine mammals and fish, including endangered species. Seismic airguns fire intense blasts of compressed air – almost as loud as explosives– that can be heard for many hundreds of miles in the ocean every 10-12 seconds, 24 hours a day, for weeks and months on end. The blasts can drive whales to abandon their habitats, go silent, and cease foraging over vast areas. At shorter distances, it can cause permanent hearing loss, injury, and even death for whales, dolphins and fish. According to the Department of the Interior's (DOI) own estimates, the use of airguns would injure up to 138,500 marine mammals and disrupt marine mammal feeding, calving, breeding, and other vital activities more than 13.5 million times.

The use of airguns for this proposed seismic testing will result in serious negative impacts on our marine resources that form the foundation of economic vitality for communities all along the Atlantic coast. Consequently, we urge your administration to stop this process and focus on ensuring the vitality of coastal economies along the Atlantic coast that need it now more than ever. Expanding unnecessary offshore drilling simply puts too much at risk.

Sincerely,



Alcee L. Hastings
Member of Congress



Ileana Ros-Lehtinen
Member of Congress



Alan Grayson
Member of Congress



Kathy Castor
Member of Congress



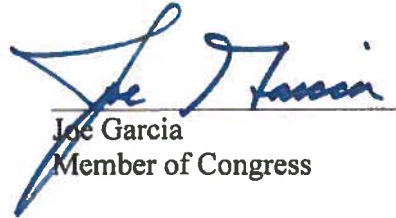
Corrine Brown
Member of Congress



Frederica Wilson
Member of Congress



Bill Nelson
United States Senate



Joe Garcia
Member of Congress



Vern Buchanan
Member of Congress



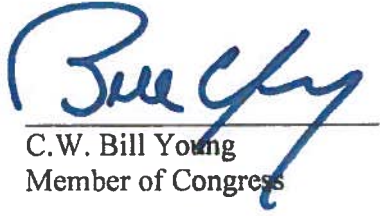
Ted Deutch
Member of Congress



Lois Frankel
Member of Congress



Patrick E. Murphy
Member of Congress



C.W. Bill Young
Member of Congress