



September 4<sup>th</sup>, 2018

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U.S. Department of the Interior  
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U.S. Department of the Interior  
1849 C Street, N.W. Washington, DC 20240

The Marine Megafauna Foundation (MMF) writes to voice our opposition to seismic airgun testing and urges you to halt the proposed testing in the Atlantic Ocean.

MMF uses research, conservation and education to ensure healthy oceans for present and future generations. Our organization consists of leading experts on our two focal species, whale sharks and manta rays. Our research has revealed that southern Florida is a critical developmental habitat for manta rays. Migratory paths for these rays could include seismic testing areas. Manta rays were recently listed on the Endangered Species Act due to the severity of their global threats, and this important population could be negatively affected by the proposed seismic testing.

Seismic testing produces intense blasts of compressed air that can be heard for hundreds of miles in the ocean. These blasts have been shown to reduce catch rates of commercially important fish, alter fishes' use of habitat, and elicit escape response in sea turtles. Marine mammals are of particular concern, as whales and dolphins rely on sound for communication, mating, feeding, and reproduction. The North Atlantic Right Whale, one of the most endangered whales on the planet, has been under severe pressures from fishing line entanglement and underwater noise impacts. Adding the additional stress of seismic testing in their habitat could jeopardize the survival of the entire species.

To ensure a healthy oceans for our future, we ask that you halt the permits for seismic testing for oil and gas in the Atlantic Ocean.

Sincerely,

Marine Megafauna Foundation