



January 4, 2019

Mr. Walter Cruickshank, Acting Director
Bureau of Ocean Energy Management
1849 C Street, NW
Washington, D.C. 20240

RE: Opposition to Seismic Testing in the Atlantic Ocean

Dear Mr. Cruickshank,

Enclosed please find a position statement from the Cape May County Chamber of Commerce on seismic testing in the Atlantic Ocean.

The Cape May County Chamber of Commerce is located in Cape May County, New Jersey which encompasses the southern peninsula of the state, surrounded by the waters of the Atlantic Ocean and the Delaware Bay. The residents and business community of Cape May County have everything at risk and nothing to gain by seismic testing for the search of offshore oil in the Atlantic Ocean.

We implore you and the decision makers at BOEM to withhold the release of permits for seismic testing in the Atlantic Ocean.

Sincerely,

Vicki T. Clark, IOM
President

CC: Senator Thom Tillis, Senator Richard Burr, Senator Robert Menendez, Senator Cory Booker, Congressman Jeff Van Drew, Congressman Donald Norcross, Congressman Andy Kim, Congressman Chris Smith, Congressman Josh Gottheimer, Congressman Frank Pallone, Congressman Malinowski, Congressman Albio Sires, Congressman William Pascrell, Congressman Donald Payne, Jr., Congresswoman Mikie Sherrill, Congresswoman Bonnie Watson Coleman, National Marine Fisheries Service, New Jersey Governor Phil Murphy, Assemblyman Bob Andrzejczak, Assemblyman Bruce Land, Cape May County Board of Chosen Freeholders, Oceana, Clean Ocean Action, BAPAC

Supporting • Strengthening • Unifying

13 Crest Haven Rd., P.O. Box 74, Cape May Court House, NJ 08210
(609) 465-7181 • (f) (609) 465-5017 • info@cmcchamber.com • www.capemaycountychamber.com

Our mission is to be the advocate for the Cape May County business community through the strength of legislative engagement, member services, and education programs.



January 2, 2019

Cape May County Chamber of Commerce statement opposing release of permits for Seismic Airgun Blasting in the Atlantic Ocean

On November 30, 2018, the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) released Incidental Harassment Authorizations (IHAs) permitting five private companies to harm marine mammals with seismic airgun blasting. Seismic airguns, used to probe the ocean floor in search of oil and gas deposits, produce blasts that are among the loudest manmade sounds in the ocean.

The Cape May County Chamber of Commerce, representing over 800 businesses located at the southern tip of New Jersey is opposed to these permits and asks that they be rescinded. The economy of Cape May County is dependent on clean, healthy ocean waters and a thriving coastal ecosystem lush with marine mammals, fisheries, and aquaculture. The ocean knows no state boundaries. These permits present a risk to marine life along the Atlantic Coast from Cape May, New Jersey to Cape Canaveral, Florida that will be exposed to dangerous and disruptive blasts. The direct negative impacts from these activities to marine life are not just potential side effects of seismic blasting, they are anticipated outcomes.

Seismic testing can be profoundly detrimental to coastal ecosystems, causing hearing loss in marine mammals, leading to strandings and mortality. The blasts can also cause abandonment of habitat; disruption of communication, feeding, and mating behaviors; and their impacts are known to cause a decline in catch rates for our vital fishing industries. Studies indicate that our vibrant seafood industry is at risk from the intense and constant airgun blasts that will cause commercial fish catches to be reduced significantly. The recreational fishing industry will also suffer from the same fishery displacement effect. Scientific research has shown that seismic surveys also cause physical harm to invertebrates like scallops, squid and crabs. Whales and dolphins will not be found for sight-seeing tours.

The IHAs issued by the National Marine Fisheries Service failed to address the socio-economic damage to our local communities and businesses from seismic surveys. There would be a considerable risk to Cape May County's combined \$6.5 billion tourism, fishing, and aquaculture industries should this seismic airgun blasting proceed anywhere along the eastern seaboard. The risk to eco-tourism and our whole coastal economy is immeasurable.

Every governing body in Cape May County representing a year-round population of 92,000 residents and a seasonal population that booms to over 675,000 during peak summer months has passed resolutions opposing offshore oil drilling and seismic airgun testing.

Supporting • Strengthening • Unifying

13 Crest Haven Rd., P.O. Box 74, Cape May Court House, NJ 08210
(609) 465-7181 • (f) (609) 465-5017 • info@cmcchamber.com • www.capemaycountychamber.com

Our mission is to be the advocate for the Cape May County business community through the strength of legislative engagement, member services, and education programs.

Cape May County's quality of life and economic risk is as follows:

- Cape May County is a peninsula surrounded by the waters of the Atlantic Ocean and Delaware Bay
 - Cape May County is directly threatened by seismic permits that could be issued off the coast of Delaware, threatening marine mammals and fisheries that are local to New Jersey's most southern coast.
- Tourism industry is a \$6.3 billion industry that is primarily generated Memorial Day to Labor Day with Spring and Fall Shoulder Seasons.
 - Cape May County is disproportionately dependent on a vibrant tourism industry
 - Cape May County experiences 15% unemployment seasonally because of the dependency on our beach and boardwalk-based economy. Seismic testing and the harm it would bring to our ecosystem and coastal economy would seriously damage the economy and quality of life in Cape May County.
- The Port of Cape May/Wildwood, NJ is the third largest commercial fishing port on the Atlantic Coast representing
 - 2nd most gross receipts by dollars
 - 3rd highest ranking by pounds

Eco-Tourism At Risk

National Geographic has named Cape May one of the top ten birding destinations in the world (March 2018) on a list that includes birding hotspots such as South Georgia Island and Broome in Western Australia. These migratory species depend on the delicate lush bounty of aquatic life and marshes unique to the coastal ecosystem surrounding the peninsula that comprise Cape May County, surrounded by the waters of the Atlantic Ocean and the Delaware Bay.

The Delaware Bay is the largest spawning area in the world for horseshoe crabs, and every spring from May to late June, tens of thousands of horseshoe crabs lay their eggs on the shore of the Delaware Bay. They are joined by a multitude of wading shorebirds, ready to feast on the horseshoe crabs' tiny green eggs. Iconic among them is the red knot, a robin-sized shorebird recently designated as threatened under the Endangered Species Act and known for being one of the longest-distance migrants in the animal kingdom. The Delaware Bay beaches provide a crucial stopover point during the red knot's journey, which brings them from the tip of South America to their breeding grounds in the Arctic. It is estimated that nearly 90 percent of the entire population of the Red Knot can be present on the bay in a single day. The Delaware Bayshore, protected by the Coastal Zone Act, provides an internationally renowned stage for this fascinating relationship. (2019 Univ of Del Library).

The Cape May County Chamber of Commerce urges NMFS to rescind the permits issued and calls on the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management to refuse any request to conduct seismic testing in the Atlantic Ocean.

Supporting • Strengthening • Unifying

13 Crest Haven Rd., P.O. Box 74, Cape May Court House, NJ 08210
(609) 465-7181 • (f) (609) 465-5017 • info@cmcchamber.com • www.capemaycountychamber.com

Our mission is to be the advocate for the Cape May County business community through the strength of legislative engagement, member services, and education programs.