

## Seismic surveys muted -- for now

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South Carolinians can quit worrying, at least temporarily, about things that go boom off the coast.

The Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (BOEM) rightly has denied all pending permits for seismic surveying for oil off the mid- and south Atlantic coasts. That means sea mammals and aquatic life of all kinds won't have to put up with relentless, high-intensity sonic blasts that are among the loudest manmade sounds in the ocean.

The Obama administration is to thank for the decision, which builds on an earlier decision to put the entire Atlantic Coast off limits to oil exploration through 2022. BOEM's director said the value of the seismic surveys, since drilling was off the table, simply did not outweigh the risks.

The bad news is that the incoming president can upend these decisions, put together a new five-year offshore energy program and, within about 18 months, conceivably unleash testing and drilling along the south Atlantic's outer continental shelf.

Those itching to plumb the sea floor for black gold are predictably unhappy, claiming seismic surveys are harmless and putting their faith in President-elect Donald Trump.

“The only thing left to say is that January 20th cannot come soon enough,” said Randall Luthi, the head of offshore energy lobbying group National Ocean Industries Association.

In December, President Barack Obama threw up an indefinite roadblock to oil drilling in Arctic waters and off the Atlantic coast north of Chesapeake Bay by invoking a little-used 1953 federal law known as the Outer Continental Shelf Lands Act.

But to the south, waters off Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia and Florida could be fair game in relatively near future.

Don’t forget that Trump repeatedly has vowed to free energy companies of “job-killing regulations.”

So while those fighting to protect our coast — the lifeblood of the state’s multibillion-dollar tourism industry — have won the fight this time, a rematch with Big Oil and the Trump administration is only a matter of time.

South Carolina’s leaders in Columbia and its congressional delegation should all come around to the fact that offshore drilling threatens all we hold dear in the Lowcountry.

They should join coastal leaders, who have opposed the drilling and seismic testing plans virtually as one, and with coastal South Carolina environmentalists who are fighting to preserve our vital resources.

[http://www.postandcourier.com/opinion/editorials/seismic-surveys-muted---for-now/article\\_3fdf5166-d430-11e6-a330-ff3f5e57a5b4.html](http://www.postandcourier.com/opinion/editorials/seismic-surveys-muted---for-now/article_3fdf5166-d430-11e6-a330-ff3f5e57a5b4.html)