



NEW JERSEY SENATE

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August 15, 2017

The Honorable Ryan Zinke
United States Department of the Interior
1849 C Street, NW
Washington, DC 20240

Dear Secretary Zinke:

I am writing to you as State Senator for New Jersey's 17th Legislative District and Chairman of the New Jersey Senate Environment and Energy Committee. Serving in the legislature for three decades and with a background in Chemistry and Environmental Science, I have authored many bills that have become law addressing fossil fuel pollution, supporting renewable energy, and other sensible environmental issues.

In response to the federal register notice by the Bureau of Ocean and Energy Management (BOEM) announcing a new five- year plan under the Outer Continental Shelf Oil and Gas leasing Program, and the formal Request for Information, I respectfully request that this plan be abandoned. First, a new five-year plan is most unwarranted and unwelcome. BOEM just completed a 5 year plan in January, which was to be in effect from 2017-2022. This new overlapping plan will waste tax-payers dollars and require the public to repeat the process just completed. There is no need for a new plan.

I am particularly opposed to offshore drilling off the coast of New Jersey, an area included in the North American Planning Region. As for the current Request for Information, and based on economic, environmental, social, and cultural reasons I remain steadfastly opposed to offshore drilling in the Atlantic Ocean and ask that the following be considered:

Economic

New Jersey is based on a clean ocean economy. Coastal tourism accounts for nearly \$32 billion and employs over 500,000 citizens. Commercial and recreational fishing account for thousands of jobs and generate over \$2.1 billion in sales and landings. Property values along the shore are likely valued at close to a trillion dollars.

Environmental

The New Jersey shore has 127 miles of coastline with hundreds more estuaries and maritime rivers connected to the ocean. These ecologically rich areas support over 350 species of bird, 300 species of fish, 33 species of whale and dolphin, five species of sea turtle and four species of seal. They include many endangered species such as the Right Whale, Atlantic Sturgeon, piping plover, and Kemp's Ridley sea turtle.

Societal

The livelihoods of millions of New Jersey citizens depend upon our clean ocean economy.

Cultural

The Jersey Shore experience is iconic. Citizens around the country and the world treasure their experiences on the boardwalk, amusements, restaurants, walks along the shore, and picnics on the beach with family and friends.

All of these valuable experiences would be at risk from oil and gas development, exploration, and production. There is nothing clean about the oil and gas industry as can be seen in the Gulf of Mexico. The fossil fuel based economy pollutes the coast, and offshore oil rigs leak and pollute the ocean. The devastating consequences of spills, especially the BP Horizon spill, have been catastrophic to the Gulf. Scientists are still finding harmful impacts to the marine life which affects the fishing and tourism communities there.

As someone who understands the facts of climate change and has been a leader in supporting renewable and efficient energy sources as well as energy conservation, I know fossil fuels are a dead end. Therefore, I urge you to abandon this new five-year plan, and should you continue to move forward, do not pursue drilling in the Atlantic Ocean, particularly off New Jersey.

Very truly yours,



Bob Smith
SENATOR