



**North Carolina Council  
of Churches**

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August 15, 2017

Kelly Hammerle, National Program Manager  
Bureau of Ocean Energy Management, U.S. Department of Interior  
45600 Woodland Road  
Mailstop VAM-LD  
Sterling, VA 20166  
Phone: 703-787-1613

*Via Federal eRulemaking Portal: <https://www.regulations.gov/document?D=BOEM-2017-0050-0001>*

**Re: Request for Information and Comments on the Preparation of the 2019-2024 National Outer Continental Shelf Oil and Gas Leasing Program; 82 Fed. Reg. 30886 (July 3, 2017)**

Dear Ms. Hammerle:

We, the North Carolina Council of Churches, comprised of 26 distinct judicatories from 18 denominations with 1.5 million congregants across the state, are writing to call on you to permanently protect the Atlantic from offshore oil and gas drilling.

The North Carolina Council of Churches recognizes that offshore oil and gas activities jeopardize an entire way of life for communities with vast economic, social, cultural, familial, and spiritual consequences. Offshore drilling poses a dire and immediate threat to the coastlands and inland estuaries, marshes, and waterways of the coast of North Carolina, and to the ecosystems of birds, shrimp, oysters, fish, and other life-forms. It also threatens the livelihoods of tens of thousands of North Carolinians who rely on a healthy coast in order to make a living. Fishing, tourism and recreation industries risk revenue losses in the billions due to spills and habitat destruction. There have been more than 40 major oil spills from offshore drilling since 1964, each one spewing at least 42,000 gallons of toxic waste into our oceans.

For these reasons and more, we implore you to remove the Atlantic from the 2019-2024 Outer Continental Shelf Oil and Gas Leasing Proposed Program.

As faithful Americans, we must join together to protect our coast from the devastating impacts of oil and gas exploration in our oceans to focus on the development and implementation of clean energy projects for our nation and provide a safe and healthy future for all of God's creation.

Sincerely,

The Rev. Dr. Jennifer Copeland  
Executive Director, NC Council of Churches

[Attached: NC Council of Churches Governing Board Statement Opposing Offshore Drilling]