



## NEW JERSEY GENERAL ASSEMBLY

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

Dear Ms. Hammerle,

As the representatives of New Jersey's 11th Legislative District in Monmouth County, we are writing to strongly oppose any efforts to expand offshore oil and gas drilling into the Atlantic Ocean, which would threaten New Jersey's vibrant coastal communities. As you know, the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (BOEM) is soliciting information and requesting comments on the preparation of a new five-year National Outer Continental Shelf Oil and Gas Leasing Program (National OCS Program) for 2019-2024 pursuant to the Outer Continental Shelf (OCS) Lands Act. We are submitting this letter as public comment to make clear our opposition to this initiative.

We are frankly shocked that the prospect of offshore drilling on the Atlantic Coast, a proposal that will threaten the economy and environment of New Jersey and every state along the Atlantic Coast, is being considered again after widespread opposition convinced the Federal Government to abandon this initiative in the National OCS Program for 2017-2022 (2017-2022 Program). That this new plan is being considered now, despite the fact that a new plan is not required until 2022, is deeply disturbing to us.

The arguments that were made against offshore drilling during the development of the existing 2017-2022 Program are still relevant today. New Jersey's 127-mile coast supports a tourism industry worth over \$38 billion, or almost 7 percent of our state's entire economy. A major oil spill on the Atlantic Coast, such as the BP Deepwater Horizon oil spill in 2010, could easily reach New Jersey and destroy our coastal resources, cause catastrophic and lasting economic harm, and significantly reduce the quality of life for New Jersey residents. A spill could also threaten the many endangered and threaten species that call the Jersey Shore home.

Moreover, allowing offshore drilling would have a catastrophic impact on local towns in our district. Our legislative district includes the shore communities of Allenhurst, Asbury Park, Deal, Interlaken, Loch Arbour, Long Branch, and Ocean Grove. The Jersey Shore is an incredible resource and point of pride for our Monmouth County communities, and huge drawing point for tourists and future residents alike. For those that reside here, it is not an exaggeration to believe that offshore drilling on the Atlantic Coast would devastate our local economies, potentially lower property values, and lower the quality of life that residents have come to expect.

Finally, it must be stated on the record that the reopening of this process not only endangered New Jersey's coastal economy, but also ignores the will of the local communities that would be most impacted by oil drilling. That is including over 120 municipalities, 1,200 elected officials, 41,000

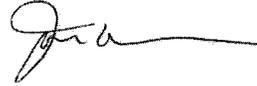
businesses, and 500,000 fishing families from up and down the Atlantic Coast who have all voiced their opposition to oil and gas activities. As such, we oppose the inclusion of any and all of the Atlantic planning areas in the draft plan.

Thank you for your time and consideration of this letter.

Respectfully,



Assemblyman Eric Houghtaling  
11th Legislative District



Assemblywoman Joann Downey  
11th Legislative District