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## Dune Hugger: North Carolina Oil

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by [Editor](#)

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### **Special to the PRESS**

Last week, I had the fortunate opportunity to spend four days on North Carolina's Atlantic Coast for our June Surfrider Foundation Board of Directors Meeting in Wrightsville Beach. What is unique about these meetings is that Surfrider Foundation doesn't just have a Board Meeting where we talk business inside a conference room all day but we make a serious effort to go out and enjoy the communities and what they have to offer, what their issues are concerning their beaches and seriously engage with the local Chapters and their members. This time around, it included multiple surf sessions, a boat tour of the marshes and Masonboro Island, a completely protected pristine section of the Wrightsville Beach area that is only accessible by boat, stand-up paddle board or paddling. What I'm saying is that we got a really great sense of what the amazing Surfrider Activists in North Carolina are trying to preserve and protect by not being in a board room for 4 days, but actually experiencing the area.

The big issue right now in North Carolina is seismic testing and potential offshore oil drilling. Coming from Texas, it may be hard to imagine a coast where there is no such thing as offshore drilling. It's a way of life here that we all grew up with. In North Carolina, there is not one offshore rig or well. Their waters have not been touched by the petroleum exploration industry. This, when you think about it, is pretty special. However, that is all about to potentially change with their waters being opened to drilling now that the Obama Administration has declared them opened for business. Obviously, the North Carolina Surfrider Chapters are vehemently opposed to this. The first step would be seismic testing to determine if there are workable formations which could potentially harm and kill thousands of marine mammals and other marine life. Next would come the actual exploratory drilling and then actual production rigs. With all of this comes risk and a lot of people in North Carolina do not think the rewards outweigh the risk.

So how can a small environmental organization made up completely of volunteers stop the Oil Industry that has more money than God waiving the banner of jobs and energy independence? I was seriously contemplating that same question when I was traveling there knowing this issue would be the focus of the weekend and to tell you the truth, I had my doubts. That was until I met everyone there involved in the issue and what they have actually been able to do to turn the tide of public opinion. Surfrider Foundation in North Carolina along with Oceana have been able to get more than 16 individual community governments to sign and submit resolutions to the State and the Feds saying they do not support offshore drilling in North Carolina and the numbers are growing with possibly Wilmington joining later this month. That is seriously impressive considering the big PR push by the Oil Industry is jobs. It's always jobs. Offshore Oil Drilling in North Carolina is not a given and actually is getting a good fight.

So what does this mean for us here on South Padre Island? We are looking at the very real possibility of LNG plants being constructed right next door to us that could potentially pollute our air and water. Of course, we are hearing that there is no real danger as it is all safe and perfectly fine with a solid safety and environmental record. Funny, I heard that from Space X before they got approved and last week they rained down debris along the Florida Coast in their third rocket explosion this year. The state of Florida and NASA are telling people it may be toxic or explosive and to not use their cell phones around any debris they may find. This could all arrive on Florida's beaches just in time for the 4<sup>th</sup> of July Weekend! Great for tourism?

The truth is, yes there is a lot of money involved with these LNG projects and some jobs. It may seem impossible to defeat them but what I found out this weekend in North Carolina is that a small group of very motivated people can turn that tide. It's time to do the same here against LNG.

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