

# Bluffton Today

## Administration says 'no' to seismic testing

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Residents up and down the South Carolina coast had to be pleased with the news Friday: The federal Bureau of Ocean Energy Management rejected all pending applications to conduct seismic testing for oil and natural gas deposits in the Atlantic Ocean.

The decision seemed like a no-brainer, considering President Barack Obama blocked all drilling off the Atlantic Coast under a five-year plan announced last year. Still, this is a decision worth celebrating.

Now we know the waters off our coast won't be subjected to the sound blasts of seismic testing that environmental groups say can disturb or even kill marine life — at least for now.

Many coastal residents, elected officials and businesses have spoken out since the Obama administration proposed in early 2015 to open the Southeast coast to offshore drilling and seismic testing. They rightly cited the potential harm to marine life, as well as the fishing and tourism industries.

U.S. Rep. Mark Sanford has been a key voice, supporting the many municipalities in this congressional district that went on the record against drilling and testing.

"This is important news for the coast of South Carolina, and an issue that my office has prioritized, particularly in light of local input," Sanford said in a statement Friday.

“It’s a decision that speaks volumes to the importance of voicing one’s opinion, and residents along our coast should be proud of the way they sent a compelling message to Washington.”

While we are encouraged by the decisions Obama and his administration have made, coastal South Carolinians have reason to wonder if they will stand under his successor. Our waters are not subject to Obama’s indefinite ban on drilling in areas from New England to Virginia.

We could be right back to square one when it’s time for President-elect Donald Trump’s administration to present an offshore drilling plan. Trump said during his campaign he would push for more domestic oil production.

Going forward, South Carolinians who oppose drilling and testing will have to hold firm on their position, as the group Business Alliance for Protecting the Atlantic Coast argued last week.

“Seismic testing is a dangerous, old technology that would dramatically harm our marine life... thus threatening our local tourism and commercial fishing economies,” alliance co-founder Frank Knapp said.

“This important decision will buy us time to educate the next administration about the Atlantic Coast business community’s overwhelming opposition to offshore drilling.”

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