

**Congress of the United States**  
**House of Representatives**  
**Washington, DC 20515-0904**

July 20, 2017

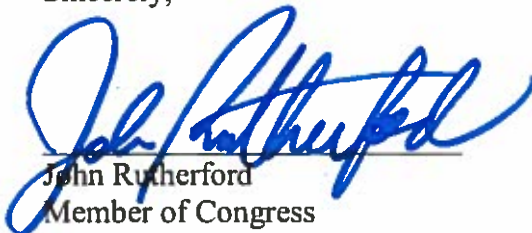
HOMELAND SECURITY  
SUBCOMMITTEES  
BORDER AND MARITIME SECURITY  
EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS, RESPONSE,  
AND COMMUNICATIONS  
VETERANS' AFFAIRS  
SUBCOMMITTEES  
HEALTH  
ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY

Dear Secretary Ross:

Please accept the attached letter signed by 103 members of the U.S. House of Representatives regarding the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's (NOAA) proposed incidental harassment authorizations (IHAs) for five geological and geophysical companies to incidentally take marine mammals to search for subsea oil and gas deposits in the Atlantic Ocean, as listed in the Federal Register (82 FR 26244).

As laid out in our letter, we have very strong concerns regarding the extensive negative impacts such an authorization would have on Atlantic marine ecosystems and the coastal economies that depend on them. Should you have any questions about our intent or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact our offices. We look forward to your response.

Sincerely,



John Rutherford  
Member of Congress



Don Beyer  
Member of Congress

cc: Chris Oliver, Assistant Administrator for NOAA Fisheries  
Samuel Rauch, Deputy Assistant Administrator for Regulatory Programs, NOAA Fisheries  
Donna Wieting, Director, Office of Protected Resources, NOAA Fisheries  
Jonathan Shannon, Outreach Specialist, NOAA Fisheries  
Patricia Montanio, Director, Office of Habitat Conservation, NOAA Fisheries  
Kate Naughten, Director, Office of Communications and External Affairs, NOAA Fisheries  
Jennifer Lukens, Director, Office of Policy, NOAA Fisheries  
John K. Bullard, Regional Administrator, Greater Atlantic Region, NOAA Fisheries  
Dr. Roy E Crabtree, Regional Administrator, Southeast Region, NOAA Fisheries  
Dr. Jonathan Hare, Science and Research Director, Northeast Fisheries Science Center, NOAA Fisheries  
Dr. Bonnie Ponwith, Science and Research Director, Southeast Fisheries Science Center, NOAA Fisheries  
Keely Hite, Environmental Consultation Branch, Division of Environmental Assessment BOEM  
Walter Cruikshank, Acting Director of BOEM  
Timothy Williams, Deputy Director of External Affairs, Department of the Interior

**Congress of the United States**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

June 28, 2017

Secretary Ryan Zinke  
Department of Interior  
1849 C St NW  
Washington, D.C. 20240

Dear Secretary Zinke,

We are writing in strong opposition to your recent secretarial order (#3350) to move forward with offshore oil and gas exploration in the Atlantic Ocean, and the subsequent issuance of five Incidental Harassment Authorizations (IHAs) by the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) for Atlantic geophysical & geological (G&G) permit applications.

This decision to move forward with permits for seismic airgun surveys for subsea oil and gas deposits puts at risk the vibrant Atlantic Coast economies dependent on healthy ocean ecosystems, which generate \$95 billion in gross domestic product and support nearly 1.4 million jobs each year.

Offshore oil and gas exploration and development, the first step of which is seismic airgun testing, puts at risk coastal economies based on fishing, tourism, and recreation. Numerous studies show the detrimental impacts seismic airgun blasting has on fisheries and marine mammals, thereby affecting the catch anglers bring dockside and the revenue generated by related businesses. A 2014 study conducted off North Carolina's coast by the University of North Carolina Chapel Hill, Duke University and NOAA found that, during seismic surveying, the abundance of reef-fish declined by 78 percent during evening hours, a time of day when fish use of that same habitat was highest on the previous three days when seismic surveys were not being conducted. The tertiary effects of this trickle down to fishing businesses, restaurants and the visitors that flock to our coastal communities.

Some proponents of opening drilling in the Atlantic make the argument that seismic airgun surveys for oil and gas deposits would allow local communities to learn more about what resources might be available. The reality is that, by law, the data obtained from seismic surveys are proprietary and only available to the oil and gas industry. The public, local government officials and even Members of Congress would not have access to the survey data. This inability to access information leaves coastal communities without the opportunity to perform substantive cost-benefit analyses for extracting oil and gas reserves off their coasts. Our constituents would be left taking on significant risk without being involved in future development decisions.

We hear from countless business owners, elected officials and residents along our coasts who recognize and reject the risks of offshore oil and gas development. More than 120 local

governments have passed formal resolutions opposing oil and gas exploration and/or drilling in the Atlantic or Eastern Gulf. These include numerous local chambers of commerce, tourism and restaurant associations, commercial and recreational fishing associations, and the Mid-Atlantic and South Atlantic Fishery Management Councils. More than 41,000 businesses and 500,000 commercial fishing families strongly oppose offshore oil and gas exploration and drilling. Further, NASA, the Department of Defense, and the Florida Defense Support Task Force have also expressed concern with offshore oil and gas development threatening their ability to perform critical activities.

Opening the Atlantic to seismic testing and drilling jeopardizes our coastal businesses, fishing communities, tourism, and our national security. It harms our coastal economies in the near term and opens the door to even greater risks from offshore oil and gas production down the road. Therefore, we implore you not to issue any permits for seismic airgun surveys for subsea oil and gas deposits in the Atlantic Ocean.

Sincerely,



John Rutherford  
Member of Congress



Donald S. Beyer Jr.  
Member of Congress



Mark Sanford  
Member of Congress



Gerald E. Connolly  
Member of Congress



Raúl M. Grijalva  
Member of Congress



Eric Swalwell  
Member of Congress



Christopher H. Smith  
Member of Congress



Darren Soto  
Member of Congress



Michael Capuano  
Member of Congress



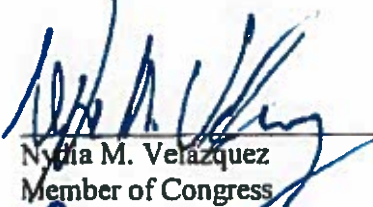
Walter B. Jones  
Member of Congress



Frank Pallone, Jr.  
Member of Congress



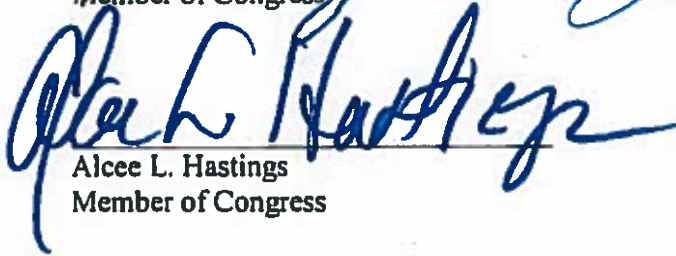
Bill Posey  
Member of Congress



Nydia M. Velazquez  
Member of Congress



John Garamendi  
Member of Congress



Alcee L. Hastings  
Member of Congress



Jan Schakowsky  
Member of Congress



Robert C. "Bobby" Scott  
Member of Congress



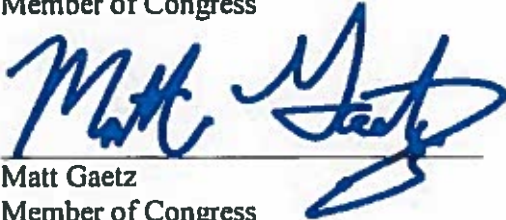
Bobby L. Rush  
Member of Congress



Katherine Clark  
Member of Congress



Niki Tsongas  
Member of Congress



Matt Gaetz  
Member of Congress



Charlie Crist  
Member of Congress



Alan Lowenthal  
Member of Congress



Jamie Raskin  
Member of Congress



Ileana Ros-Lehtinen  
Member of Congress

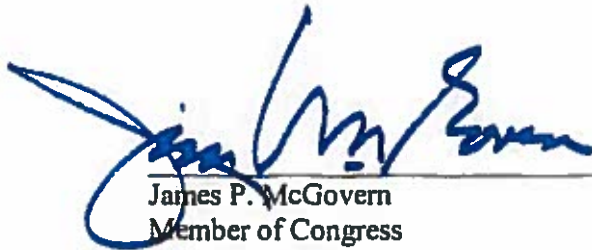


Suzanne Bonamici  
Member of Congress





Carol Shea-Porter  
Member of Congress



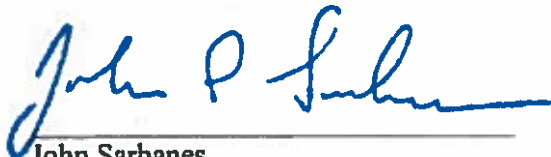
James P. McGovern  
Member of Congress



Louise M. Slaughter  
Member of Congress



Seth Moulton  
Member of Congress



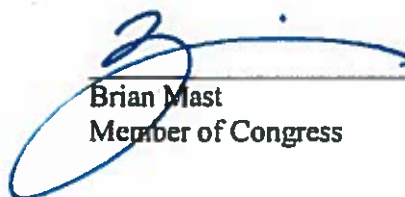
John Sarbanes  
Member of Congress



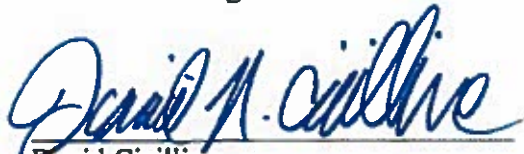
Frederica Wilson  
Member of Congress



Lisa Blunt Rochester  
Member of Congress



Brian Mast  
Member of Congress



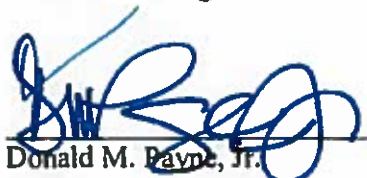
David Cicilline  
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William R. Keating  
Member of Congress



Anthony G. Brown  
Member of Congress



Donald M. Payne, Jr.  
Member of Congress



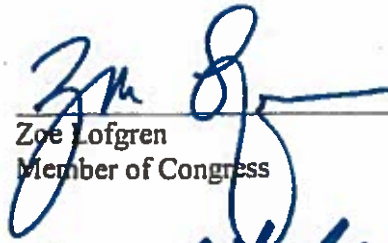
Bill Pascrell, Jr.  
Member of Congress



Frank A. LoBiondo  
Member of Congress



Dennis A. Ross  
Member of Congress



Zoe Lofgren  
Member of Congress



Daniel W. Lipinski  
Member of Congress



Jared Huffman  
Member of Congress



Barbara Lee  
Member of Congress



Val B. Demings  
Member of Congress



Debbie Wasserman Schultz  
Member of Congress



Ted Yoho, D.V.M.  
Member of Congress



Kathy Castor  
Member of Congress



Francis Rooney  
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William Lacy Clay  
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Yvette Clarke  
Member of Congress



Dwight Evans  
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Derek Kilmer  
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*David Price*

David E. Price  
Member of Congress

*Mike Quigley*

Mike Quigley  
Member of Congress

*Kip Ellison*

Keith Ellison  
Member of Congress

*Jerry McNamee*

Jerry McNamee  
Member of Congress

*Jared Polis*

Jared Polis  
Member of Congress

*Joe Crowley*

Joe Crowley  
Member of Congress

*John Conyers, Jr.*

John Conyers, Jr.  
Member of Congress

*John Yarmuth*

John Yarmuth  
Member of Congress

*Donald Norcross*

Donald Norcross  
Member of Congress

*Jose E. Serrano*

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Member of Congress

*Brendan F. Boyle*

Brendan F. Boyle  
Member of Congress

*Earl Blumenauer*

Earl Blumenauer  
Member of Congress

*Grace Meng*

Grace Meng  
Member of Congress

*Matthew A. Cartwright*

Matthew A. Cartwright  
Member of Congress



Ted Deutch  
Member of Congress



Henry C. "Hank" Johnson  
Member of Congress



Eleanor Holmes Norton  
Member of Congress



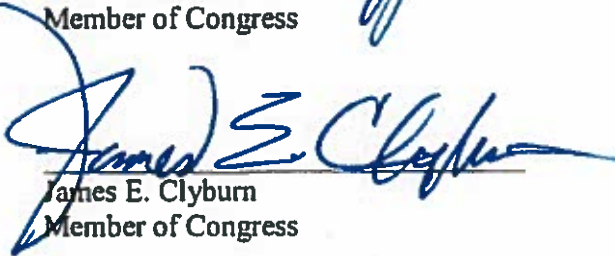
James R. Langevin  
Member of Congress



Adam Schiff  
Member of Congress



Ron DeSantis  
Member of Congress



James E. Clyburn  
Member of Congress



Jerrold Nadler  
Member of Congress



Lois Frankel  
Member of Congress



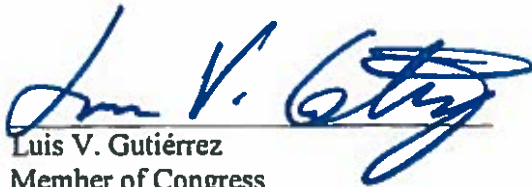
Al Lawson  
Member of Congress



Peter DeFazio  
Member of Congress



C.A. Dutch Ruppberger  
Member of Congress



Luis V. Gutiérrez  
Member of Congress



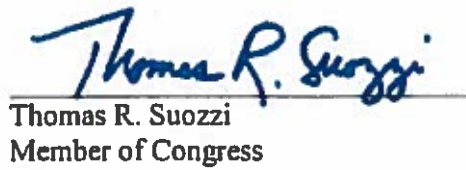
Betty McCollum  
Member of Congress



  
Carolyn B. Maloney  
Member of Congress

  
Vern Buchanan  
Member of Congress

  
Alma S. Adams  
Member of Congress

  
Thomas R. Suozzi  
Member of Congress

  
A. Donald McEachin  
Member of Congress

  
Marcy Kaptur  
Member of Congress

  
Pramila Jayapal  
Member of Congress

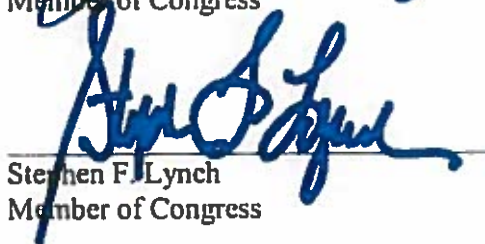
  
Stephanie Murphy  
Member of Congress

  
John Lewis  
Member of Congress

  
Nanette Diaz Barragan  
Member of Congress

  
Elijah E. Cummings  
Member of Congress

  
G.K. Butterfield  
Member of Congress

  
Stephen F. Lynch  
Member of Congress

  
Joseph P. Kennedy, III  
Member of Congress



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Mike Doyle  
Member of Congress



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Paul Tonko  
Member of Congress



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Grace F. Napolitano  
Member of Congress



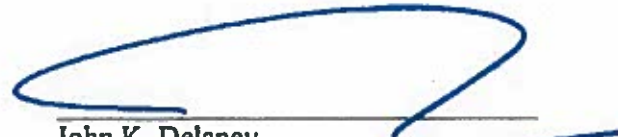
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Adriano Espaillat  
Member of Congress



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Jackie Speier  
Member of Congress



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John K. Delaney  
Member of Congress



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Peter Welch  
Member of Congress