



President Barack Obama
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20500

December 13, 2016

Dear President Obama,

Thank you for removing the Atlantic Ocean from the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management's 2017-2022 Outer Continental Shelf Oil and Gas Leasing Program.

No fewer than 120 municipalities in East Coast states have formally opposed oil and gas development in the Atlantic, including Ocean city and Worcester County Maryland. Together, these municipalities represent 90% of the coastline that would be at direct risk from seismic airgun blasting, from Cape May, New Jersey to Cape Canaveral, Florida. Additionally, over 1,100 business interests and over 1,200 federal, state and local legislators have opposed oil and gas exploration or development in the Atlantic.

It is clear that Atlantic coastal communities, elected leaders, and other stakeholders do not want offshore oil and gas development, including offshore drilling and seismic airgun blasting. We will never support the destruction of our ocean, which supports our economies and way of life.

We have strongly opposed as Maryland's irreplaceable natural resources would be unnecessarily compromised during both phases of this process of exploration/testing and ultimately drilling. We have some of the most nationally recognized pristine beaches in the world as well as the commercial and recreational impact of the Chesapeake Bay. Any disturbance to marine life and the inevitable spillage of drilling would severely impact our tourism based economy. Further, the Assateague Island National Seashore includes more than 37 miles of high quality Ocean beaches in Maryland and Virginia, and is one of the few remaining undeveloped barrier island environments along the mid-Atlantic coast. Assateague Island State Park has been named in the Top 10 in the nation and the seashore is an

important regional destination with more than 2 million visitors each year, resulting in an economic benefit of \$84 million annually. Here in Ocean City, we boast 10 miles of shoreline host upwards of 8 million guests annually with tourism spending topping 1 billion.

We are grateful that the Atlantic is no longer being considered for offshore drilling in the upcoming five-year program. However, our ocean is priceless and our coastal assets are far too valuable to ever put at risk of oil and gas development. We urge you to use your presidential authority to permanently protect the Atlantic Ocean and our communities from offshore drilling and seismic airgun blasting.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'M. Pursel', with a large, stylized flourish at the end.

Melanie A. Pursel, MS
Executive Director
Greater Ocean City, MD Chamber of Commerce