

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

December 6, 2018

The Honorable Wilbur Ross  
Secretary  
U.S. Department of Commerce  
1401 Constitution Avenue NW  
Washington, DC 20230

The Honorable Ryan Zinke  
Secretary  
U.S. Department of the Interior  
1849 C Street NW,  
Washington, DC 20240

Dear Secretaries Ross and Zinke:

We write in strong opposition to seismic testing in the Atlantic Ocean for the purposes of oil and gas exploration in light of the November 30<sup>th</sup> decision by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) to authorize the harm and harassment of marine mammals. These authorizations pave the way for five companies to conduct widespread seismic testing, including allowing blasting just miles off the southern coast of New Jersey. This decision is a threat to our coastal ecosystems, and places the wishes of the oil industry above the needs and values of the people living and working in our shore communities.

Seismic testing can be profoundly detrimental to marine life and to our coastal ecosystems. Seismic blasts can cause hearing loss in marine mammals, leading to strandings and mortality. The blasts can also cause abandonment of habitat; disruption of communication, feeding, and mating behaviors; and a decline in catch rates for our vital fishing industries. Species like the iconic North Atlantic right whale, which is already critically endangered, would be further threatened by this decision.


Compounding our concerns is the fact that these harassment authorizations are being issued in service of allowing oil drilling in the Atlantic. The Administration has been single-minded in its efforts to sell our shores to the highest bidder—but time and again, the people most impacted by this plan have voiced their strenuous opposition. Seismic testing goes against the express wishes of the over 120 municipalities, 1,200 elected officials, 42,000 businesses, and 500,000 fishing families from up and down the Atlantic coast who have all voiced their opposition to oil and gas activities.

Seismic blasting and offshore drilling anywhere in the Atlantic is a threat to the ecosystems and coastal economies of states throughout our region. New Jerseyans and people up and down the East Coast remain steadfast against any effort to drill off of our shores. Allowing for seismic

blasting in support of an oil drilling scheme that will never become reality is needlessly harmful. We call on the Department of Commerce to immediately reverse these ill-founded authorizations, and the Department of the Interior to deny all pending seismic survey permits for seismic testing in the Atlantic Ocean.

Sincerely,

  
ROBERT MENENDEZ  
United States Senator

  
CORY A. BOOKER  
United States Senator

  
FRANK PALLONE, JR.  
Member of Congress

  
ALBIO SIRES  
Member of Congress

  
DONALD NORCROSS  
Member of Congress

  
DONALD M. PAYNE, JR.  
Member of Congress

  
FRANK A. LOBIONDO  
Member of Congress

  
BILL PASCRELL, JR.  
Member of Congress

  
JOSH GOTTHEIMER  
Member of Congress

  
BONNIE WATSON COLEMAN  
Member of Congress