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February 21, 2019

The Honorable David Bernhardt
Acting Secretary of the Interior
U.S. Department of the Interior
1849 C Street NW
Washington, DC 20240
Email: oiea@ios.doi.gov

RE: Worcester County, Maryland Opposition to Seismic Testing and Offshore Drilling

Dear Acting Secretary Bernhardt:

Please be advised that at our meeting of February 19, 2019, the Worcester County Commissioners discussed our strong opposition to offshore drilling and seismic airgun blasting in the waters off the Delmarva Coast and specifically in the vicinity of Worcester County, Maryland which includes Ocean City and Assateague Island State and National Parks. In addition, we request that the Mid-Atlantic Planning Area be removed from consideration in the 2019-2024 Outer Continental Shelf Oil and Gas Leasing Program.

The economy of Maryland, and particularly that of Worcester County, is heavily dependent on healthy waterways and beaches to support robust tourism, real estate, and fishing industries. These industries are directly threatened by proposed exploration and drilling for oil and gas off the Delmarva coast in the Mid-Atlantic Planning Area.

The oil and gas industry has a poor history when it comes to accident prevention and remediation, as statistics from the Bureau of Safety and Environmental Enforcement (BSEE) detail. Between 2011 and 2017, in an era of increased concern about safety following the BP disaster in the Gulf of Mexico, BSEE reported the following safety incidents in the U.S. offshore drilling industry:

- 13 deaths
- 760 fires or explosions
- 26 losses of well control, and
- 125 spills of 50 barrels of oil or more

These statistics clearly demonstrate the inherent risks that come with offshore oil and gas development.

Citizens and Government Working Together

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Underscoring this risk is the dearth of oil and gas in the Mid-Atlantic Planning Area. The Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (BOEM) estimates approximately 2.41 billion barrels of oil and 24.63 trillion cubic feet of natural gas in the Mid Atlantic Planning Area. At current U.S. consumption rates, that equals less than a 4-month supply of oil and less than a year's worth of natural gas.

As elected leaders, entrusted by the citizens and visitors of Worcester County to protect our natural resources and ensure the future prosperity of our community, we strongly feel the risks associated with oil and gas development in the Mid-Atlantic Planning Area far outweigh any potential benefits.

For these reasons, we respectfully request that you please remove all areas in the Mid-Atlantic Planning Area from consideration in the 2019-2024 Outer Continental Shelf Oil and Gas Leasing Program and deny any seismic airgun surveys for oil and gas off the Delmarva coast.

Sincerely,



Diana Purnell
President

cc: Dr. Walter Cruickshank, Acting Director, Bureau of Ocean Energy Management
Congressman Andy Harris, M.D.
U.S. Senator Ben Cardin
U.S. Senator Chris Van Hollen
Gov. Larry Hogan
MD Senator Mary Beth Carozza
Del. Charles J. Otto
Del. Wayne A. Hartman
Ocean City Mayor and Council