



STATE OF RHODE ISLAND
OFFICE OF GOVERNOR DANIEL J. MCKEE

August 16, 2021

The Honorable Deb Haaland
Secretary
U.S. Department of the Interior
1849 C Street NW
Washington, D.C. 20240

Dear Secretary Haaland:

As the governor of Rhode Island, I write to reiterate my strong opposition to oil and gas drilling off the Atlantic Coast. Offshore drilling poses an unacceptable and unnecessary threat to our coastal ecosystems and economy. I adamantly oppose any new oil and gas leases being issued along the Atlantic Coast and urge the Department of the Interior to permanently protect the Atlantic from future offshore oil and gas lease sales.

Our coastal economy supports over 50,000 jobs for Rhode Islanders in industries like tourism, recreation, and fishing. These industries depend on clean oceans and healthy oceanic ecosystems. The Atlantic Coast's ocean economy generates more than \$100 billion in gross domestic product, \$3.5 billion of which is generated in Rhode Island. That economic impact is jeopardized by offshore oil and gas drilling. Local governments up and down the coast have passed resolutions opposing offshore drilling in the Atlantic Ocean. Tourism associations, convention and visitors' bureaus, businesses, trade groups, and elected officials from both sides of the aisle also have voiced opposition to these activities.

Recent research found that permanent protections for unleased federal waters from offshore drilling could prevent over \$720 billion in damages and eliminate greenhouse gas emissions equivalent to taking all cars off the road in the U.S. for 15 years. Oil disasters can permanently damage marine environments and destroy the immune and reproductive systems in dolphins, whales, and fish. The financial toll of oil disasters stems largely from these and other environmental damages. The only way to guarantee offshore drilling won't harm the ecosystems depended on by Rhode Islanders is to not issue any new leases in the Atlantic.

State and local leaders in Rhode Island have voiced consistent, bipartisan opposition to offshore drilling. As a result, I request that you deny any future activities whose purpose is to support offshore drilling in the Atlantic Ocean.

Sincerely,


Daniel McKee

Governor of Rhode Island

December 20, 2018

The Honorable Wilbur L. Ross, Jr.
Secretary
U.S. Department of Commerce
1401 Constitution Ave., NW
Washington, D.C. 20230

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

Dear Secretary Ross and Secretary Zinke:

As the governors of 10 states on the Atlantic seaboard, we write to reiterate our strong opposition to seismic airgun surveys and oil and gas drilling off our coasts. These activities pose an unacceptable and unnecessary threat to our coastal ecosystems and coastal economies. We emphatically disagree with the recent decision by the Department of Commerce to issue incidental harassment authorizations (IHAs) for seismic airgun surveys in the Atlantic Ocean. We urge the Department of the Interior to deny permits for seismic airgun surveys in the Atlantic. In addition, we adamantly oppose the inclusion of any Atlantic Ocean region in the final 2019-2024 National Outer Continental Shelf Oil and Gas Leasing Program.

The coastal economies in each of our states depend upon vibrant tourism and fishing industries. The IHAs would allow five companies to conduct seismic airgun surveys in the Atlantic Ocean, despite peer-reviewed evidence portending significant harmful impacts to marine mammals and fisheries, including endangered species. Seismic airgun surveying can cause acute, cumulative, and chronic negative impacts on the ability of marine mammals to send and receive signals that are essential for feeding, reproduction, raising offspring, and navigation. The repeated, loud noises from airgun blasts also risk diminishing essential fish stocks for commercial and recreational fishing communities in our states.

The seismic survey restrictions in the IHAs do not ensure that such activities will have a negligible impact on affected species. These restrictions, for example, fail to account for the ability of seismic airgun pulses to travel over long distances, the correct exposure thresholds for changes in species behavior, and the cumulative impacts of conducting multiple seismic airgun surveying operations at once. As a result, conducting seismic surveys under these authorizations can lead to mortality and permanent injury of fish and marine mammals, including endangered species such as the North Atlantic right whale.

The Atlantic Coast's ocean economy generates more than \$98 billion in gross domestic product, an economic impact that would be jeopardized by seismic airgun surveys and

offshore oil and gas drilling. More than 200 local governments have passed resolutions opposing seismic airgun surveying and/or offshore drilling in the Atlantic Ocean. Tourism associations, convention and visitors bureaus, businesses, trade groups, and elected officials from both sides of the aisle also have voiced opposition to these activities.

State and local leaders in our states have voiced consistent, bipartisan opposition to seismic airgun surveys and offshore drilling. We ask that you respect our request and concerns by denying all permit applications and issuing no further IHAs for seismic airgun surveys in the Atlantic Ocean. In addition, we request that you exclude the Atlantic Ocean from the 2019-2024 National Outer Continental Shelf Oil and Gas Leasing Program for offshore drilling and deny any future activities whose purpose is to support offshore drilling in the Atlantic Ocean.

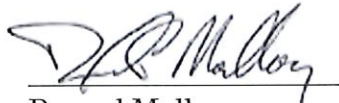
Sincerely,



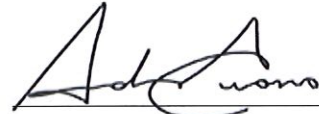
Roy Cooper
Governor of North Carolina



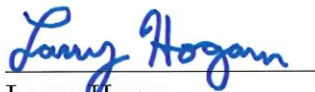
Henry McMaster
Governor of South Carolina



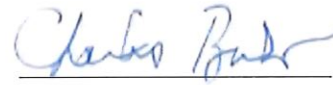
Dannel Malloy
Governor of Connecticut



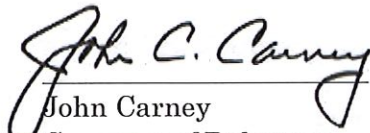
Andrew Cuomo
Governor of New York



Larry Hogan
Governor of Maryland



Charlie Baker
Governor of Massachusetts



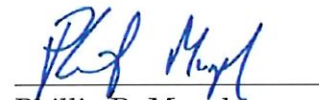
John Carney
Governor of Delaware



Ralph Northam
Governor of Virginia



Gina Raimondo
Governor of Rhode Island



Phillip D. Murphy
Governor of New Jersey