

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

December 17, 2020

The Honorable Dr. Hubert Alexander Minnis, ON, M.P.
Prime Minister of the Commonwealth of the Bahamas
Office of the Prime Minister
Sir Cecil Wallace Whitfield Centre
Nassau, N.P., The Bahamas

The Honorable Romauld Sotario Ferreira
Minister of the Environment and Housing
Charlotte House, Second Floor
Shirley & Charlotte St.
Nassau, N.P., The Bahamas

Via electronic correspondence.

Dear Prime Minister Minnis and Minister Ferreira,

We write regarding the Bahamas Petroleum Company's (BPC) offshore drilling project, the Perseverance No. 1 oil well, off the coast of The Bahamas. We believe you should reconsider the agreement established between your government and BPC to protect the beauty and longevity of our fragile and shared ecosystems, the economies that depend on them, and the future of our planet.

As coastal and near-coastal Members of Congress, we have long fought to prevent oil spills, but the success of this work is directly dependent on the cooperation of other states, our federal government, and nearby nations. We and countless Americans remember the devastation and loss of life caused by the 2010 Deepwater Horizon spill,^[1] for which Florida continues to require restoration funding.^[2] That well, similar to that which BPC plans to bore, claimed 11 lives and spewed more than 200 million gallons of oil into the Gulf of Mexico, destroying whole ecosystems and halting tourism and fisheries across the region. It has become clear that oil companies such as BPC have every intention to plow ahead despite red flags, which warn of the grave health, natural disaster, and environmental risks of drilling.

Should BPC's project move forward, we will be justified in fearing that the Atlantic coast is at risk of severe, even catastrophic, impact from any spills that might occur – essentially undermining the recent offshore drilling ban extension from President Trump, and future offshore drilling restrictions. It is unclear whether BPC has the capacity to help mitigate a serious

^[1] [Deep Water Horizon](#). Damage Assessment, Remediation, and Restoration Program. National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA). Updated: August 17, 2020.

^[2] [Florida receives additional \\$73 million from Deepwater Horizon settlement](#). Karl Schneider. Naples Daily News. Updated: October 29, 2020.

disaster, let alone prevent one in the first place. Should a calamitous event occur, the Bahamian government and BPC's clean-up efforts will undoubtedly require financial assistance from neighbors, including the United States, to address any spill that would spread throughout domestic and international waters. For perspective, Deepwater Horizon cost an estimated \$65 billion to clean up and the effects have yet to be fully alleviated.^[3] What's worse, the ship that is set to begin drilling has a track record of safety issues on previous jobs, including incidents in March 2016,^[4] September 2016,^[5] and October 2017.^[6]

Unfortunately, we believe the agreement reached between BPC and the Bahamian government is directly contrary to the urgent call made at the United Nations just last year.^[7] In that speech, Prime Minister, you cited the contribution carbon emissions have made to the climate crisis and the devastating impacts this crisis continues to have on island nations like The Bahamas,^[8] including those wrought by Hurricane Dorian, rising sea levels, and natural barrier degradation. These events are felt deeply by Americans and communities around the world, and expanding offshore drilling is fundamentally against their interests.

We stand ready to work with your government to fight the climate crisis, a looming mass-extinction event, and oil and gas interests that seek only to profit off activities that truly put our respective communities at great risk. The health of our constituencies, oceans, and planet hinges on what actions we take here and now.

Sincerely,



Alcee L. Hastings
Member of Congress

//s//

Kathy Castor
Member of Congress

//s//

Charlie Crist
Member of Congress

//s//

Darren Soto
Member of Congress

//s//

Gerald E. Connolly
Member of Congress

^[3] [BP Takes \\$1.7 Billion Charge on Deepwater Horizon; Costs Now Top \\$65B](#). Alex Lardieri. U.S. News & World Report. January 16, 2018.

^[4] [Shell offshore team loses Styrofoam pipe floats at sea](#). Brett Ruskin. CBC. March 22, 2016.

^[5] [Shell Canada offshore drill fell within 12 metres of oil exploration well](#). Michal Tutton. CBC. September 29, 2016.

^[6] [Scottish oil worker Colin Gillespie dies in Gran Canaria](#). BBC News. October 23, 2017.

^[7] [Treat climate crisis with 'greatest urgency', Bahamas leader tells UN Assembly](#). The United Nations. September 27, 2019.

^[8] [National Statement at the 74th Session of the United Nations' General Assembly](#). The Most Hon. Dr. Hubert Minnis Prime Minister of the Commonwealth of The Bahamas. September 27, 2019.

//s//
Debbie Wasserman Schultz
Member of Congress

//s//
Nydia M. Velázquez
Member of Congress

//s//
A. Donald McEachin
Member of Congress

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Alan Lowenthal
Member of Congress

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Chellie Pingree
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David Scott
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Al Lawson
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Abigail D. Spanberger
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