

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

February 26, 2014

Hon. Sally Jewell
Secretary of the Interior
Department of the Interior
1849 C Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20240

Dear Secretary Jewell:

We are writing to request that the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (BOEM) refrain from finalizing the Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement (PEIS) on seismic airgun testing for offshore oil and gas exploration in the Atlantic Ocean until all of the best available science can be incorporated. The proposed seismic airgun testing presents a serious threat to our coastal economy and marine life, and consideration of these effects should not be rushed.

The National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) recently released a draft Marine Mammal Acoustic Guidance document, which will allow for more accurate estimates of auditory injuries and disturbances to marine mammals from proposed seismic airgun testing. The Atlantic Ocean is home to a diversity and abundance of marine mammals that migrate along the entire East Coast. This includes the critically endangered North Atlantic right whale, which could be put at greater risk given the widespread acoustic footprint of seismic survey activity. It is essential that BOEM incorporate NMFS guidance on this subject into the final PEIS so that this important information can guide the most appropriate mitigation measures and protect vulnerable marine species.

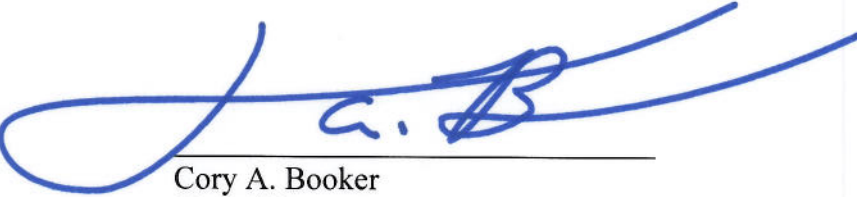
NMFS released the Marine Mammal Acoustic Guidance document on December 27, 2013 for public comment, and we understand that the agency will be releasing additional guidance regarding behavioral disturbances to marine mammals in the near future. The newly published draft guidance synthesizes years of scientific research regarding the effects of anthropogenic sound on marine mammals. The Office of Management and Budget (OMB) has classified these guidelines as a "Highly Influential Scientific Assessment," which is the most stringent possible ranking under OMB's peer-review protocol. NMFS and BOEM should work together to incorporate this important information into the PEIS, through a process transparent to policymakers and the public.

Given that the current Five Year Outer Continental Shelf (OCS) Leasing Plan protects the East Coast from offshore oil and gas lease sales through 2017, there is no reason to rush the PEIS or permit seismic surveys in the mid- and south Atlantic without considering this new scientific information.

We strongly urge you to await the completion of the new Marine Mammal Acoustic Guidance from NMFS and incorporate this best available science into the PEIS for proposed seismic

survey activity in the mid- and south Atlantic. Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

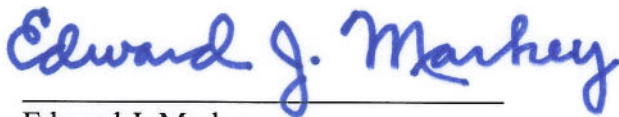
Sincerely,



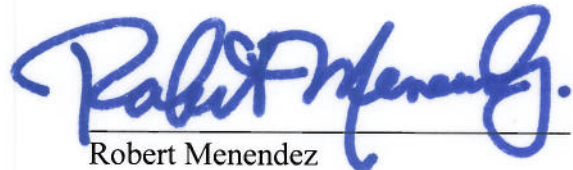
Cory A. Booker
United States Senator



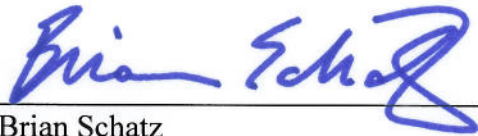
Sheldon Whitehouse
United States Senator



Edward J. Markey
United States Senator



Robert Menendez
United States Senator



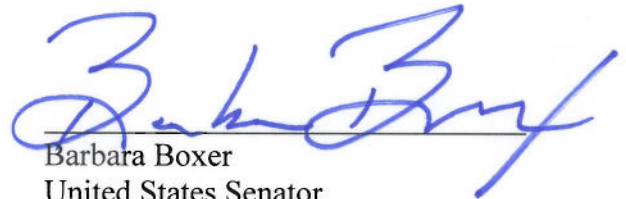
Brian Schatz
United States Senator



Benjamin L. Cardin
United States Senator



Maria Cantwell
United States Senator



Barbara Boxer
United States Senator



Barbara A. Mikulski
United States Senator