

Gullah/Geechee Nation

RESOLUTION OPPOSING SEISMIC TESTING AND OFFSHORE DRILLING ACTIVITIES ALONG THE GULLAH/GEECHEE COAST



WHEREAS, the Gullah/Geechee Nation exist from Jacksonville, NC to Jacksonville, FL; and,

WHEREAS, the National Trust for Historic Preservation declared this region the “Gullah/Geechee Endangered Coast; and,

WHEREAS, the United States Gullah/Geechee Cultural Heritage Act was established to assist Gullah/Geechees with continuing to preserve their cultural heritage and tangible and intangible cultural resources; and,

WHEREAS, the Gullah/Geechee Sea Island Coalition which is a national organization with international supporters that advocate for the rights of Gullah/Geechees, the Gullah/Geechee Fishing Association, and the leadership of the Gullah/Geechee Nation submitted input to the United States Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (BOEM) opposing opening the mid and south Atlantic Ocean to exploration and development of offshore oil and gas via seismic blasting; and,

WHEREAS, seismic air-guns fire intense blasts of compressed air, one of the loudest man made sounds in the ocean at 200-230 decibels and the air gun blasts can occur as frequently as every ten seconds, for days to weeks at a time and are loud enough to harm marine and aquatic life;

WHEREAS, these types of environmental disruptions would have lasting negative impacts on Gullah/Geechee subsistence fisheries and Gullah/Geechee traditional lifeways; and

WHEREAS, the full impact of seismic testing and offshore drilling in the Atlantic Ocean are not yet fully understood by scientists, the oil and gas industry, BOEM, or the Federal Government, and lower-impact alternative technologies may be available for exploration in the near future; and,

WHEREAS, exploratory and commercial drilling, extraction, and transportation of offshore oil and gas resources pose a significant risk of a spill which would cause extreme harm to the life ways of Gullah/Geechees on the Sea Islands and throughout the Lowcountry; and,

WHEREAS, Gullah/Geechees are an indigenous, cultural, and linguistic minority of the Sea Islands and are recognized as such by international human rights laws that govern decisions of environmental resources and the processes of engaging with these cultural communities in the management and use of said resources; and,

WHEREAS, the Gullah/Geechee Nation does not support the erecting of onshore infrastructure, such as pipelines or refineries, which are part of offshore drilling activities that could harm the character of our coast; and,

WHEREAS, Gullah/Geechee culture is inextricably tied to the land and the waterways of the southeastern coast; and,

WHEREAS, access to land and waterways is a vital part of the traditional life ways of Gullah/Geechees, and,

WHEREAS, seismic gun blast and offshore drilling activities do impact the coastal patterns of natural, estuarine, scenic, and cultural resource features, qualities, processes, uses, values; and,

WHEREAS, offshore drilling activities pose threats to coastal wetlands in South Carolina, which are of intrinsic ecological value for numerous migratory bird species, serve as essential nursery habitats for recreational and commercially important fisheries, and act as natural buffers from storm surge and hurricanes; and,

WHEREAS, any negative impact that would happen through these activities would do irreversible harm to the quality of life of the citizens of the Gullah/Geechee Nation; and,

WHEREAS, the Gullah/Geechee Nation's leaders seek to continue to improve and maintain the quality of life of the people along the southeastern coast by actively engaging in activities that have minimal impacts on these sensitive environmental areas; and,

WHEREAS, the Gullah/Geechee Nation supports the numerous towns and counties of our coast that also oppose these activities and have stated that it would be more economically and ecologically responsible to pursue non-polluting sources of renewable energy through solar, wind, and biomass energy production projects that pose less risk to our coastal environment and economic health before using uncertain methods of seismic blasting for offshore oil and gas exploration.

NOW THEREFORE, be it resolved that the Gullah/Geechee Nation opposes offshore seismic testing and offshore oil and gas development off the North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, and Florida coast.

Queen Quet

Chieftess of the Gullah/Geechee Nation

on behalf of the Gullah/Geechee Nation Wisdom Circle Council of Elders

and

Gullah/Geechee Assembly of Representatives

October 1, 2015