

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

January 9, 2018

Secretary Ryan Zinke
Department of the Interior
1849 C Street, N.W.
Washington DC 20240

Dear Secretary Zinke,

We write in strong opposition to your recent proposal that would open the U.S. outer continental shelf off the coast of New Jersey for oil and gas exploration and development.

This proposal poses serious economic and environmental risks to the local marine wildlife, the fish populations which our commercial fishermen rely upon for their livelihood, and our pristine state beaches which support our tourism industry.

Economically, this proposal will impact nearly 1.4 million jobs and over \$95 billion in gross domestic product that rely on healthy Atlantic Ocean ecosystems. As you know, together with both commercial and recreational fishing activities, tourism remains an economic driver along New Jersey's 130 mile shoreline and brings in roughly \$45 billion per year. Even a minor oil spill off the state's coast could result in oil washing directly onshore due to the prevailing ocean currents; such a disaster could cripple the tourism economy and lead to loss of employment for the beaches and towns that support these industries.

Environmentally, our coastal communities in New Jersey are concerned with the effects drilling will have on our marine life. Even low level exposure to contaminants can cause significant harm to individual organisms and entire populations, degrade water quality, lower dissolved oxygen, pollute sediments, and alter aquatic vegetation.

Further, seismic testing used to discover oil and gas reserves— which include firing large blasts of air 100,000 times more intense than a jet engine at the ocean floor- can occur as often as every 10 seconds and have been shown to disrupt fragile marine ecosystems. Wildlife that rely on their own sonar for movement, such as whales, are disoriented, deafened and possibly killed by these blasts.

We urge you to reconsider opening our coast to oil and gas exploration and development. Asserting our energy independence and protecting our environment do not have to be mutually exclusive, and we must accomplish this in a way that does not compromise our coastal waters and beaches that drive our economy.

Sincerely,




CHRISTOPHER H. SMITH
Member of Congress




FRANK A. LOBIONDO
Member of Congress

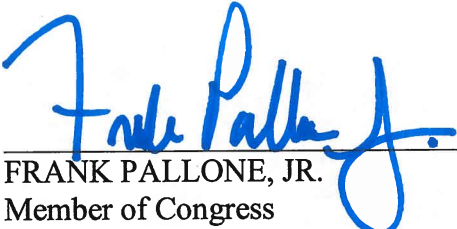

ROBERT MENENDEZ
United States Senator


CORY A. BOOKER
United States Senator

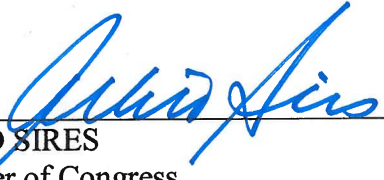

TOM MACARTHUR
Member of Congress



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