

PRESS RELEASE



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Obama Administration's Final Decision Declares Open Season on the Atlantic by Big Oil *Coalition Responds to Administration's Hypocritical Ocean Policy --- Adds Insult to Injury off Jersey Shore*

Today, the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management announced its issuance of the Record of Decision for environmental review of geological and geophysical survey activities associated with oil and gas exploration off the Atlantic coast, which has been under a drilling moratorium for decades.

Upon hearing of this development, Cindy Zipf, Executive Director of Clean Ocean Action, stated, "The Obama Administration has officially declared open season on the Atlantic for Big Oil to exploit and threaten our coasts. This is clearly hypocritical; President Obama just declared June as 'National Oceans Month,' calling upon us to be good ocean stewards. Which side of the ocean is he on?"

The Record of Decision brings energy companies one step closer to beginning exploration of the mid- and south-Atlantic, from Delaware Bay to Florida, for oil and gas reserves. Zipf pointed to the strong opposition that citizens and elected officials in many coastal states have shown over the years to offshore oil and gas development.

"Atlantic coastal states have thrived for decades on clean ocean economies such as tourism and commercial and recreational fishing. The New Jersey coastal delegation in particular has stood firm in its resistance to offshore fossil fuel development due to the huge risks that oil spills pose to the marine environment. One spill could wipe out our entire coastal economy."

Under the President's proposed plan, energy companies will be permitted to conduct harmful seismic testing offshore to locate potential oil and gas deposits. Seismic testing involves the use of arrays of airguns towed behind a vessel that shoot extremely loud, pressurized blasts of air into the water column. Research on impacts to marine life from seismic testing have shown responses that range from harassment to death.

"Allowing seismic testing in the Atlantic Ocean is essentially opening the floodgates to oil and gas development. Before an oil well is even drilled, seismic testing could displace fisheries, deafen whales and dolphins, and interrupt vital marine animal behaviors, such as feeding, migration, communication, and breeding," said Cassandra Ornell, Clean Ocean Action Staff Scientist. "BOEM claims that the

approved plan establishes 'safeguards to reduce or eliminate impacts to marine life.' The only way to ensure that is to not do seismic testing at all," added Ornell.

This announcement comes on the heels of the Federal government's approval of another seismic testing study in the Atlantic Ocean off New Jersey. "New Jersey's marine ecosystem is already going to be subject to seismic blasting this summer by Rutgers University for scientific research purposes. BOEM is adding insult to injury with today's approval of additional seismic blasting for oil and gas development," stated Zipf.

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Clean Ocean Action (COA) is a regional, broad-based coalition of 125 active boating, business, community, conservation, diving, environmental, fishing, religious, service, student, surfing, and women's groups with a mission to improve the degraded water quality of the marine waters of the New Jersey/New York coast. COA has a decades-long history of science- and law-based advocacy for a clean, oil-development-free Atlantic Ocean.