



The Outer Banks Chamber of Commerce

Serving Currituck and Dare Counties, Ocracoke Island

P.O. Box 1757 • 101 Town Hall Drive • Kill Devil Hills, NC 27948

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RE: Outer Banks Chamber Statement regarding offshore drilling, exploration and seismic testing

The Outer Banks Chamber of Commerce represents approximately 1,000 businesses and organizations along the beautiful North Carolina coast from Corolla in Currituck County, from Duck through Kitty Hawk, Kill Devil Hills, Nags Head, Hatteras Island and all of Dare County, to Ocracoke Island in Hyde County. As the largest regional organization representing this area we ask you to reconsider allowing offshore drilling and seismic testing for natural gas or oil along our coastline .

While we as an organization recognize and support the need for energy independence and alternatives, exploration along our coast would be catastrophic for an area that depends on its natural beauty and environment for not only tourism related industries but for our recreational and commercial fishing fleet, our boat builders, and our entrepreneurs.

Is the risk of damage to our tourism industry worth the anticipated reward? Research suggests that job numbers and revenues expected from off-shore drilling have been overstated and will fall far short of the impact and revenue generated by our already thriving tourism-based economy. Specifically, the Outer Banks would not realize any benefit from any offshore drilling or testing activities. There would be no job creation or industry benefit as we do not have ports or infrastructure to support this type of industry. The Outer Banks would be shouldering all the risk with NO reward.

The 20 counties that comprise North Carolina's coastal region generate more personal and commercial income, public revenues, and employment opportunities, than the petroleum and natural gas industry. Specifically:

- In 2016 a record \$22.9 billion in domestic visitor/tourism spending was realized in North Carolina.
- Out of the 100 counties in the State of North Carolina, Dare County was #4 in travel expenditures, generating over \$1.09 billion and over 13,000 jobs.
- Direct tourism employment in North Carolina is approximately 219,000+ persons, with a direct tourism payroll of \$5.5 billion. Dare, Currituck and Hyde Counties combine for more than \$271million in tourism payroll.
- Visitors to North Carolina generated more than \$3 billion in federal, state and local taxes in 2016.
- The National Marine Fisheries Service reported fish landings in 2015 in North Carolina to be worth in excess of \$94,049,000.

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Visitors come from all over the world come to enjoy the natural beauty of our clean beaches, marshes, sounds, and tributaries. Many of these natural areas provide sanctuary and nesting/breeding grounds for diverse groups of migratory birds, turtles, whales, fish and other forms of wildlife. Along with recreational enjoyment, our coastal waters and natural habitats provide the world with some of the best wild-caught seafood, renowned for its freshness and exceptional quality.

The inherent risks to our region from off-shore oil and natural gas exploration and drilling have the potential to irrevocably harm our natural environment, our economic well-being, and our overall quality of life. Offshore of the Outer Banks are two unique features; the continental shelf and the colliding of two currents, the Labrador current and the Gulf Stream. An oil spill would not only impact the Outer Banks but the two currents could take oil both north and south along the Atlantic coastline with catastrophic results.

Consider just two massive spills in waters contiguous to the United States:

- The Exxon Valdez in 1989, which leaked 10.8 million gallons of crude oil into Prince William Sound, caused \$300 million dollars in environmental damage, and reduced tourism by 35 percent in southwest Alaska in the year after spill.
- The Deepwater Horizon oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico in 2010, which leaked 205.8 million gallons of crude oil, contaminated 1,100 linear miles of coastline, and caused a net negative impact on tourism across Louisiana, Alabama, Mississippi, and Florida.

The Outer Banks Chamber of Commerce continues to be opposed to exploration and production of petroleum resources off the coast of North Carolina. We also urge all coastal region local governments, Governor Roy Cooper, the North Carolina General Assembly and the federal government to oppose offshore petroleum production policies that risk the proven tourism-driven economy of coastal North Carolina.

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