

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

March 21, 2013

The Honorable Barack Obama
President of the United States of America
1600 Pennsylvania Ave, NW
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Mr. President:

We are writing to urge that your Administration act to diligently complete the long-delayed Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the conduct of a safe, environmentally protective seismic assessment of the oil and natural gas resources offshore the Atlantic outer continental shelf (OCS). The gathering of such information represents a critical step toward making science-based decisions with regard to any future commercial or recreational activities in the federal waters off our Atlantic coastline that could provide the nation much needed energy, economic, and environmental benefits.

It has been nearly two generations since seismic testing was last conducted along our eastern seaboard. Since that time, technological advancements have rendered those previous findings nearly irrelevant. For example, while 2-D imaging was restricted by certain geological characteristics, today's 3-D and 4-D imaging techniques allow us to identify resources previously unknown to exist. By relying solely on outdated technology and information, we are blindly assessing offshore resource potential and making uninformed decisions without the benefit of sound science. To further illustrate this point, in 1987 the Minerals Management Service estimated that there were 9.57 billion barrels of oil within the Gulf of Mexico. In 2011, with more recent seismic data and exploration, they adjusted that estimate to 48.4 billion barrels of oil – roughly a 500% increase.

Contrary to the hyperbolic comments of many opposed to this simple information-gathering process, history tells us it can be done safely with great deference to our valuable ocean ecosystems. Industry employs a number of effective mitigation measures to reduce any potential impacts to wildlife in the seismic survey areas such as ramping up the sound levels to allow animals to leave the area before the full survey begins and placing marine mammal observers onboard the survey vessel to shut down the survey if an animal is spotted in the vicinity. Industry has been performing seismic surveys around the world, including the Gulf of Mexico, for decades and there has never been a documented case where use of an air gun to perform a seismic survey has caused the death of an animal. Similarly, a report by the National Academy of Sciences' National Research Council stated that "No scientific studies have conclusively demonstrated a link between exposure to sound and adverse effects on a marine mammal population." It is past time to continue your Administration's efforts to safely accumulate this information using modern technology.

As you know, the Department of the Interior (DOI) held an initial scoping meeting on their EIS for Atlantic OCS seismic in April 2010. Previous to that in 2009, the FY 2010 House Interior Appropriations bill instructed DOI to indicate their expected timeline for completion of the EIS. DOI's response in February 2010 indicated a Final EIS being issued in April 2012. With nearly a full year having passed beyond this target date, we would urge the swift completion of this environmental analysis so that the many seismic permits already submitted to DOI may be properly considered, along with any future applications.

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Finally, in order to ensure a viable market for Atlantic seismic data, we also urge your reconsideration of current policies prohibiting any new oil and gas leasing in the Atlantic OCS. Only the prospect of future leasing provides proper market incentive to make the significant investments needed to obtain this data.

We thank you for your consideration and hope to quickly move forward on Atlantic seismic testing to enable a science-based decision making process with regard to OCS access.

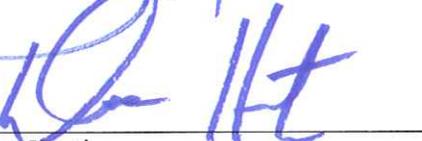
Sincerely,



Jeff Duncan
Member of Congress



Robert Wittman
Member of Congress



Doc Hastings
Member of Congress



Doug Lamborn
Member of Congress



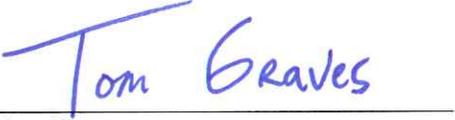
John Fleming
Member of Congress



Rob Bishop
Member of Congress



Steve Scalise
Member of Congress



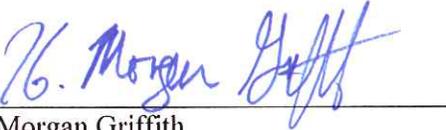
Tom Graves
Member of Congress



Joe Wilson
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Randy Forbes
Member of Congress



Morgan Griffith
Member of Congress



Paul Broun
Member of Congress

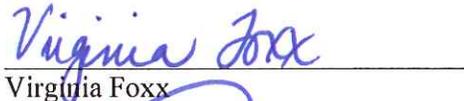
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Mick Mulvaney
Member of Congress



Tom Rice
Member of Congress



Virginia Foxx
Member of Congress



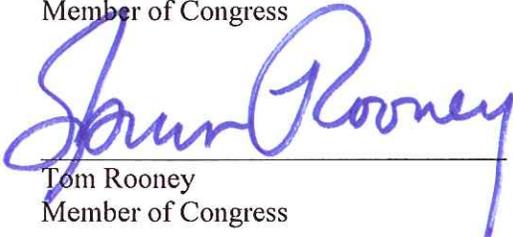
Renee Ellmers
Member of Congress



Robert Hurt
Member of Congress



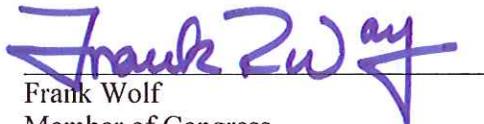
Scott Rigell
Member of Congress



Tom Rooney
Member of Congress



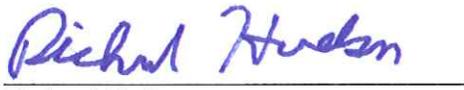
Bob Goodlatte
Member of Congress



Frank Wolf
Member of Congress



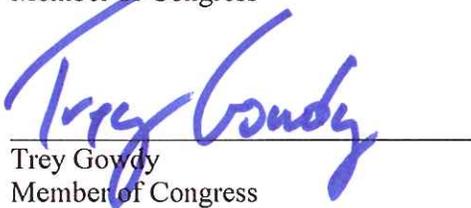
Mark Meadows
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Richard Hudson
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Robert Pittenger
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Trey Gowdy
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Lynn Westmoreland
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Glenn Thompson
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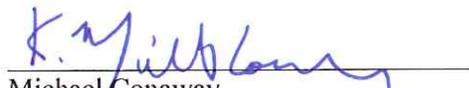


Bill Cassidy
Member of Congress

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Cynthia Lummis
Member of Congress

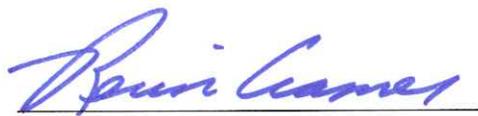

Bill Flores
Member of Congress

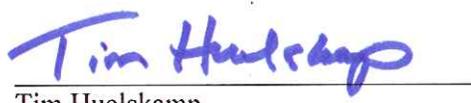

Michael Conaway
Member of Congress


Chris Stewart
Member of Congress

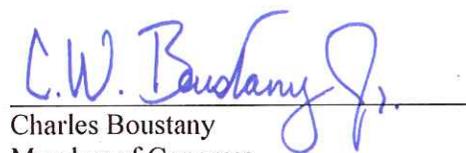

Steve Stivers
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Mark Amodei
Member of Congress

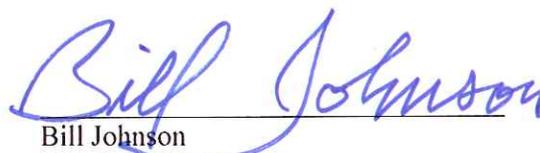

Kevin Cramer
Member of Congress

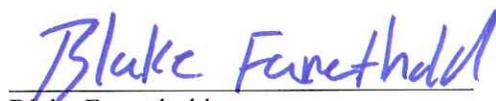

Tim Huelskamp
Member of Congress

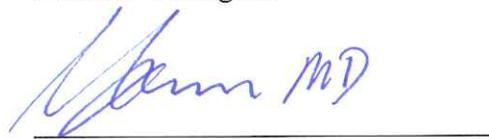

Henry Cuellar
Member of Congress


Charles Boustany
Member of Congress


Gene Green
Member of Congress


Bill Johnson
Member of Congress


Blake Farenthold
Member of Congress


Andy Harris
Member of Congress

Cc: The Honorable Kenneth L. Salazar, Secretary, Department of the Interior