

# TOWN OF SEABROOK ISLAND

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May 30, 2017

The Honorable Henry McMaster  
State House  
1100 Gervais Street  
Columbia, South Carolina 29201

Dear Governor McMaster:

On behalf of the residents and property owners of the Town of Seabrook Island, I would like to express our opposition to the policy set forth in the "Presidential Executive Order Implementing an America-First Offshore Energy Strategy" recently signed by President Trump which purports to encourage energy exploration and production in the Outer Continental Shelf in general, and the Bureau of Energy Management (BOEM) Mid-Atlantic and South Atlantic Planning Areas in particular.

In 2015 the Town of Seabrook Island, along with virtually every other coastal South Carolina community, formally protested against the inclusion of the Mid-Atlantic and South Atlantic planning areas in the Department of Interior's proposed 2017 – 2022 oil and gas leasing program. At that time, we expressed our concern for the potential for significant and adverse environmental impact on marine life, coastal wetlands, beaches and the tourism industry. Furthermore, we were skeptical of claims of potential economic benefit to the state of South Carolina. We thought that the potential adverse environmental impacts associated with constructing and operating offshore oil and gas industry and its supporting infrastructure would far outweigh any economic benefits to the state of South Carolina and our coastal communities.

We were pleased when the final 2017 – 2022 program, which was developed through a public process that took years to complete, specifically excluded lease sales in the Atlantic, Arctic and Pacific Oceans, focusing instead on development in the Gulf of Mexico where known resources and the best spill response capabilities exist. The President's Executive Order is specifically focused on putting those "off-limit" areas back up for consideration. The President's Executive Order provides that the Secretary of the Interior shall:

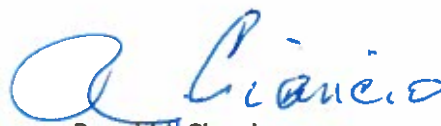
"give full consideration to revising the schedule of proposed oil and gas lease sales, . . . , so that it includes, . . . , annual lease sales, *to the maximum extent permitted by law*, in each of the following Outer Continental Shelf Planning Areas, as designated by the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (BOEM) (Planning Areas): Western Gulf of Mexico, Central Gulf of Mexico, Chukchi Sea, Beaufort Sea, Cook Inlet, Mid-Atlantic, and South Atlantic" [Emphasis Added].

We renew the concerns we expressed in 2015. In addition, we note that the President's Executive Order exacerbates those concerns as it includes provisions which, in part, would roll back safeguards for marine wildlife, diminish environmental protections and limit or reduce marine sanctuaries. Specifically, Section 5 of the President's Executive Order modifies the withdrawal of areas of the Outer Continental Shelf from leasing disposition, and provides in part as follows:

"Under the authority vested in me as President of the United States, including Section 12(a) of the Outer Continental Shelf Lands Act, 43 U.S.C. 1341(a), I hereby withdraw from disposition by leasing, for a time period without specific expiration, those areas of the Outer Continental Shelf designated as of July 14, 2008, as Marine Sanctuaries under the Marine Protection, Research, and Sanctuaries Act of 1972, 16 U.S.C. 1431-1434, 33 U.S.C. 1401 et seq."

In addition, the President's Executive Order appears to fast track harmful seismic testing and to truncate the opportunity for public review of and comment on the actions of the Department of Interior, as it orders a "streamlined approach for privately funded seismic data research and collection aimed at expeditiously determining the offshore energy resource potential within the Planning Areas." Thus, the likelihood that oil and gas exploration and drilling off the Atlantic Coast can become an actuality is greater than ever.

Very truly yours,



Ronald J. Ciancio  
Mayor

cc: Hon. Lindsey Graham  
Hon. Tim Scott  
Hon. Mark Sanford  
Hon. George E. "Chip" Campsen, III  
Hon. Peter McCoy