

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

September 16, 2009

The Honorable Ken Salazar
Secretary, Department of Interior
1849 C Street, NW
Washington, DC 20240

Re: Comment on Draft Five-Year Outer Continental Shelf (OCS) Oil and Gas Leasing Program

Dear Secretary Salazar,

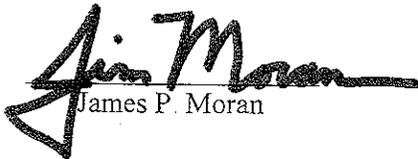
As members of the Virginia Congressional delegation we thank you for temporarily suspending Five-Year Outer Continental Shelf (OCS) Oil and Gas Leasing Program while you conducted a more thorough review. Bringing additional scientific facts and a more balanced and sustainable approach to developing new sources of energy, particularly your emphasis on using our oceans for generating renewable energy, are very much appreciated.

We hope this review will lead you to reach the same conclusion we have reached, that there should be no oil or gas drilling offshore Virginia and that the proposed lease sales, specifically Lease Sale 220 and one originally planned for 2012 and another for 2015 should be canceled. The ocean waters off Virginia enjoyed a moratorium on offshore drilling starting in 1990 and a Presidential withdrawal starting in 1998 for good reasons. The Mid-Atlantic beaches host a vibrant coastal tourism industry worth \$20 billion dollars in direct economic benefits. Our commercial fish and shellfish catches are worth over \$150 million per year. Our armed forces and NASA maintain extensive and exclusive use of some of this ocean for training, testing and missile launches.

The area off our coast contains many unique marine ecosystems such as deep submarine canyons, serves as the critical nursery of many fish stocks and blue crab larvae and hosts multiple threatened species of whales, sea turtles and other wildlife. Our coasts and ocean are judged to be very sensitive and productive. Even by the crude measures employed by the Minerals Management Service to rank such things, the Mid-Atlantic Planning area is the fourth most sensitive in the country and the second most productive. Today the Mid-Atlantic suffers from the effects of ocean warming, acidification, overfishing of some fish stocks and pollution from runoff. The impact of a major oil spill would be catastrophic. Minor oil spills or everyday chronic pollution from oil production would also take their toll.

We therefore respectfully ask that you remove all of the leasing plans from the revised 5 Year Drilling Plan

Sincerely,


James P. Moran


Robert C. Scott