

County of Brunswick
Office of the County Commissioners



**RESOLUTION IN OPPOSITION OF SEISMIC SURVEYING AND OIL AND GAS OFFSHORE
EXPLORATION AND DRILLING ON THE CONTINENTAL SHELF OFF THE COAST OF
NORTH CAROLINA**

WHEREAS, on January 29, 2015, the U.S. Department of the Interior released the draft lease sale schedule for 2017-2022 for the national oil and gas leasing program proposed for planning areas of the U.S. Outer Continental Shelf (OCS). After the mandatory consulting process, the final schedule was approved on January 17, 2017, and lease sales were prohibited in the Atlantic; and

WHEREAS, on January 4, 2018, the Department of the Interior released a new draft plan for 2019-2024 that dramatically expands oil and gas exploration and drilling into nearly all U.S. waters, including the Atlantic; and,

WHEREAS, a controversial aspect of the oil and gas exploration process is the use of seismic surveying to determine potential sites for drilling. The full impacts of seismic blasting are not fully understood by scientists, the oil and gas industry and the federal government; and,

WHEREAS, on March 5, 2015, a letter was sent to President Obama signed by 75 leading marine scientists expressing concern over the significant threat to marine life posed by the introduction of seismic oil and gas exploration along the U.S. mid-Atlantic and south Atlantic coasts. The letter further stated, "Opening the U.S. east coast to seismic airgun exploration poses an unacceptable risk of serious harm to marine life at the species and population levels, the full extent of which will not be understood until long after the harm occurs"; and,

WHEREAS, on June 23, 2017, the University of Tasmania – Institute for Marine and Arctic Study released new research showing that marine seismic surveys used in petroleum exploration could cause a two- to three-fold increase in mortality of adult and larval zooplankton, tiny animals that are eaten by fish and are a building block of most marine life; and,

WHEREAS, exploratory and commercial drilling, extraction, and transportation of offshore oil and gas resources pose a significant risk of spill; and

WHEREAS, offshore drilling requires substantial onshore infrastructure, such as pipelines and/or refineries, which will further risk the health and safety the environment, character and natural beauty of North Carolina's coast; and

WHEREAS, opposition to oil and gas exploration and drilling off the Outer Continental Shelf is a bipartisan effort among individuals, municipalities and other governing bodies. Indeed, every coastal governor from the Atlantic and Pacific oceans except one opposes oil and gas exploration and drilling off their coasts and are seeking waivers to become exempt; and,

WHEREAS, 33 North Carolina cities, towns and counties, and more than 140 municipalities on the East Coast have passed formal resolutions in opposition to seismic blasting and offshore drilling; and,

WHEREAS, on July 20, 2017, North Carolina Governor Roy Cooper announced his opposition to exploration and drilling stating, “It’s clear that opening North Carolina’s coast to oil and gas exploration and drilling would bring unacceptable risks to our economy, our environment, and our coastal communities—and for little potential gain”; and,

WHEREAS, the Commissioners of Brunswick County recognize that our region’s economic survival solely depends on the sustainability of the existing environment; and

WHEREAS, Brunswick County is committed to being a sound steward of the unique coastal environment, including the rare maritime forest, estuaries, marshes and pristine beaches on and around our regional coastal communities; and

WHEREAS, it is known that the 20 counties that comprise North Carolina’s coastal region generate more commercial and personal income, public revenues and employment opportunities than the petroleum and natural gas industry is estimated to generate for the State, specifically:

1. In 2016, a record \$22.9 billion in domestic visitor/tourism spending was realized in North Carolina, an increase of 4.3% over the previous record of \$21.9.
2. In 2016, North Carolina was the sixth most visited state in the nation. Eighty-nine percent of all domestic visitors that year came to North Carolina for pleasure purposes.
3. Out of the 100 counties in the State of North Carolina, in terms of travel expenditures, three of the top 10 counties were coastal counties in 2016.
4. In 2016, direct tourism employment in North Carolina was approximately 218,340 persons, an increase of 3.2% over 211,490 – with a direct tourism payroll of \$5.5 billion.
5. Visitors to North Carolina generated more than \$5.1 billion **PER DAY** in federal, state and local taxes in 2016.
6. The NC Division of Marine Fisheries (NCDENR) reported 2016 commercial fish landings in North Carolina to be worth \$94,049,803.
7. Brunswick County is ranked ninth among the one hundred counties in terms of expenditures. Tourists spent \$105 million in 2016, an increase of 6.8% over 2015.
8. Because of North Carolina’s tourism industry, each North Carolina household in 2016 saved \$497 in state and local taxes as a direct result of visitor spending in the state.

WHEREAS, visitors from all over the world come to enjoy the natural beauty of our clean beaches, salt and freshwater marshes, inlets, estuaries and tributaries; and

WHEREAS, Brunswick County and her surrounding coastal communities are rich in natural areas that provide sanctuary, nesting and breeding grounds for diverse groups of migratory birds, turtles, dolphin, whales, fish and other wildlife, some of which are on the endangered species list; and

WHEREAS, North Carolina’s coastal waters and natural habitats provide the world with some of the best wild-caught seafood, renowned for its freshness and exceptional quality; and

WHEREAS, the inherent risks to North Carolina’s 320 miles of valued coastline from seismic

surveying, offshore 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.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Brunswick County Commissioners supersede the July 6, 2015, RESOLUTION TO ADDRESS SEISMIC SURVEYS AND OFFSHORE DRILLING AND DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES with the RESOLUTION IN OPPOSITION OF SEISMIC SURVEYING AND OIL AND GAS OFFSHORE EXPLORATION AND DRILLING ON THE CONTINENTAL SHELF OFF THE COAST OF NORTH CAROLINA; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Brunswick County Commissioners stand in solidarity with North Carolina coastal communities and communities who may be affected by the onshore infrastructure supporting offshore exploration and drilling and who may suffer long-term social, economic and environmental impacts from offshore exploration and production of petroleum resources on the continental shelf off the coast of North Carolina.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Brunswick County Commissioners urge the Governor and the North Carolina General Assembly to oppose offshore petroleum production policies that risk the health, safety and sound environmental stewardship of North Carolina's coastline whose natural beauty attracts a proven tourism-driven economy.

This the 19th day of March, 2018.

Frank Williams, Chair
Brunswick County Commissioners

Attest:

Andrea White
Clerk to the Board