



STATE OF NEW HAMPSHIRE
OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

CHRISTOPHER T. SUNUNU
Governor

February 5, 2018

The Honorable Ryan Zinke
Secretary
U.S. Department of the Interior
1849 C Street, NW
Washington, D.C. 20240

Re: Response to BOEM's Request for Comments on Preparation of 2019-2024 National Outer Continental Shelf Oil and Gas Leasing Program

Dear Secretary Zinke,

I am writing to follow up on our productive conversation in regard to the Bureau of Ocean Management's (BOEM) proposed National Continental Shelf Oil and Gas Leasing Program (the plan). I appreciate your assurances that my opinion would be critical in determining the viability of drilling off of New Hampshire's Coasts, as proposed under the plan. I share your commitment to the public input process. Thank you for the opportunity to formally submit comments on behalf of the State of New Hampshire.

New Hampshire, perhaps more than any other state based on our size, history, and dependence on natural resources, could be devastated by any catastrophic man-made or natural event. New Hampshire's \$5.4 billion travel and tourism industry is central to our state economy. Tourists come here for the natural majesty of the state, including our beautiful Atlantic seacoast and numerous historic coastline communities. These same features play a large a role in our strategies to attract business and workforce here to keep this economy one of the strongest in the country.

In New Hampshire, we have a history of protecting our Seacoast and our long opposition to oil drilling off of our coast reflects that. It dates back to the 1970s when Olympic Oil sought to build a refinery off the New Hampshire coast and farmers, fishermen, environmentalists, and politicians, came together to soundly reject the plan.

For over 30 years, the current drilling moratorium has protected the North Atlantic from the adverse impacts of oil and gas exploration and development. Over that same time span, our tourism industry on the Seacoast has become increasingly popular with domestic and international visitors. Over 2 million visitors enjoy the recreational, cultural, and natural resources of our Seacoast each year, spending over \$1.4 billion and supporting 11,000 industry-related jobs in the region. New Hampshire and its visitors enjoy some of the cleanest and highest quality beaches in the country.

New Hampshire's coastline is also home to an important \$100 million commercial fisheries industry, supporting more than 2,700 jobs with an annual catch value exceeding \$17 million. Survey and extraction activities brought about by offshore drilling would directly displace fishing vessels. Some fishing operations might not be economically viable if forced to move to less productive or more distant fishing grounds. For over 400 years the fishing industry has been an integral part of New Hampshire's economy and culture. We are currently seeing an increase in estuarine aquaculture, with a growing shellfish industry.

107 North Main Street, State House - Rm 208, Concord, New Hampshire 03301
Telephone (603) 271-2121 • FAX (603) 271-7640
Website: <http://www.governor.nh.gov/> • Email: governorsununu@nh.gov
TDD Access: Relay NH 1-800-735-2964

Beyond our fishery industry, New Hampshire is home to one of the most important estuaries in the country, the Great Bay Estuary, covering 1,023 acres that include a diverse mix of open water, salt marshes, and open fields. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency has afforded special protection to the Great Bay Estuary as one of only 28 "estuaries of national significance." Unique ecosystems like Great Bay, with its marshes and estuaries, play an important role cleaning our coastal waters and creating critical wildlife habitat.

Upon reviewing the proposed plan, I strongly encourage you to reevaluate your decision to exclude the impacts of a catastrophic oil spill in the Net Social Value calculations. While I can appreciate the difficulty in quantifying the probability of a catastrophic oil spill, I believe that the stakes for New Hampshire's economy and the quality of life of Granite Staters is far too high to warrant its exclusion.

New Hampshire supports sound energy policies that can meet our needs today and tomorrow. We support responsible innovative solutions to meet these needs. However, we are steadfast in protecting our natural resources from drilling accidents and recognize the devastating impact that even a minor mishap could have on our small coastal shoreline.

Protecting the countries smallest shoreline is an immense responsibility. I hope you will consider the unique aspects of our situation and join me in opposing New Hampshire's inclusion in this plan.

Sincerely,



Christopher T. Sununu
Governor