



North Carolina Department of Environment and Natural Resources

Pat McCrory
Governor

John E. Skvarla, III
Secretary

October 31, 2014

Nadia Luhr, Legislative Counsel
NC Conservation Network
19 East Martin Street, Suite 300
Raleigh, NC 27601

Dear Ms. Luhr,

Thank you for your letter dated October 30, 2014, in which you raise concerns about a Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) meeting on the Mid-Atlantic Five Year Outer Continental Shelf Oil & Gas Leasing Program.

DENR is hosting an informational meeting on November 6 for federal and state agency staff and elected officials involved in the Mid-Atlantic Five Year Outer Continental Shelf Oil & Gas Leasing Program development process. The meeting will consist of a series of panel discussions on topics related to the exploration, leasing and development of offshore energy resources in the Mid-Atlantic. The panels are comprised of subject matter experts and include neither special interest groups nor industry representatives.

The meeting is by invitation only due in part to concerns raised by a participating federal agency. The inclusion of special interest groups and industry would allow for the potential of the appearance of influence on permit application reviews currently underway by the Obama Administration. Therefore, the joint decision was made to limit the invitation list to federal and state agencies and elected officials to avoid any potential for real or perceived conflicts of interest.

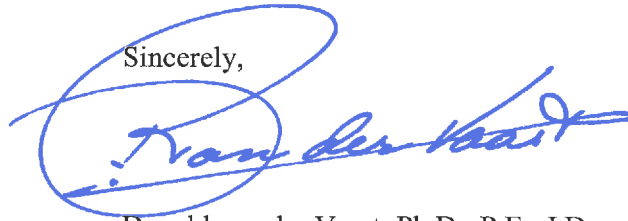
The November 6 meeting will be strictly informational and educational in nature and will not serve as a means for DENR or any participant to submit official comments or partake in the policymaking process. Pursuant to Section 18 of the OCS Lands Act, the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (BOEM) will present extensive opportunities for public engagement and comment throughout the OCS oil and gas leasing, exploration and development process. BOEM will provide equal opportunity for all stakeholders and interested parties to participate in the Five Year Program development process. It should also be noted that this meeting does not preclude each co-signer to request a meeting with federal agencies on the matter.

As I am sure you are aware, North Carolina law recognizes the value and importance of educational meetings amongst government agencies and issue experts. The state has a long history of holding regular meetings of this nature in the normal course of business to gain a better understanding of issues of mutual interest.

DENR supports the development of a responsible Five Year Program that includes practicable safeguards to eliminate or reduce impacts to human, marine and coastal environments; military and shipping operations; and fishing and recreational activities. We welcome input from all of North Carolina's constituents and are happy to schedule a time to meet with each co-signer individually or as group to discuss your concerns about offshore exploration and development.

Thank you for your time and attention.

Sincerely,



Donald van der Vaart, Ph.D., P.E., J.D.
Deputy Secretary and Energy Policy Advisor
Department of Environment and Natural Resources

Cc: Kemp Burdette, Executive Director, Cape Fear River Watch
June Blotnick, Executive Director, Clean Air Carolina
Elizabeth Ouzts, State Director, Environment North Carolina
Todd Miller, Executive Director, NC Coastal Federation
Brian Buzby, Executive Director, NC Conservation Network
Carrie Clark, Executive Director, NC League of Conservation Voters
Molly Diggins, State Director, NC Sierra Club
Jacqueline Savitz, Vice President for U.S. Oceans, Oceana
Derb S. Carter, Jr., Director, Chapel Hill Office, Southern Environmental Law Center
Julie Mayfield, Executive Director, Western North Carolina Alliance

Secretary Sally Jewell, Department of the Interior
Acting Director Walter Cruickshank, Bureau of Ocean Energy Management
Chief Environmental Officer William Brown, Bureau of Ocean Energy Management
Jolie Harrison, Permits and Conservation Division, National Marine Fisheries Service
Mitch Gillespie, Assistant Secretary, N.C. Dept. of Environment and Natural Resources