

THE FACTS BEHIND ATLANTIC OFFSHORE DRILLING

Southern Environmental Law Center

The Southeast Rejects Offshore Drilling

- The prospect of opening the Atlantic to offshore drilling has resulted in intense opposition along the Southeast coast with over 200 East Coast local governments passing resolutions against drilling, joining state leaders and hundreds of businesses voicing their opposition to Atlantic offshore drilling and seismic testing.
- Governors on both sides of the aisle, including [Gov. Roy Cooper](#), [Gov. Ralph Northam](#), and [Gov. Henry McMaster](#), have requested that their states be omitted from the next five-year leasing plan.
- The U.S. Navy has said offshore drilling could disrupt training, put military readiness at risk, and interfere with Navy and NASA operations off Virginia's coast, weakening a significant sector of the state's economy.

Drilling Threatens the Southeast's Economy

- Drilling and the intensive industrialization and infrastructure that come with it are incompatible with communities along the Southeast coast that depend on tourism.
- In 2016, visitors to the coastal regions of Virginia, the Carolinas, and Georgia spent over \$15 billion dollars, according to the U.S. Travel Association. Those visitors supported tens of thousands of workers in the travel and tourism industry.
- The travel and tourism industry in our coastal regions in provided workers with \$3.2 billion in wages in 2016.

Drilling Would Be Environmentally Devastating

- In a worst-case scenario, a single oil spill from a rig, tanker, or pipeline would devastate the healthy waters and clean beaches that are critical to coastal economies.
- Years after the *Deepwater Horizon* disaster, lasting damage from the spill continues as buried oil resurfaces, birds lose key nesting islands, dolphins become sick at higher rates, and fisheries struggle.
- Even routine spills and accidents, like those regularly seen off the [coast of Louisiana](#), would pose environmental and health-related challenges for coastal communities.

The Federal Decision-Making Process

- In January, 2018, the Trump administration [announced its draft 2019-2024 offshore leasing plan](#), proposing to open nearly all U.S. waters to offshore drilling, including the Mid- and South Atlantic. Thirteen of 14 East Coast governors have voiced opposition to seismic blasting and offshore drilling. And more than 1.3 million public comments opposing the Trump administration proposal have flooded into the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management.
- Just two days later, then-[Interior Secretary Zinke issued a statement](#) explaining he would be removing Florida from consideration due to local opposition and economic concerns, ignoring similar opposition across the Southeast. Contradictory follow-up statements from the administration have triggered even more confusion and doubts about the process.
- Ten East Coast attorneys general have joined a lawsuit filed by conservation organizations and several coastal cities opposing seismic blasting.
- These decisions come as the administration also plans to [roll back safety rules](#) put in place after the *Deepwater Horizon* disaster, making drilling more dangerous for those who depend on the coast and its fisheries.

