

November 3, 2015

The Honorable Penny Pritzker  
Secretary  
U.S. Department of Commerce  
1401 Constitution Avenue, NW  
Washington, DC 20230

Dear Secretary Pritzker:

As bipartisan governors of Mid-Atlantic States, we support policies that encourage the safe and responsible exploration of offshore oil, natural gas and renewable energy. The potential exists for significant amounts of recoverable fossil fuels and power generation wind in the Outer Continental Shelf (OCS) offshore North Carolina and Virginia. Opening up the Atlantic OCS for energy development and expanding revenue sharing to all participating coastal states support our shared goal of providing our citizens with affordable and reliable energy resources.

New geological and geophysical (G&G) surveys are necessary to provide the critical data required for informed exploration, development and environmental decisions. Most seismic information for the Atlantic is more than three decades old. With advanced seismic data collection and computer modeling, the industry will be better equipped to safely recover oil and gas resources and site offshore wind energy turbine generators.

Last summer, the U.S. Department of the Interior approved a framework that allows G&G survey firms to submit applications to map potential oil and natural gas fields in the Mid- and South Atlantic. Several G&G companies filed applications in 2014 with the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) to obtain Incidental Harassment Authorizations (IHAs) as part of the regulatory approval process to acquire oil and gas seismic and other G&G data in the Mid- and South Atlantic. Two IHA requests for seismic acquisition in waters off Alaska have been processed since that time, yet the NMFS has been slow in processing IHA applications for the Mid- and South Atlantic OCS. Additional delays were created when a 30 day comment period was added to the application review process.

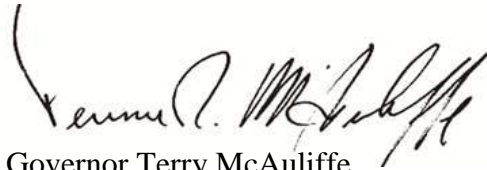
According to the NOAA Fisheries, the NMFS typically acknowledges receipt of an application within two to six weeks of the submission of a complete application as a first step in a process that generally lasts six or more months. We are concerned that the delays in the IHA process could jeopardize the timely acquisition of seismic data that will support informed decision-making by Mid-Atlantic states.

We respectfully request that you look into the processing of IHA applications to determine the cause of any delays and ensure that IHA issuance is completed in a timely manner. Please contact Dr. Donald van der Vaart, Secretary of the North Carolina Department of Environmental Quality, at 919-707-8600 or [donald.vandervaart@ncdenr.gov](mailto:donald.vandervaart@ncdenr.gov) if we can provide you with any additional information in support of our request.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Pat McCrory". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, prominent "P" and "M".

Governor Pat McCrory  
State of North Carolina

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Terry McAuliffe". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, prominent "T" and "M".

Governor Terry McAuliffe  
Commonwealth of Virginia

cc: Eileen Sobeck, Assistant Administrator for Fisheries, NOAA  
Dr. Kathryn Sullivan, Under Secretary of Commerce for Oceans and Atmosphere and NOAA  
Administrator