



COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA

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VIA ELECTRONIC MAIL

Jolie Harrison, Chief
Permits and Conservation Division
Office of Protected Resources
National Marine Fisheries Service
1315 East-West Highway
Silver Spring, Maryland 20910
Email: ITP.Laws@noaa.gov

Notice of Proposed Authorizations 82 FR 26244 (June 6, 2017)

Dear Chief Harrison:

I oppose the issuance of authorizations that would allow geophysical survey activities in the Atlantic Ocean as noticed in the Federal Register on June 6, 2017. It was disappointing that the Administration rescinded the moratorium on seismic testing permits, but NMFS should not issue the proposed authorizations. Their issuance is but a first step in the oil and gas exploration process.

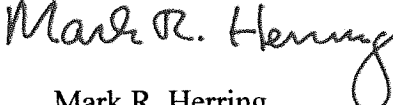
Oil and gas exploration and drilling off the coast of Virginia poses unacceptable risks not only to the environment, but also to Virginia's coastal economy. Virginia has a thriving tourist industry and vibrant fisheries. The Chesapeake Bay is one of the world's most important estuaries, and is a critical part of Virginia's economy and culture. Millions of dollars have been invested to protect and improve the Bay. All would be put at risk by the proposed seismic activity and eventual oil and gas exploration and production. Moreover, I am concerned that offshore exploration and drilling will interfere with the operations and training exercises of the U.S. Navy, which operates its largest base in Norfolk.

In June, the City Council of Virginia Beach voted unanimously to adopt a resolution opposing offshore drilling. The Virginia Beach restaurant and hotel associations also are opposed.

Accomack and Northampton Counties are also on record opposing offshore drilling, joining more than 120 municipalities in opposition. The environmental and economic risks simply outweigh any benefit.

I appreciate the opportunity to comment on this proposal and trust that once you have considered this and other comments you will deny the permit applications.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mark R. Herring". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looping "H" and a long tail on the "g".

Mark R. Herring