

## **BUSINESSES, SCIENTISTS, AND THE GENERAL PUBLIC SUPPORT PERMANENT BAN ON OFFSHORE DRILLING IN ARCTIC OCEAN AND PORTIONS OF THE ATLANTIC OCEAN**

***Not Just a “Green Thing” -- Diverse Group of Interests, Experts and People Said: “Make it Permanent!”; Public Polling Shows 59 Percent of Americans Back Permanent Protection***

**WASHINGTON, D.C. – December 22, 2016** – The Obama Administration’s announcement on Tuesday to permanently ban offshore drilling in the large majority of our Arctic Ocean and important portions of the Atlantic enjoys widespread support from coastal businesses, leading scientists, editorial boards, and the general public. In recent weeks and months, tens of thousands of businesses stepped up to say they do not want offshore oil exploration off the East Coast and in the Alaskan Arctic. Members of Congress, from Maine to Florida and California to Washington, also called on President Obama to protect the Arctic and Atlantic Coast by permanently barring offshore drilling.

President Obama’s step to go beyond the current five-year moratorium on offshore Arctic and Atlantic drilling firmly addresses climate change and provides meaningful assurances to those whose fate is tied to the health and vitality of these publicly-owned waters. Although there’s still more work that can be done to ensure protection of our east coast beaches and coastal communities.

Far from being limited to environmentalists, backing for the measure came from widely diverse quarters. Just how broad and widespread is the support for this step that further cements the environmental legacy of the Obama Administration? Consider this timeline:

- **December 20** – Alaskan Native leaders applauded the action taken by the Obama Administration in a [statement](#): **“From Nuiqsut to Hooper Bay, we would like to thank you for today’s announcement protecting the Arctic Ocean. We thank you as subsistence users, and together we seek to make sure that future generations can continue to live off the clean waters of the Arctic Ocean long into the future, like they have for thousands of years.”**
- **December 16** – The Los Angeles Times and the Charleston (SC) Post and Courier editorialized that President Obama should permanently protect both the Atlantic and Arctic Oceans from offshore drilling. The Los Angeles Times [editorial board wrote](#): **“Not only is the beauty of the coast imperiled by drilling, but so is the ‘clean coast economy,’ an estimated \$44-billion, 650,000 job industry rooted in tourism, commercial and recreational fishing, leisure boating and other activities not tied to pumping oil from beneath the sea. Obama should go further and ban drilling in federal waters in the Arctic and off the Atlantic coast.”** The Post and Courier [editorial board wrote](#): **“the current president can, and should, act to minimize the threat of the next president opening U.S. waters in the Arctic — and the Atlantic — to the risks of offshore drilling.”**
- **December 15** - Esau Sinnok, Inupiaq (Alaskan Native) leader [wrote](#): **“Permitting oil operations in our ocean carries far more consequences than most realize. Drilling would threaten our oceans, our climate, and our communities, but it would also continue to change the migration patterns of our walrus, seals, and whales; the pattern that they’ve been migrating for time immemorial. Animals have to go a lot farther out in the ocean, and that means as they go farther out we’d have to go farther out just to hunt for them. That’s a really big struggle. We are already unable to hunt the way we have for thousands of years. It all goes back to what the effects of drilling are -- the thin ice. We aren’t able to reach the animals we rely on for survival because the ice is so thin we can’t get to them.”**
- **December 14** – The President of the League of Women Voters, a nonpartisan political organization representing female voters with 1,000 local chapters and offices in all 50 states, [opined](#): **“There is simply no place for Arctic or Atlantic drilling in a climate-safe, clean energy future. Not in the**

**next year. Not in the next five years. Not ever. It will never make sense to put our climate and these drill-free waters at risk this way.”**

- **December 12 and 13** – Two letters from Atlantic businesses were sent to the President urging him to permanently ban offshore drilling in the Atlantic Ocean. The first [letter](#) signed by 66 business owners and the second [letter](#) signed by over 35,000 businesses from Maine to Florida called on the President to permanently protect the Atlantic Coast from offshore drilling and seismic testing. The latter letter stated: **“Protecting the Atlantic Coast’s tourism, recreation and commercial fishing economies from offshore drilling activities, petroleum industrialization and oil spills is a top priority for the tens of thousands of businesses represented in our letter”**
- **December 1** – The Stockholm Environment Institute in cooperation with the Carbon Tracker Initiative released a [report](#) showing that if the U.S. and the rest of the world remain committed to the Paris Climate Agreement and limit global temperature rise to 2°C, offshore drilling would require oil prices of \$140 per barrel in order to be financially viable. The report found: **“New U.S. offshore oil is neither needed nor consistent with a 2°C pathway, since offshore projects are costly and highly capital-intensive, likely requiring oil prices of \$140 per barrel or more to justify investment. In a 2°C world, oil demand would be expected to fall, and prices would likely stay low as well. Furthermore, meeting a 2°C limit means limiting CO2 to a cumulative carbon budget. Any CO2 associated with new offshore oil projects would thus need to be made up elsewhere by projects not being developed. Economic efficiency would suggest that, given the higher expense of offshore oil, it should be the last priority for new development.”**
- **November 28** - Nearly three dozen leading scientists, including officials with the federal government during the Obama administration – [asked President Barack Obama](#) to permanently protect the Arctic region from offshore drilling and exploration. The scientists said: **“the hypersensitivity of Arctic ecosystems, combined with our obvious inability to respond to significant spills under Arctic conditions, means that we are taking risks that we cannot manage; we are essentially crossing our fingers that we will cause no severe, adverse events such as the Exxon Valdez or Deepwater Horizon oil spills.”**
- **November 18** - Following the [Obama administration’s announcement](#) to temporarily halt exploration in the Chukchi and Beaufort Seas off the Alaskan coast and reversal of a previous plan to allow companies to drill for oil and natural gas in the Atlantic Ocean off of four southeastern states, a broad coalition of 22 environmental and conservation groups [issued a statement](#) urging the President to go even further to protect the Arctic and Atlantic regions by using his powers as President to permanently ban offshore drilling and seismic testing before leaving office. The groups wrote: **“The President, in his remaining days in office, has the power to further protect our climate and coasts by permanently barring oil drilling in the Arctic and Atlantic oceans. Doing so would provide the certainty the country richly deserves as to the future of these publicly owned waters, making sure drilling never gets a foothold there.”**
- **November 18** - Eight prominent Latino groups issued a statement in support of a permanent ban on Arctic and Atlantic drilling. [The groups said](#): **“President Obama has made the right choice to defend the Arctic and Atlantic coasts from offshore drilling—for the sake of our healthy oceans and our climate. We now ask that he permanently protect and preserve our publicly owned ocean resources and not turn them over to private oil companies. Recent polling shows that most Americans support permanent protection of the Arctic and Atlantic, and support among Hispanics and African Americans polled is overwhelming.”** Permanent protection of the Arctic and Atlantic would be far more difficult for the incoming Trump administration to unravel than the current five-year lease plan announced on Friday.
- **November 18** - Experts point out that a permanent ban on drilling cannot be wiped out with the stroke of a pen by the new President. [As Grist notes](#): **“Putting off-shore areas off-limits to drilling is not the same as naming a national monument, but it’s similar in that it uses a presidential power**

outside the normal rule-making process. To repeal permanent protection, Congress would need to change the underlying law, the Outer Continental Shelf Lands Act, or pass stand-alone legislation.” The *Los Angeles Times* also noted that [overturning a permanent drilling ban is not a simple matter](#).

- **November 16** - Congressman Ted W. Lieu (D-CA) and Congressman Frank Pallone, Jr. (D-NJ) both urged the President to go beyond a five-year moratorium and permanently ban drilling in the Arctic and Atlantic. Congressman Pallone, Jr. in a [letter to the President said](#): “**I write again to respectfully request that you use your authority under section 12(a) of the Outer Continental Shelf Lands Act to permanently protect both the Atlantic Ocean and the Arctic Ocean from any future offshore oil and gas leasing.**” [Congressman Lieu, said](#): “it is clear that sparing the Arctic Ocean from drilling would benefit United States national security. Having served on active duty, I understand that oil exploration in the Arctic is contrary to our country’s interests.”
- **November 14** – A broad coalition of environmental, women and health groups including Alaska Wilderness League, Defenders of Wildlife, Earthjustice, Environment America, Green Latinos, League of Conservation Voters, League of Women Voters, Moms Clean Air Force, National Hispanic Medical Association, NextGen Climate, NRDC, REDOIL, Sierra Club and Voces Verdes began a [print and digital ad campaign](#) urging the President to permanently protect the Arctic and Atlantic from offshore drilling. The full page print ad appeared in the Washington Post and digital ads will run on social media and news websites through December.
- **November 6** – The Wilmington (DE) News Journal and other Atlantic Coast Gannett publications published an op-ed article from the director of Environment New Jersey, Doug O’Malley, calling on the President to permanently ban drilling in both the Atlantic and Arctic. [O’Malley opined](#): “**The president can decide the fate of our oceans, not just for five years — but for good. Obama has already done this for Bristol Bay and other ocean waters. Now he should permanently protect the entire Arctic and Atlantic oceans. Our climate, our oceans, Atlantic fishing, tourism and our coastal economies deserve that certainty.**”
- **November 3** – Local community and business leaders from six Atlantic Coast states representing millions of East Coast residents participate in a news event to urge the Obama White House to permanently ban offshore drilling and exploration. (For a transcript or to hear streaming audio from the news event, go to [stopthedrill.org](#).) Frank Knapp, president and CEO, South Carolina Small Business Chamber of Commerce, said: “**It really is time for the President to use his authority to permanently protect the Atlantic Coast and our vibrant coastal economies forever.**” Queen Quet, Chiefess of the Gullah/Geechee Nation, said: “**We want the President to stop seismic guns from being tested off here in the Atlantic...we literally live in the water. And coastal resources are inextricably tied to the sustainability of Gullah/Geechee cultural heritage because of the fact that we live in and from the sea.**”
- **October 27** – The Business Alliance for Protecting the Atlantic Coast (BAPAC), representing over 12,000 businesses and 500,000 commercial fishing families, [sent a letter to President Obama](#) indicating that the signers want a permanent offshore drilling ban. The letter states the groups “**strongly oppose geological and geophysical (G&G) activities in the Atlantic Ocean, including but not limited to seismic airgun testing. Seismic airgun testing threatens our vibrant local coastal economies and is the first step towards dangerous offshore drilling ... With the Atlantic Ocean withdrawn from the current offshore drilling plans, seismic airgun testing is unnecessary, would significantly impact coastal economies—in particular our commercial fishing and tourism industries—and should not proceed ... Seismic invites offshore drilling and the industrialization of our coast.**”
- **October 13** – The Natural Resources Defense Council and the League of Conservation Voters [released survey findings](#) showing that 59 percent of Americans – including 84 percent of Democrats, 63 percent of Independents and 67 percent of millennials – would support permanently protecting the Arctic and Atlantic Ocean from offshore drilling.

- **October 6** – A group of 14 Democratic Senators delivered a letter to President Obama asking him to permanently protect the Atlantic Ocean and Arctic from oil and gas drilling. **“Using this authority to permanently protect these areas would ensure that important industries in our coastal states such as fishing and tourism are protected, that we do not despoil our beaches and coastlines...and that we align our long-term federal energy decisions with a climate-safe future.”**
- **September 28** – A letter from 74 Members of the U.S. House of Representatives is sent to the White House stating: “The United States must continue to lead the fight against global warming not only by committing to clean energy alternatives, but also by closing the door on new, dangerous and environmentally harmful fossil fuel extraction. Protecting the Atlantic and Arctic coastlines against future oil and gas extraction would send a powerful signal to the world that the United States is fully committed to delivering on our climate commitments. It would help defend our communities and future generations against the health, environmental, and economic impacts of climate change and the possibility of a catastrophic oil spill. Plain and simple, we do not need and we cannot afford to expand drilling into these sensitive areas.”
- **February 16** – Over 360 Atlantic Coast businesses sent a letter urging the Obama Administration to take the Atlantic out of the proposed program for oil and gas drilling on the Outer Continental Shelf. The joint letter states: “... according to the Energy Information Administration, there is only about 209 days’ worth of oil and 13 months’ worth of natural gas in the Atlantic Ocean. The potential short-term economic gain drilling would bring to our economy is not worth sacrificing the immense and sustained value our coastal tourism and fishing industries bring to Atlantic Coast states and the entire United States. From our local businesses to bustling boardwalks and populated beaches, it is no wonder families frequent our beaches and people come from all over to experience the wonders of the Atlantic Coast.”

For a full overview of local municipalities, businesses interests, fishing groups, state and local elected officials, Members of Congress, and other stakeholders opposed to offshore drilling, go to [www.stophedrill.org](http://www.stophedrill.org).

#### **MEDIA CONTACTS:**

Rachel Richardson, for Environment America, (971) 570-1161 or [rachel@environmentamerica.org](mailto:rachel@environmentamerica.org)  
 David Willett, for League of Conservation Voters, (202) 454-4598 or [David.Willett@lcv.org](mailto:David.Willett@lcv.org)  
 Anne Hawke, for Natural Resources Defense Council, (202) 513-6263 or [ahawke@nrdc.org](mailto:ahawke@nrdc.org)  
 Alex Frank, (703) 276-3264 or [afrank@hastingsgroup.com](mailto:afrank@hastingsgroup.com).

###

**Environment America** is a federation of state-based citizen-funded environmental advocacy organizations. We fight to protect the places you love and advance the environmental values we share. Visit us at [www.environmentamerica.org](http://www.environmentamerica.org).

**The League of Conservation Voters** works to turn environmental values into national, state and local priorities. LCV, in collaboration with our state LCV partners, advocates for sound environmental laws and policies, holds elected officials accountable for their votes and actions, and elects pro-environment candidates who will champion our priority issues. Visit us at [www.lcv.org](http://www.lcv.org), and follow us on Twitter [@LCVoters](https://twitter.com/LCVoters).

**The Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC)** is an international nonprofit environmental organization with more than 2 million members and online activists. Since 1970, our lawyers, scientists, and other environmental specialists have worked to protect the world’s natural resources, public health, and the environment. NRDC has offices in New York City; Washington, D.C.; Los Angeles; San Francisco; Chicago; Bozeman, Montana; and Beijing. Visit us at [www.nrdc.org](http://www.nrdc.org) and follow us on Twitter [@NRDC](https://twitter.com/NRDC).