

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Media Contacts:

Rachel Bosworth, 631-220-1220, rachelbosworth.com

Adrienne Esposito, 631-384-1378, aesposito@citizenscampaign.org

Anne Hawke, 646-823-4518, ahawke@nrdc.org

Jillian M. Liner, 607-254-2437, jliner@audubon.org

Chip Weiskotten, 518-669-3936, cweiskotten@wcs.org

New York, Atlantic Coastal Groups Reject Trump Administration Offshore Drilling Plan

Opponents of Draft Drilling Plan Crowd New York State Assembly Hearing

SMITHTOWN, NY (Feb. 14, 2018) – Elected officials and environmental leaders packed the auditorium in the William H. Rogers Building today to voice opposition to the Trump Administration’s draft proposed program for offshore oil and gas leasing. New York State Assembly Members Steve Englebright, Christine Pellegrino, and Anthony D’Urso hosted the hearing as an alternative to a public meeting to be convened tomorrow by the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management in Albany—far from the coastal residents most likely to be on the front lines of an oil spill disaster.

The administration has proposed the most sweeping drilling plan of any administration, ever, with virtually all federal waters off all coastal states at risk; it calls for nine lease sales for the Atlantic Region, stretching from the Florida Straits to Maine.

“Trump’s polluters-first agenda is an oil industry dream that threatens the hundreds of thousands of New York jobs and billions of dollars that depend on clean oceans and abundant fish and wildlife,” said Alison Chase, Senior Policy Analyst for oceans at the **Natural Resources Defense Council**. “Our state leaders are providing an important forum today for the public to weigh in on this dangerous proposal.”

“New Yorkers are united in saying NO to this risky, dangerous scheme that will turn our oceans over to the oil companies and jeopardize our climate, coastlines and communities. Oil and water do not mix. Oil spills do not respect state boundaries, therefore, an oil spill anywhere along the Atlantic Coast can impact our beaches, tourism, marine life, and our way of life,” said Adrienne Esposito, Executive Director of the **Citizens Campaign for the Environment**.

“The risks presented by offshore drilling are never confined to a local area, and far exceed any economic benefits. After BP’s 2010 *Deepwater Horizon* rig explosion, oil polluted shorelines from Texas to Florida, devastating coastal economies and tourism, as well as severely impacting wildlife like birds, dolphins, and endangered whales for generations to come. An equivalent disaster in the Atlantic could coat beaches from Savannah to Boston,” said Brian Langloss, New York Campaign Organizer for **Oceana**. “Oil spills don’t respect state lines and New Yorkers need to speak out loudly against this rash and ill-informed plan to turn our beach towns into oil towns.”

“Early on in my career I was asked what was the worst stranding I had ever seen and I replied, the ones that we could prevent. I worked with many organizations to respond to sea turtles affected by the BP oil spill, and saw firsthand the devastation of a preventable disaster. With the increased sightings of whales, dolphins, sharks and other marine life in the New York Bight, projects that once seemed to have a nominal impact on marine life could be significantly more detrimental today,” said Rob DiGiovanni, Founder and Chief Scientist of the **Atlantic Marine Conservation Society**.

Long before drilling begins, the search for oil and gas deposits beneath the seafloor is harmful to marine life and the jobs it supports. In 2015, seventy-five marine scientists cautioned that the proposed introduction of seismic exploration along the East Coast could have “significant, long-lasting, and widespread impacts on the reproduction and survival” of both fish and marine mammal populations in the region.

“This is insulting to New Yorkers, as well as coastal communities up and down the East Coast, who went on the record just last year saying that they don't want offshore oil drilling. Guess what? The people that live on the coast still don't want offshore oil drilling,” said Matt Gove, Mid-Atlantic Policy Manager, **Surfrider Foundation**.

“Ryan Zinke and Donald Trump are picking a fight they will not win. Under the leadership of Governor Andrew Cuomo, New York is establishing itself as a national leader on offshore wind, creating thousands of good family-wage jobs and reducing our reliance on fossil fuels. Opening our coast to offshore drilling threatens progress on climate action and economic development, and New Yorkers are united in opposition to this plan,” said Shay O'Reilly, Organizing Representative for the **Sierra Club**.

“Drill, baby, drill is truly a step backward for U.S. energy policy that will no doubt benefit a few financially while leading to irreparable harm of the planet. Instead of doubling down on a continued dependency of fossil fuels, the Trump administration should be leading the world in promoting renewable energy sources like solar and wind,” said Aaron Virgin, Vice President of **Group for the East End**.

Jon Dohlin, Director of the **Wildlife Conservation Society's New York Aquarium**, said, “In recent decades, the health of New York seascape has been improving and we're seeing an encouraging resurgence of wildlife off our shores. Oil and gas development not only threatens some of our most endangered and iconic species – like the North Atlantic right whale – it can be devastating to our entire marine ecosystem, as well as tourism and the jobs, onshore and off, that depend on a healthy ocean.”

“Long Island's coast and marine habitats support important populations of birds like the Red Knot, Piping Plover, American Oystercatcher, Roseate Tern and multiple species of shearwaters, and are also critical to the local economies. Audubon does not support expanding oil and gas lease sales to areas off the Atlantic Coast—it is too risky for the birds and communities,” said Jillian Liner, **Audubon New York's Director of Bird Conservation**. “We look forward to continuing to work with our state leadership to prevent the expansion of offshore drilling in the Atlantic.”

###

The **Atlantic Marine Conservation Society's** (AMCS) mission is to promote conservation of the marine environment through action, which is accomplished through education, research, and response. AMCS is the lead large whale response organization in New York State, and also conducts stranding investigations on deceased marine mammals and sea turtles. The non-profit organization conducts research projects and partners with several other organizations within the stranding response community to gain a better understanding of the marine environment, its inhabitants, and what we can all do to promote conservation.

As a leading state program of the National Audubon Society, **Audubon New York** (Audubon NY) works with a network of 50,000 members, 27 local Audubon Chapters, seven sanctuaries and nature centers and thousands of annual visitors, volunteers, and partners to achieve its mission of protecting birds and their habitats through science, advocacy, education, and on-the-ground conservation programs.

Citizens Campaign for the Environment (CCE) empowers communities and advocates solutions for our shared environment and public health and is supported by over 80,000 members throughout New York State and Connecticut. www.citizenscampaign.org

Group for the East End protects and restores the environment of eastern Long Island, New York through professional advocacy and education. They inspire people to embrace a conservation ethic and to take action in their local community. The organization was established in Bridgehampton in 1972 to serve as a community advocate for conservation in response to broad-based community concern about the future development of the region. The Group employs a full-time staff of professional planners, natural resource specialists, and environmental educators that bring over 100 years of collective land use, education, and public advocacy experience to the local community. Over the years, the Group has developed a reputation for achieving lasting conservation success with the support of broad-based civic, business, and elected constituencies.

The **Natural Resources Defense Council** (NRDC) is an international nonprofit environmental organization with more than 3 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, MT, and Beijing. Visit us at www.nrdc.org and follow us on Twitter @NRDC.

Oceana is the largest international advocacy organization solely dedicated to ocean conservation. We focus on winning policy victories that achieve measurable outcomes in making our oceans as rich, healthy, and abundant as they once were. www.oceana.org

The Sierra Club is the United States's oldest environmental organization, fighting to explore, enjoy, and protect the planet with over 3 million members and supporters nationwide. www.sierraclub.org

The Surfrider Foundation is a non-profit grassroots organization dedicated to the protection and enjoyment of our world's oceans, waves and beaches through a powerful network. Founded in 1984 by a handful of visionary surfers in Malibu, California, the Surfrider Foundation now maintains over 500,000 supporters, activists and members, with more than 80 volunteer-led chapters and 60 clubs in the U.S., and more than 400 victories protecting our coasts. Learn more at surfrider.org.

Wildlife Conservation Society saves wildlife and wild places worldwide through science, conservation action, education, and inspiring people to value nature. To achieve our mission, WCS, based at the Bronx Zoo, harnesses the power of its Global Conservation Program in nearly 60 nations and in all the world's oceans and its five wildlife parks in New York City, visited by 4 million people annually. WCS combines its expertise in the field, zoos, and aquarium to achieve its conservation mission. Visit: newsroom.wcs.org Follow: @WCSNewsroom. For more information: 347-840-1242.