



# Town of Southern Shores

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## **RESOLUTION IN RESPONSE TO BOEM'S REQUEST FOR INFORMATION REGARDING THE 11TH NATIONAL OUTER CONTINENTAL SHELF OIL AND GAS LEASING PROGRAM**

**Resolution #2025.07.01**

**WHEREAS**, the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (BOEM), pursuant to Section 18(f)(5) of the Outer Continental Shelf Lands Act (43 U.S.C. 1344(f)(5)) and 30 CFR 556.202, has requested information from coastal states concerning the potential impacts of future offshore oil and gas development as part of the development of the 11th National OCS Oil and Gas Leasing Program; and

**WHEREAS**, BOEM has requested that states submit specific information concerning the environmental, economic, and social impacts of Outer Continental Shelf (OCS) development activities, including their relationship to coastal zone management programs and potential impacts to marine and coastal environments and economies.

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED** that the Southern Shores Town Council hereby submits the following information in direct response to BOEM's request for input:

### **Coastal Zone Management Programs**

The Town of Southern Shores supports and participates in the North Carolina Coastal Area Management Act (CAMA), developed under Section 305 and 306 of the Coastal Zone Management Act of 1972. The goals of this program prioritize conservation, protection of natural resources, and sustainable development. Offshore oil and gas activities, including seismic testing, exploration, and drilling, pose direct risks to these goals by threatening sensitive ecosystems, increasing the risk of oil spills, and introducing industrial infrastructure incompatible with the coastal character of the Outer Banks.

### **Environmental Risk and Potential Damage**

The risks associated with OCS oil and gas activity include catastrophic oil spills, chronic pollution, habitat degradation, and disruption of marine life through intense underwater noise from seismic testing. These risks threaten essential habitats in nearby federal and state-protected areas such as Cape Hatteras National Seashore, Pea Island National Wildlife Refuge, and multiple designated Essential Fish Habitats including salt marshes, oyster reefs, and seagrass beds. The cumulative impact on marine biodiversity, water quality, and shoreline integrity is incompatible with existing conservation and resource protection objectives.

### **Other Uses of the Sea and Seabed**

The waters off the town of Southern Shores and the greater Outer Banks support robust commercial and recreational fishing industries, research and education programs, maritime transportation, and a thriving tourism-based economy. Offshore oil and gas development creates potential user conflicts, limiting public access, introducing navigation hazards, and degrading the aesthetic and ecological quality essential to these uses.

### **Equitable Sharing of Developmental Benefits and Environmental Risks**

The Outer Banks region would assume disproportionate environmental and economic risks associated with OCS development while receiving minimal long-term benefit. Energy companies would profit from resource extraction, while coastal communities bear the consequences of potential spills, degraded tourism, fisheries loss, and the costs of emergency preparedness and response. There is no equitable mechanism currently in place that ensures local communities share in financial returns or have adequate resources to manage increased risks.

### **Economic and Employment Impacts**

In 2024, tourism generated over \$2.1 billion in visitor spending in Dare County alone and supported over 13,000 jobs. North Carolina as a whole reported \$36.7 billion in travel spending and over 230,000 tourism-related jobs. The economic value of tourism, fisheries, and clean ocean industries far exceeds the speculative and long-term returns from offshore drilling. Any disruption to these sectors from oil and gas activity would cause disproportionate economic harm and threaten local employment stability, tax revenue, and property values.

### **OCS Resource Values and Environmental Impacts**

The Outer Banks region values all OCS resources-biological, geological, recreational, and aesthetic. The development of oil and gas resources undermines the protection of these assets. Oil spills, industrial infrastructure, and increased maritime traffic pose long-term threats to marine ecosystems, public health, and the overall quality of life for residents and visitors alike. Marine noise pollution, air emissions, and habitat disruption from exploration and production activity contradict the region's commitment to environmental stewardship and climate resilience.

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, the Southern Shores Town Council urges BOEM to exclude the Mid-Atlantic Planning Area-including the waters off North Carolina's coast-from further leasing consideration in the 11th National Program and to prioritize sustainable, non-extractive uses of the ocean that are aligned with state and local coastal management goals.

**ADOPTED THIS 8TH DAY OF JULY 2025**, by Southern Shores Town Council.

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Elizabeth Morey, Mayor

Attest:

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Sheila Kane, Town Clerk

