

March 8, 2018

President Donald Trump
White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC

Secretary Ryan Zinke
Department of the Interior
1849 C Street, NW
Washington, DC 20240

Dear President Trump and Secretary Zinke,

As religious leaders, we write in opposition to expanded oil and gas drilling and seismic testing in public waters. Offshore drilling brings unacceptable risks to God's oceans and coastal communities.

Offshore drilling could produce perilous consequences like oil spills that can poison the God's oceans, including wildlife and clean water. No oil company or Administration can guarantee the safety of drilling offshore.

Because the faith community serves as first responders in disasters, we know painfully well the devastation that oil spills can cause to our communities. It is well documented that oil spills can wreak havoc on ecosystems and local businesses and residents alike. Seismic testing that often precedes offshore oil and gas development also harms marine life, including imperiled sea mammals and important fisheries.

Any increased oil and gas drilling offshore will inevitably lead to increased pollution, oil spills, and harm to marine life. Drilling not only impacts marine life, but also impacts people who depend upon the oceans for food and jobs.

Expanding drilling into our Arctic, Atlantic, Eastern Gulf of Mexico and Pacific waters—still largely unspoiled by drilling's inherent hazards and harms—would put our coastal residents, businesses, oceans, and climate at grave risk. Exposing the Gulf of Mexico to additional drilling would further burden residents with the pollution and risks that have already caused great, lasting harm to the region.

God created the oceans with an abundance of life and, as stewards of God's earth, we should work to preserve and protect God's marine creation. As people of faith, we also uphold our duty to love our neighbors. Oceans provide food sources and livelihoods for millions in the U.S. and globally.

We urge the Trump Administration to focus on investments in renewable sources of energy such as wind and solar, as well as maximize our energy efficiency, instead of looking to expand fossil fuel exploration in God's ocean. God entrusts us to be good stewards of God's oceans and coasts. We should honor this sacred duty and position our country as a global leader in energy stewardship.

We ask you to join us as God's steward of the oceans and to respect the local residents, businesses, and millions of Americans who have already made clear their support for preserving, not drilling off our nation's beaches.

Sincerely,

The Rev. Dr. Jennifer Copeland
North Carolina Council of Churches
Raleigh

The Rev. Beverly Wallace
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
Clayton

The Rev. Michael McClain
National Baptist Convention USA
Charlotte

The Rev. Lee Hull Moses
Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)
Greensboro

The Rev. Art Smoker
Mennonite Church
Mars Hill

The Rev. Dennis Testerman
Presbyterians for Earth Care
Concord

The Rev. Jaye White
North Carolina Conference of the United Methodist Church
Fayetteville

The Rev. David Guthrie
Moravian Church in America-Southern Province
Winston-Salem

The Rev. Tamara Franks
High Country United Church of Christ
Vilas

The Rev. Sekinah Hamlin
Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)
Durham

The Rev. Dr. T. Anthony Spearman
North Carolina Council of Churches Governing Board President
Greensboro

The Rev. Isaac Villegas
Mennonite Church
Durham

The Rev. Steve Hickle
North Carolina Conference of the United Methodist Church
Raleigh

The Rev. Jim Abbott
Episcopal Diocese of Western North Carolina
Asheville

The Rev. Joseph Brown
Eastern North Carolina Episcopal District
African Methodist Episcopal Church
Fayetteville

The Rev. Patrick Campbell
United Church of Christ Southern Conference
Morganton

The Rev. David Guthrie
Episcopal Diocese of East Carolina
Greenville

The Rev. Rob Jackson
Presbytery of Salem
Presbyterian Church (USA)
Greensboro

The Rev. Sonja Lee
Unity Fellowship Movement
Charlotte

The Rev. Otis Robinson
Reformed Churches of God in Christ International
Winston-Salem

The Rev. Jill Stanton Bullard
Episcopal Diocese of North Carolina
Durham

The Rev. Robert Williams
Williams Memorial Christian Methodist Episcopal
High Point

The Rev. John Cradle
St. Joseph Christian Methodist Episcopal
Chapel Hill

The Rev. Ronald White, Sr.
Young Missionary Baptist
Raleigh

The Rev. Hazel Height
Greater St. Paul Miss Baptist
Durham

The Rev. Brian Thompson
Simon Temple AME Zion
Chapel Hill

The Rev. Doris Gorham
Beebe Memorial Christian Methodist Episcopal
Washington

The Rev. Barbara McCollum
Holsey Memorial Christian Methodist Episcopal
Statesville

The Rev. Robert Scott
St. Paul Baptist
Charlotte

The Rev. Cureton Johnson
First Baptist
Fayetteville

The Rev. David Mitchell
Mount Gilead Baptist
Durham

The Rev. Jerry Cannon
C.N. Jenkins Memorial Presbyterian
Charlotte

The Rev. Susannah Tuttle
Unitarian Universalist

Sister Rose Marie Tresp
Roman Catholic