



ROY COOPER
Governor

MICHAEL S. REGAN
Secretary

Oil and Gas Leasing Plan Timeline

- On April 28, 2017, President Trump issued Executive Order 13795, outlining an America First Offshore Energy Strategy. As a key piece of this strategy, the U.S. Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (BOEM) initiated a new National Outer Continental Shelf Oil and Gas Leasing Program (National OCS Program) development process to replace the 2017-2022 Program. The new National OCS Program will cover the years 2019-2024.
- On July 21, 2017, the Governor and the NC Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) submitted comments on National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's (NOAA) Incidental Harassment Authorization.
- In August 2017, the NC Division of Coastal Management conducted three public hearings in Wilmington, Morehead City and Manteo to gather comments on BOEM's request for information and comments on the preparation of the 2019-24 National Outer Continental Shelf Oil and Gas Leasing Program. In total, 465 people attended the hearings in Wilmington, Morehead City and Manteo. Of the 104 people who spoke at the hearings, 96 spoke against oil and gas exploration off North Carolina's coast.
- On August 17, 2017, Governor Cooper and NC DEQ Secretary Regan submitted comments in opposition to North Carolina's inclusion in the 2019-24 National Outer Continental Shelf Oil and Gas Leasing Program. The letters stated that offshore drilling threatens North Carolina's coastal economy and its environment, yet offers little economic benefit.
- Now that BOEM's request for information is complete, they will publish a draft proposed plan, triggering another 60-day comment period. If North Carolina is included in the five-year plan, the state will have several opportunities to weigh in as the process moves along.
- After BOEM's pre-leasing activity and possible lease sales, they will conduct another review process for post-leasing activities that will include oil and gas exploration and oil and gas development approvals. A graphic illustrating the Oil and Gas Leasing Process can be found here <https://www.boem.gov/BOEM-OCS-Oil-Gas-Leasing-Process/>. For more information on BOEM's five-year oil and gas leasing program, go to <https://www.boem.gov/Five-Year-Program/>.
- In December 2017, North Carolina asked four companies to submit additional information about proposed seismic testing because the original proposals did not consider the latest scientific studies on potentially harmful impacts to marine life.

- In accordance with the federal Coastal Zone Management Act and associated regulations, our state coastal agency requested “supplemental consistency determinations” from each of the four companies that had received conditional concurrences in 2015 to conduct seismic testing in federal waters off North Carolina’s coast.
- North Carolina’s formal legal request was based on new information – recently published scientific studies on the impacts of seismic testing on fish behaviors, zooplankton (including fish larvae), shellfish, and crustaceans among other concerns – that the proposed surveys will affect NC’s marine resources “substantially different than originally described.” (15 CFR 930.66)
- On Jan. 4, 2018, the Interior Department announced plans to open North Carolina and other East Coast states to offshore oil and gas exploration.
- NC DEQ’s Secretary Regan sent out a statement in response stating: “Offshore drilling and the seismic testing that would precede it pose environmental and economic risks to North Carolina’s coastal communities that we cannot afford. Protection of our beaches, sounds and marine life is vital to ensuring a robust coastal economy.”
- On March 13, 2018, DEQ’s Division of Coastal Management sent a letter to BOEM asking them to refrain from issuing permits to seismic companies.
- On November 30, 2018, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration issued incidental harassment authorizations (IHAs) to five separate applicants to incidentally harass marine mammals during geophysical survey activities in the Atlantic Ocean. To see the authorizations, go to <https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/action/incidental-take-authorization-oil-and-gas-industry-geophysical-survey-activity-atlantic>.
- NC DEQ’s Secretary Regan sent out a statement in response stating: “With the stress our coastal communities are enduring from the recent hurricanes and other effects of climate change, it is disappointing that the Trump administration would further jeopardize our coastal resources by approving dangerous seismic testing that could lead to offshore drilling. North Carolina has requested a state of emergency declaration for our fisheries, and approval of exploration activities is not a step in the right direction. We should be working to protect marine life, not encourage seismic airguns to disturb a fragile habitat.”