



## South Carolina & Offshore Drilling in 2015

### What's Currently On The Table?

*Right now, there are two active proposals from the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (BOEM), the federal regulator of offshore energy, to open the Atlantic Ocean off South Carolina's coast to offshore oil and gas activities: **1) exploration** and **2) leasing**.*

#### Exploration

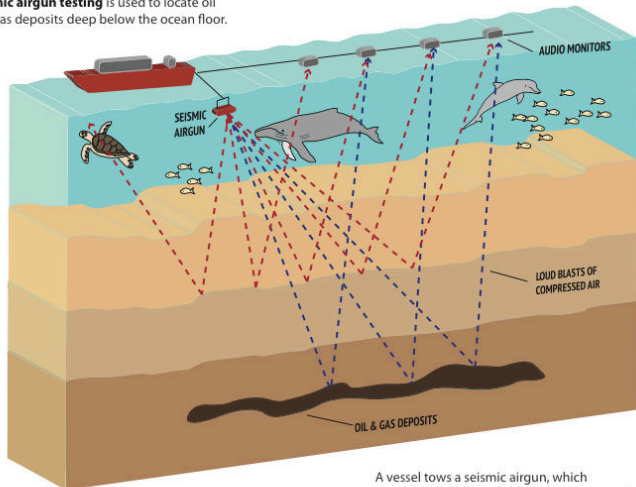
- In 2014, BOEM *approved* seismic exploration for the Mid- and South Atlantic.
- Nine companies have submitted permits to explore.
- Permits are being examined by the coastal zone agencies in each state (DHEC in SC).

#### Leasing

- In January 2015, BOEM *proposed* opening the Mid- and South Atlantic to leasing.
- The Atlantic lease sale is to be held in 2021, with drilling to begin thereafter.
- The proposal is only a draft, so BOEM is taking comments until March 30 and may revise the proposal.

### What is Seismic Airgun Testing?

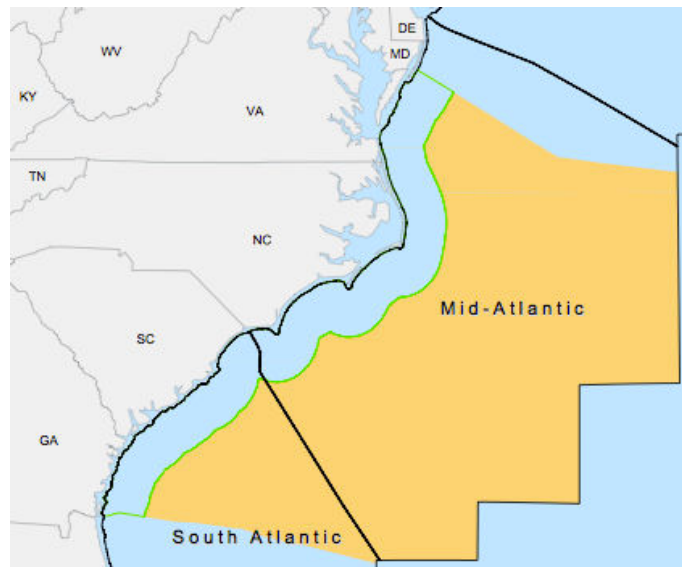
Seismic airgun testing is used to locate oil and gas deposits deep below the ocean floor.



A vessel tows a seismic airgun, which shoots extremely loud blasts of compressed air through the ocean and miles under the seafloor, every ten seconds, 24 hours a day, for days to weeks on end.

*Seismic airguns work by blasting extremely loud sound waves to below the ocean floor, where they bounce back and are received by the boat's audio monitors. This helps characterize the local geology.*

### Where Would the Leasing Be?



*The proposed lease area is offshore Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Georgia, starting at 50 nautical miles offshore, extending to several hundred miles offshore.*

## What's At Stake?

*BOEM's proposals for exploration and leasing have big impacts for South Carolina's coast.*

### Exploration

- Seismic airgun blasts are one of the loudest manmade sounds in the ocean and can travel thousands of miles underwater.
- Seismic testing makes blasts as often as every 10 seconds, 24 hours a day, for weeks, or months on end. Multiple companies can redundantly explore the same area.
- These sounds disrupt, injure, deafen, or even kill marine mammals, which rely heavily on their sense of hearing.
- Airgun blasts kill fish eggs and larvae, scare fish away from important habitats, affect sea turtles and have been linked to declines in catch rates of economically important fish.

### Leasing

- Offshore drilling presents a large risk in the form of oil spills.
- All it takes is one accident for a catastrophic oil spill, as illustrated by the BP Deepwater Horizon oil spill tragedy in the Gulf in 2010.
- Specifically, drilling off our coast jeopardizes our coastal tourism economy and the seafood industry, both of which were decimated by the BP spill.
- Even exploratory drilling is dangerous—the Deepwater Horizon was drilling an exploratory well.
- The type of oil and gas resource off our coast is a highly volatile and dangerous form of gas called methane hydrates—this is the precise material that is thought to have caused the BP Gulf explosion.
- Offshore drilling is associated with significant onshore industrial infrastructure development such as pipelines and refineries, which compromise the beauty and quality of life of coastal SC for residents and tourists alike.

## Case Study: 2010 BP Deepwater Horizon Gulf Oil Spill By The Numbers

- **11** people killed
- **87** days of oil gushing
- **200** million gallons of oil
- **1,100** oiled miles of coast
- **\$23 billion** impact on tourism over 3 years—not including seafood or real estate
- Catch rate declines as high as **75%** for oystermen and **80%** for shrimpers
- **600** confirmed sea turtles and **700** confirmed dolphins killed—likely many more undocumented
- As many as **90,000** response workers and volunteers exposed to toxic cleanup chemicals

## How Do I Help?

*There are multiple opportunities to help say NO to offshore drilling! Please lend your voice!*

- March 11 – attend the BOEM meeting in Mt. Pleasant and submit comments on proposed leasing
- March 13 deadline – submit comments to DHEC on Coastal Zone Certification of seismic permit
- March 30 deadline – submit comments to BOEM on proposed Atlantic leasing
- April 8 – attend the BOEM meeting in Mt. Pleasant on seismic testing
- May 16 – attend Hands Across the Sand at multiple locations along the SC coast

**Sample talking points are available from Don't Drill SC Coalition to help inform your comments!**