

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,

Rev. Laura Inscoe
Episcopal Church
Richmond

Bishop Carroll Baltimore
Global Alliance Interfaith Networks
Lorton

Rev. Morris Fleischer
Newport-Mt. Olivet UMC
Christiansburg

Rev. Dr. Richard Cizek
Interfaith Power and Light
Fredericksburg

Rev. Dr. Jonathan Barton
Virginia Council of Churches
Midlothian

Rev. Dr. Joseph Crockett
National Council of Churches
Midlothian

Sister Margaret Mathewson
Sisters of Bon Secours
Norfolk

Christy Dowdy
Arlington Church of the Brethren
Harrisburg

Rev. Thurman Echols
Moral Hill Baptist
Axton

Rev. Alvin Edwards Mount
Zion Baptist
Charlottesville

Rev. Geoffrey Guns
Second Calvary Baptist
Norfolk

Rev. Luther Allen
First Baptist-Lynnhaven
Virginia Beach

Rev. Andre Jefferson
Bethel AME
Hampton

Rev. Oretha Cross
Saint Paul AME
Newport News

Rev. Veron Ricks
Saint Mark AME
Virginia Beach

Rev. Cheryl Fleming
Broomfield CME
Richmond

Rev. Reginald Woodhouse
First Baptist-Jefferson Park
Newport News

Rev. Robert Murray
First Baptist
Norfolk

Rev. Robert Pettis
Zion Baptist
Richmond

Rev Jacquelyn Hollingsworth
Christ Chapel AME
Sterling

Rev. Etoria Goggins
First African AME
Manassas

Rev. Robert Smith
First AME
Alexandria