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To the Editors of the News and Observer:

On Friday the Trump administration approved requests by five companies to search for oil and gas deposits along the Atlantic coast by conducting seismic surveys. Approval was granted despite the opposition of every East Coast governor except Maine's, despite opposition by hundreds of coastal municipalities, and without holding listening sessions in the affected coastal communities.

As elected representatives of Dare County and Nags Head, we share concerns over threats to North Carolina's coast. We are both Republicans and conservationists. We both recognize the importance of a healthy coast to maintain our prosperity and way of life. Our combined history of listening to our constituents and neighbors puts us in a position to speak out about risks to our coastal business sector and livelihoods, and we can say with certainty: offshore oil drilling activities are bad for business and North Carolinians don't want them.

Seismic testing alone, even if it doesn't lead to wells being drilled, will be harmful enough! Seismic surveys utilize airgun arrays towed by ships to produce powerful sound waves. Sudden releases of pressurized air create the sound, with up to twenty guns fired simultaneously, as "streamers" of hydrophones listen for echoes. Acoustic processing of these echoes provides information about geological structures up to forty kilometers below the sea floor. The source level of most airgun arrays can be 200 to 240 decibels in water, equivalent to about 140 to 180 decibels in air. A loud rock concert is about 120 decibels and a jet engine from 100 feet away is about 140 decibels. And a typical seismic air

gun array might fire such sound waves into the ocean five or six times a minute — more than 7,000 shots in 24 hours.

Making matters worse, all five permitted companies will be testing the same area. Potentially at the same time! You might think they'd search five different areas, but no, they'll be in the same space right off our coast - because the test results are proprietary. None of the companies will share their information with the others, and they won't share it with us.

That cacophony will devastate sea life. According to a report issued by Oceana in April 2013, seismic testing in the mid- and south-Atlantic regions would cause 138,000 injuries to whales and dolphins, injuries to 9 (of only 500 remaining) critically endangered North Atlantic right whales, widespread displacement of whales, disruption of loggerhead sea turtles as they head to nesting beaches, widespread death of fish eggs and larvae, and potential disruption of fish migration and spawning.

Environmental groups will rightly emphasize the effects of seismic surveys on marine mammals. However the death of fish eggs and larvae and disruption of fish migration and spawning will be more harmful to our fishing and tourism industries. North Carolina seafood is iconic, a historic and important part of our state's identity. Commercial fleets and fish houses are critical to many small coastal communities. Recreational anglers catch more fish in North Carolina waters than in any other state except Florida, and even popular river species like shad and striped bass, which spend parts of their lives in the ocean, could be at risk from seismic surveys.

For all of those reasons we should be opposed to seismic surveys on their own merits, or lack thereof. But worse still, the surveys keep our nation on a path to Atlantic offshore oil and gas drilling. Despite the fact that the Permian Basin in Texas will double output by 2023 to become the third-biggest oil producing region in the world. Despite the shale boom which has already made America the world's biggest oil producer. Despite the Deepwater Horizon disaster. Despite 300 to 700 barrels of oil per day which have been spewing 12 miles off Louisiana's coast since 2004, when a platform owned by Taylor Energy sank

in a mudslide triggered by Hurricane Ivan. Despite the fact that in 2017 the world added 98 gigawatts of solar PV capacity — more than fossil fuels and nuclear capacity together.

We ran for office for many different reasons, but we both ran because we love this state and we love its natural resources and want to do our part to protect both. Future generations of North Carolinians should be able to enjoy our incomparable Outer Banks beaches and spend summers fishing our ocean, sounds and rivers. We want to protect North Carolina's way of life and offshore oil drilling activities have no part in that, including the precursor to offshore drilling, seismic airgun blasting.

Bob Woodard is Chairman of the Dare County Board of Commissioners and Ben Cahoon is Mayor of the Town of Nags Head.