

Maryland joins fight to stop seismic testing in the Atlantic

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ANNAPOLIS, MD - Governor Larry Hogan today authorized the State of Maryland to file a lawsuit against the federal government aimed at preventing seismic testing for offshore oil exploration off Maryland's Atlantic coast.

"As governor, I take my role as a steward of our environment extremely seriously. We have made incredible progress in improving our air and water quality standards, and we are not going to let misguided policies from the federal government jeopardize our hard work," said Governor Hogan. "Maryland will continue to fight against this sort of federal government overreach that threatens our natural resources and coastal communities."

The Maryland Department of Natural Resources, represented by Maryland Attorney General Brian Frosh, joined a multi-state legal action against the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration over its November authorization of seismic testing. Maryland has consistently voiced opposition to seismic testing, along with offshore oil and gas development and exploration. Governor Hogan had previously directed the attorney general to "commence and prosecute any viable legal claims, actions, or suits against the U.S. government to prevent" drilling off of Maryland's shore in a letter on January 4, 2018.

Maryland Natural Resources Secretary Mark Belton joined Attorney General Frosh at a press conference announcing the state's participation in the lawsuit. The Maryland Department of Natural Resources has repeatedly expressed concern about the individual and cumulative impacts to marine species and habitats that may result from geological and geophysical surveys in the Atlantic, including in a letter from Secretary Belton to NOAA officials issued today.

"Maryland remains steadfast in its opposition to offshore oil and gas development and exploration in the Atlantic Ocean due to the fact that it unnecessarily endangers marine life and water quality, and exposes our communities and commerce to harm," said Secretary Belton. "We strongly believe that these actions by the federal government pose greater risk than we are willing to assume in the backyard of one of our nation's most iconic natural places - the Chesapeake and Atlantic Coastal Bays."

The lawsuit, filed in South Carolina, asserts that the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) violated the Marine Mammal Protection Act, the Endangered Species Act, and the National Environmental Policy Act when it issued Incidental Harassment Authorizations to five companies on November 30, 2018.

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