

February 20, 2014

President Barack Obama  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW  
Washington, DC 20500

**RE: Use the Best Available Science before Permitting Seismic Surveys for Offshore Oil and Gas in the Mid- and South Atlantic**

Dear President Obama:

On behalf of the following marine scientists and conservation biologists we urge you to use the best available science before permitting seismic surveys for offshore oil and gas in the mid- and south Atlantic. We recommend that you do not finalize the Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement (PEIS) regarding seismic surveys in the mid- and south Atlantic until the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) has completed new Marine Mammal Acoustic Guidelines. It is essential to incorporate these guidelines into this PEIS in order to accurately estimate auditory injuries and disturbances to marine mammals from proposed seismic surveys, so that this important information can guide the most appropriate mitigation measures.

NMFS released the first phase of the acoustic guidelines on December 27, 2013 for public comment, and the agency will be releasing the second phase regarding behavioral disturbances to marine mammals soon. The Office of Management and Budget (OMB) has classified the first phase of these guidelines as a “Highly Influential Scientific Assessment”— the most stringent possible ranking under OMB’s peer-review protocol. More than 15 years have passed since NMFS first began developing these criteria for auditory impacts, as well as criteria for acoustic disturbances. The newly published draft guidelines synthesize years of scientific research regarding the effects of anthropogenic sound on marine mammals. During the development of the guidelines NMFS has undergone a rigorous internal and external peer review process including consultation with issue experts, and the first phase is now undergoing public comment.

If the PEIS moves forward without the newly established acoustic guidelines it will be scientifically deficient and quickly outdated. It will fail to accurately assess the true scope of marine mammal impacts from proposed seismic surveys, which is a primary purpose of the PEIS. The mid- and south Atlantic is home to a diversity and abundance of marine mammals, including the critically endangered North Atlantic right whale which could be impacted by proposed seismic survey activity. We implore you to take this opportunity to integrate NMFS’ new Marine Mammal Acoustic Guidelines into the PEIS for proposed seismic survey activity in the mid- and south Atlantic.

Sincerely,

Matthew Huelsenbeck, M.A.S. Marine Biodiversity and Conservation  
Marine Scientist  
Oceana

Aaron Rice, Ph.D.  
Director  
Bioacoustics Research Program  
Cornell University

Scott D. Kraus, Ph.D.  
Vice President of Research  
John H. Prescott Marine Laboratory  
New England Aquarium

Sarah Frias-Torres, Ph.D. Biological Oceanography  
Research Collaborator  
Smithsonian Marine Station

Andrew J. Read, Ph.D.  
Stephen Toth Professor of Marine Biology  
Division of Marine Science and Conservation  
Nicholas School of the Environment  
Duke University

Les Kaufman, Ph.D.  
Professor of Biology Boston University Marine Program  
Marine Conservation Fellow  
Betty and Gordon Moore Center for Ecosystem Science and Economics  
Conservation International

Giovanni Bearzi, Ph.D.  
Pew Marine Conservation Fellow  
Science director, Dolphin Biology & Conservation  
Research Associate, Texas A&M University

Susan K. Willson, Ph.D.  
Associate Professor of Biology  
St. Lawrence University

Chris Parsons, Ph.D.  
Professor  
George Mason University

Nikki Traylor-Knowles, Ph.D.  
Postdoctoral Scholar  
Stanford University, Hopkins Marine Station

David K. Mellinger, Ph.D.  
Associate Professor, Senior Research  
Oregon State University

Russell Leaper, Ph.D.  
Researcher, Acoustician  
School of Biological Science – Honorary Research Fellow  
University of Aberdeen

Nicole Adimey  
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Biologist  
Coastal Program, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Amy Knowlton, Masters in Marine Affairs  
Right Whale Research Scientist  
New England Aquarium

Arthur H. Kopelman, Ph.D.  
President  
Coastal Research and Education Society of Long Island

Lisa Munger, Ph.D.  
Senior Researcher  
Oceanwide Science Institute, Maui, Hawaii

Naomi A. Rose, Ph.D.  
Marine Mammal Scientist  
Animal Welfare Institute

Michelle Fournet, M.Sc. Marine Resource Management, Applied Bioacoustics  
Oregon State University

Helen E Fox, Ph.D.  
Director, Marine Science  
World Wildlife Fund

Maddalena Bearzi, Ph.D.  
President  
Ocean Conservation Society

Leslie A. Cornick, Ph.D.  
Professor, Marine Biology  
Alaska Pacific University

Jeff Goodyear, Ph.D. Marine Ecology  
Large Whale Ecologist/Consultant  
Aurora Environmental Research, Ltd.

Andrew J. Wright, Ph.D.  
Affiliate Professor  
George Mason University

Moira W. Brown, Ph.D.  
Senior Scientist, North Atlantic right whales  
John H. Prescott Marine Laboratory  
New England Aquarium

Kelly Swing, Ph.D.  
Professor of Tropical Ecology, Universidad San Francisco de Quito  
Founding Director, Tiputini Biodiversity Station, USFQ  
Director of Boston University Tropical Ecology Program  
Adjunct Associate Professor of Biology, BU Center for Ecology and Conservation Biology  
Senior Research Fellow, UCLA Center for Tropical Research

Yara Bernaldo de Quiros, Ph.D.  
Postdoctoral Research Associate  
Texas A&M University Corpus Christi

Guy W. Oliver, Ph.D.  
Research Fellow  
Institute of Marine Sciences  
Long Marine Lab, University of California Santa Cruz

Stanley Senner  
Conservation Science Director & Senior Arctic Director  
Ocean Conservancy

Scott Veirs, Ph.D. Oceanography  
President  
Beam Reach Marine Science

Laura Wright, M.Sc. in Marine Biology & Coastal Zone Management  
Project Manager & FFWCC Marine Turtle Permit Holder Broward County Sea Turtle  
Conservation Program Nova Southeastern University Oceanographic Center

Blaine D. Griffen, Ph.D.  
McCausland Faculty Fellow  
Marine Science Program and Department of Biological Sciences, University of South Carolina

Tiphaine Jeanniard-du-Dot, Ph.D. candidate  
Marine Mammal Research Unit  
University of British Columbia, Canada

Richard E. Dodge, Ph.D.  
Dean  
Nova Southeastern University Oceanographic Center

Julie N. Oswald, Ph.D.  
Vice President  
Bio-Waves, Inc.

Margarita Brandt, Ph.D.  
Universidad San Francisco de Quito.

Lindsay Danielle Hirt, B.A. Marine Biology, B.S. Veterinary Biology, M.S. Emergency  
Management  
Marine Mammal Risk Analyst and Animal Disaster Management Specialist  
Massachusetts Maritime Academy (MMA), Whale and Dolphin Conservation – North America  
(WDC-NA)

Renata Sousa-Lima, Ph.D.  
Professor of Animal Behavior  
Bioacoustics Lab at Universidade Federal do Rio Grande do Norte, Brazil and Bioacoustics  
Research Program, Cornell University

Judith Denking, Ph.D.  
Profesora Tiempo Completo  
COCIBA  
Universidad San Francisco de Quito

Heather Saffert, Ph.D. Oceanography  
Environmental Consultant

Marta Azzolin, Ph.D.  
Lecturer  
Life Sciences and Systems Biology Department, University of Torino (Italy) and  
President Gaia Research Institute Onlus (Italian NGO)

Jessica Taylor, B.Sc. Marine Biology  
Marine Environmental Consultant

Marie Trone, Ph.D.  
Professor of Biology  
Valencia College

Jason N. Bruck, Ph.D.  
Research Fellow  
Institute for Mind and Biology, University of Chicago

Alastair Birtles, Ph.D. Marine Biology  
Senior Lecturer in Environmental Management & Ecotourism  
Discipline of Tourism, Sport and Event Management  
School of Business  
James Cook University

Joanna Bluemel, Ph.D.  
Senior Scientific Researcher (Biodiversity)  
Marine Conservation Society Seychelles

Karina R. Groch, Ph.D.  
Research Director  
Right Whale Project Brazil

Natacha Aguilar de Soto, Ph.D.  
Research Fellow  
University of La Laguna, Canary Islands, Spain

Eduard Degollada, DVM, Ph.D., Veterinary Medicine  
President of the EDMAKTUB Association

Marina Costa, Ph.D. Student  
University of St Andrews

Dr. Peter C. Beamish, Ph.D.  
Director, Ceta-Research, Inc.  
Author of "Dancing With Whales"

Mahmood Shivji, Ph.D.  
Professor, Oceanographic Center  
Nova Southeastern University

Klaus Lucke, Ph.D.  
Research Fellow  
Curtin University, Centre for Marine Science & Technology, Perth, Australia

Alexis Rudd, Ph.D. Candidate, Marine Bioacoustics  
University of Hawaii at Manoa

Shannon Leone Fowler, Ph.D.

John Calambokidis  
Senior Research Biologist and Co-Founder  
Cascadia Research

Stefanie Hawks-Johnson, M.Sc.  
Executive Director  
Marine Mammal Connection Society

Powell Strong, M.Sc. Marine Environmental Protection  
Senior Lecturer  
Pembrokeshire College, U.K.

Katheryn Patterson, M.Sc.  
Ph.D. Candidate, George Mason University

Cortney Watt, M.Sc.  
Ph.D. Candidate - Narwhal Foraging Ecology  
University of Manitoba, Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada

Kathryn Driscoll, M.Sc. Sustainable Environmental Management  
Freelance MMO/PSO/PAM/ESAS CIEEM & MMOA Ecologist

Ann M Zoidis, M.Sc. Physiology and Behavioral Biology  
Director  
Cetos Research Organization

Thomas R. Kieckhefer, M.Sc.  
Independent Consultant  
Marine Ecologist & Educator

Diane Claridge, Ph.D.  
Executive Director  
Bahamas Marine Mammal Research Organisation

Geoff Patton, Ph.D.

Melissa Green, P.W.S., M.Sc. Marine Science  
Wetland Scientist/Project Manager  
BSC Group, Inc.

Jade M.S. Delevaux, Ph.D. Student  
Graduate Assistant  
University of Hawaii

Joanna Prime, M.Sc. Sciences  
President  
PixWhale

Meredith A. Rivin, M.Sc. Geology Marine Mammal Evolution  
Associate Curator of Paleontology  
The Dr. John D. Cooper Archaeological and Paleontological Center

Cassandra Ornell, M.E.M.  
Staff Scientist  
Clean Ocean Action

Elizabeth Keddy, MA Biology  
Instructor of Marine Science and Biology  
Olympic College

Julia Haywood M.Sc.  
Marine Biologist  
Baros Maldives

Dr. Patricia Gray, D.M.A.  
Director, The BioMusic Program  
University of North Carolina-Greensboro

Lauren Ryan, B.Sc.  
Graduate Student, University of North Carolina Wilmington  
Echo Friendly Action

Katherine Snell, B.Sc. M.Phil  
NNR Site Manager  
SNH, United Kingdom

Renee Owens, M.Sc. Ecology  
Director  
SAGE Wildlife Institute  
Adjunct Professor  
Imperial Valley College

Kathryn Brown, M.Sc. Marine Environmental Education, B.Sc. Biological Sciences  
Marine Educator  
Riverwalk Nature Center

Rebecca Allen M.Sc. Marine Science  
Programme Manager – FdSc Marine Conservation  
Cornwall College

Robert C. Rocha, Jr., M.Sc. Environmental Studies  
Science Director  
New Bedford Whaling Museum

Monique van Rensburg, M.Sc. Conservation Biology  
Biodiversity Advisor  
Auckland Council, New Zealand

Gratia Kautek, B.Sc.  
University of Vienna

Eric Eisenhardt  
Research Curator  
The Whale Museum

James Robbins, M.Sc. Marine Biology  
University College Cork, Ireland.

Sabina Airoidi, M.Sc.  
Project Director  
Tethys Research Institute, Italy

Caroline Hoeschle, M.Sc.  
Biologist  
BioConsult SH  
Germany

Dany Zbinden, M.Sc.  
Executive Director  
Mériscopie Marine Research Station

Katja Vinding Petersen, Ph.D. Student  
University of Pretoria



Ilaria Spiga, Ph.D. Student  
Marine Science and Technology  
Newcastle University, UK

William W. Rossiter  
Executive Director, Advocacy, Science & Grants  
Cetacean Society International

Andrea Dransfield, B.Sc. Environmental Science,  
Channel Islands National Marine Sanctuary

Fabian Ritter  
President, Director of Research  
M.E.E.R. e.V.  
Berlin, Germany

Tilen Genov, M.Res. Marine Mammal Science  
Morigenos, Slovenian Marine Mammal Society

Emily Hague, B.Sc. Hons Marine Biology  
University of St. Andrews

Sven Koschinski  
Marine Biologist  
MERRESZOOLOGIE Germany

Barbara Galletti  
President  
Centro de Conservacion Cetacea, CHILE

Sue Sayer, B.Sc. Geography  
Chair  
Cornwall Seal Group

Michael Abbot, B.Sc. Biology

Monique Pool  
Chairman  
Green Heritage Fund Suriname

Howard Garrett  
Orca Network

Erin Wyatt, B.Sc. Hons  
Marine Fauna Aerial Observer  
Murdoch University, Australia

Sean McQuilken, B.Sc.  
Freelance  
Marine Biologist and Marine Mammal Observer

Michael H. Smith  
Project Coordinator  
Gray Whales Count

Peter Holden B.Sc., MMO, PAM.  
Marine Mammal Acoustics Consultant  
Marine Conservation Society Seychelles

CC: Sally Jewell, Secretary, Department of the Interior  
Dr. Walter Cruickshank, Deputy Director, Bureau of Ocean Energy Management  
Dr. Kathryn Sullivan, Acting Under Secretary of Commerce for Oceans and Atmosphere  
and Acting Administrator National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration  
Eileen Sobeck, Assistant Administrator for Fisheries, National Marine Fisheries Service