STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA
OFFICE OF THE LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR

DANIEL J FOREST LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR

March 25, 2015

The Honorable Sally Jewell
Secretary, United States Department of Interior
1849 C Street, NW
Washington, DC 20240

RE: Request for comments on the 2017-2022 Draft Proposed Oil and Gas Leasing Program

Dear Secretary Jewell:

As Lieutenant Governor and as chair of the North Carolina Energy Policy Council (EPC), I write in support of your decision to include the federal lands off the coast of North Carolina in the 2017-2022 Draft Proposed Outer Continental Shelf Oil and Gas Leasing Program (DPP). The EPC, which is the central energy policy planning body of the state, strongly supports responsible offshore energy development and believes it will lead to a more prosperous and secure future for the people of North Carolina.

The importance of defining and unlocking the potential reserves off our coast cannot be overstated. The Atlantic OCS has been off-limits for oil and gas exploration and development for decades. Economic changes combined with technological and regulatory advancements make oil and gas leasing in the Atlantic areas more feasible, desirable and safe. The shale gas revolution has reduced our dependence on imports, propelled the U.S. to become the number one producer of natural gas in the world, and given us a tremendous competitive advantage in the international market place. Proposed lease sale 260 provides an excellent opportunity to continue the economic recovery and manufacturing renaissance brought about by affordable domestic energy.

With the proposed 50 mile coastal buffer, much of North Carolina's most accessible resources are off limits. While we share BOEM's interest in minimizing potential conflicts between offshore oil and gas development activities and tourism, offshore fishing, boating and other maritime activities, critical habitat designations, military operations, renewable energy facilities, viewsheds, and other environmental concerns, we have reservations about the "one size fits all" approach and believe individual circumstances should be considered. Therefore, we request that you insert flexibility into the application of the buffer, including provisions that take into account the uniqueness of waters off the North Carolina coast. The final environmental impact statement and the results of new geological and geophysical surveys should be the scientific and economic basis for the establishment of buffer areas.

Finally, we encourage your support of legislative efforts to promote revenue sharing with coastal energy states. To bring offshore energy development to North Carolina, we will need to develop onshore infrastructure, ports and inlets, and regulatory programs as well as obtain local support. Without revenue sharing, many coastal residents feel that they are being asked to bear all the costs and risks without reaping any of the rewards. Revenue sharing will help fund projects vital to coastal communities, like the dredging of ports and inlets, coastal conservation and beach preservation. We are fully committed to realizing our offshore energy potential through safe, responsible production of our OCS resources, and opening up our waters to energy development will help us to pave the way for American energy independence and economic prosperity for North Carolina.

Sincerely,

Dan Forest
Lieutenant Governor of North Carolina

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