

Rep. Jeff Van Drew
Testimony
4/1/19

H.R. 1149 – Atlantic Coastal Economies Protection Act

Chairman Lowenthal, Ranking Member Gosar, and Members of the Subcommittee, I thank you for the opportunity for letting me speak on H.R. 1149, the bipartisan *Atlantic Coastal Protection Economies Act of 2019* that I introduced with Congressman John Rutherford of Florida.

Our bill would prohibit the Department of Interior from issuing the pending permits for seismic air gun blasting in the Atlantic Ocean.

I represent New Jersey's second congressional district which encompasses the southern half of the state.

In South Jersey, fisheries, wildlife viewing, and tourism are important industries to us.

Seismic airgun blasting and its successor, offshore oil and gas drilling, would wipe everything away with an event like the 2010 BP oil disaster in the Gulf of Mexico.

I introduced this legislation because I'm concerned with the possible permitting of seismic airgun blasting off the Atlantic Coast, from Jacksonville, Florida to Cape May, New Jersey to Portland, Maine.

Late last year, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration issued 5 Incidental Harassment Authorizations which advanced permit applications for seismic airgun blasting in the Atlantic Ocean.

This action essentially set the stage for the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management to approve these permits at any moment now.

Seismic airgun blasting is not only the first step towards offshore oil and gas exploration and development, but it is harmful to marine mammals and marine life and it encroaches on vital military operations.

At a time when we should be attempting to limit the dangers of climate change such as extreme weather events, it is unthinkable to further endanger our environment and endanger our coastal economy.

Our public policy goal is to create a cleaner and healthier environment that sustains local jobs.

An environment that we can pass on to our children and grandchildren to enjoy.

I am very proud that a broad array of organizations in New Jersey have supported my bill, from local chambers of commerce to environmental organizations.

People from across the political spectrum, whether Democrat or Republican, understand that this is an issue about American jobs.

Several weeks ago, the Cape May County Chamber of Commerce, Clean Ocean Action and the Surfrider Foundation held the “Rally to Save Our Seas” in Cape May where hundreds of my constituents showed up to protest the destructive practice of seismic airgun blasting.

The *Atlantic Coastal Economies Protection Act* would prevent the 5 seismic airgun blasting permits that are under consideration at the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management from being issued.

I urge my colleagues to protect our precious coastline and the livelihoods of those that depend on it by supporting H.R. 1149, the bipartisan *Atlantic Coastal Economies Protection Act*.

Thank you Chairman Lowenthal for scheduling this legislative hearing and I look forward to working with you on advancing this bill through the committee and the House of Representatives.