Gouveia, Susan

From: Lashway, Lisa
Sent: Friday, June 05, 2015 2:03 PM
To: Canning, Sean; Gouveia, Susan
Subject: FW: NJDEP Press Release - Seismic Research Project
Attachments: Seismic Testing -- P54.pdf

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From: Rogers, Joseph [mailto:Joseph.Rogers@dep.nj.gov] **On Behalf Of** Randazzo, Cindy
Sent: Friday, June 05, 2015 1:58 PM
To: Randazzo, Cindy
Subject: NJDEP Press Release - Seismic Research Project

Dear Municipal Official:

Please see the attached NJDEP Press Release concerning the Christie Administration's seeking to stop Seismic Research Project.

If you have any questions, please contact me directly.

Sincerely,

Cindy W. Randazzo
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Office of Local Government Assistance
New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection
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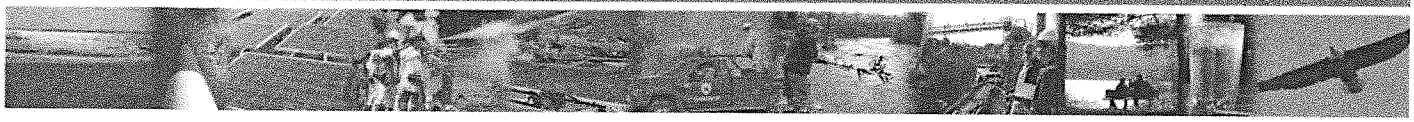
DEP NEWS RELEASE
New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection
Chris Christie, Governor
Kim Guadagno, Lt. Governor
Bob Martin, Commissioner



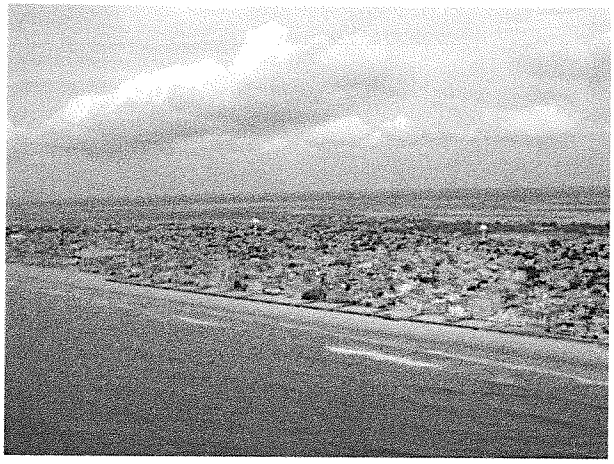
IMMEDIATE RELEASE
June 5, 2015

Contact: Lawrence Hajna (609) 984-1795
Bob Considine (609) 292-2994
Caryn Shinske (609) 984-1795

CHRISTIE ADMINISTRATION SEEKS FEDERAL COURT RULING TO STOP SEISMIC RESEARCH PROJECT

STATE ARGUES PROJECT WILL HARM FISH AND MARINE MAMMAL POPULATIONS IN STUDY AREA OFF LONG BEACH ISLAND

(15/P54) TRENTON – The Christie Administration today filed a complaint in U.S. District Court arguing that a federally funded research project using strong seismic blasts to map ocean sediment deposits should be stopped because it will adversely impact economically vital commercial and recreational fisheries and harm marine mammals.



The complaint filed by the Attorney General's Office this morning in U.S. District Court in Trenton argues the project violates federal laws protecting marine animals and requests the National Science Foundation (NSF) to perform an area-specific environmental impact study before proceeding any further.

Rutgers University, the NSF's contractor, launched the project this week, despite objections from Governor Christie, state and federal lawmakers, and advocacy groups.

"We are not going to give up this fight," Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) Commissioner Bob Martin said. "It is extremely disappointing that the federal government is moving ahead with this misguided project despite widespread objection from all quarters and without regard to the negative impacts on New Jersey.

"Starting the project now, with the summer tourism and fishing seasons shifting into full gear, is simply wrong," Commissioner Martin added. "We must take no chances when it comes to protecting our ocean resources, our commercial and recreational fishing industries, and our state's $42 billion tourism economy, which depends heavily on the shore."

The State's action today follows a letter Commissioner Martin sent this week to NSF Director

Dr. France A. Córdova "strongly condemning" the project and asserting that the "timing of the study callously disregards the welfare of our coastal resources and all of the people whose jobs depend on the health of those resources."

Commercial and recreational fishing support about $1 billion in revenues in New Jersey. The testing is being done in federal waters in a 230-square-mile area southeast of Long Beach Island, an area well-established for fishing. Among the many species of fish that are available off the Jersey coast in the summer are bluefish, black sea bass, summer flounder, black drum, herring and mackerel.

Those who have publicly expressed strong opposition to the project include U.S. Senator Cory Booker, U.S., Representative Frank Pallone, State Senate President Stephen M. Sweeney, Clean Ocean Action, the Marine Mammal Stranding Center, the Recreational Fishing Alliance, the Jersey Coast Anglers Association and the New Jersey Outdoor Alliance.

"Clean Ocean Action is shocked and disappointed at the lack of concern the geological community has shown toward the living marine resources," said Cindy Zipf, the environmental group's Executive Director. "At the same time, it is inspiring to see the incredible outpouring of support including federal, state, and local elected officials, the fishing community, and all citizens in defense of the ocean's marine life. This indeed is a powerful statement about the importance of the ocean to New Jersey."

"The testing could not come at a worse time of year for recreational fishermen, commercial fishermen and bait and tackle shops that depend on the summer fishing season for their livelihood," said Paul Turi, corresponding secretary for the Jersey Coast Anglers Association. "The JCAA and its member clubs see no justifiable value for this study. We believe the potential negative effects far outweigh any potential positive effects."

Bob Schoelkopf, Executive Director of the Marine Mammal Stranding Center in Brigantine, said the testing could result in deaths of dolphins and whales by disrupting feeding patterns. The waters off New Jersey provide prime birthing areas for bottlenose dolphins over the summer, Schoelkopf said. Humpback whales are also migrating from birthing areas off the Dominican Republic to North Atlantic waters.

"Both species rely heavily on being able to prey on tightly bunched schools of fish," Schoelkopf said. "Seismic testing disperses these schools and disrupts marine mammals' sonar needed to track prey."

The DEP provided the NSF with peer-reviewed studies that show that underwater seismic blasts cause fish to move out of areas where this type of testing is done, causing shifts in distribution and declines in numbers of fish that can be caught, and may even cause immediate mortality.

Rutgers is conducting seismic ocean blasting tests to examine changes in layers of deep-sea sediments. The project is taking place in waters 18 to 45 miles southeast of Barnegat Inlet. The process involves repeated underwater blasts of compressed air that can generate up to 250 decibels. In comparison, a jet engine generates about 160 decibels.

The U.S. District Court and the U.S. Court of Appeals last year ruled against the State in its

efforts seeking an injunction to block the work, which was initially scheduled to take place last summer. The project did not move forward at that time due to mechanical problems with the research vessel.

For a copy of the State's complaint, please visit: http://www.nj.gov/dep/docs/seismic-complaint.pdf

For a copy of the letter to the National Science Foundation, please visit: http://www.nj.gov/dep/docs/nsf-cordova-letter-20150602.pdf

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