



January 29, 2018

The Honorable Ryan Zinke  
Secretary  
U.S. Department of the Interior  
1849 C Street, NW  
Washington DC 20240

Secretary Zinke:

As Board Chairman of the Hampton Roads Military and Federal Facilities Alliance (HRMFFA), I am writing to express the Alliance's strong support for excluding the waters off the coast of Virginia from the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management's next iteration of the Five Year Oil and Gas Leasing Program.

HRMFFA provides a focused regional voice in matters relating to attracting, retaining and growing Hampton Roads' many Federal capabilities and installations. Today, the 13 communities that formed HRMFFA collectively support eighteen major military installations (including two joint bases), all four branches of the military services and the Coast Guard, approximately 120,000 active duty, reserve and civilian personnel, over 125,000 military dependents, and over 230,000 veterans. The military presence is an integral part of the Hampton Roads economy, accounting for over 37% of the gross regional product of \$103.2B. Military personnel, DoD civilians and contractors account for nearly 20% of all employment in the region with another 15% indirectly attributed to the military's presence.


Naval Station Norfolk is the largest naval base in the world and is the homeport of 58 ships and 18 aircraft squadrons. There are another seven ships homeported at Joint Expeditionary Base Little Creek-Fort Story and 19 aircraft squadrons at Naval Air Station Oceana. Langley Air Force Base is host to the 1<sup>st</sup> Fighter Wing and its two F-22 aircraft squadrons. These ships and aircraft rely extensively on the surface and airspace ranges off Virginia's coast for readiness training and weapons testing activities. In 2015, DoD's Mission Compatibility Planning Assessment of the BOEM 2017-2022 Outer Continental Shelf Oil and Gas Leasing Program designated the vast majority of the program area off Virginia's coast as incompatible with all oil and gas activity. For these reasons, HRMFFA strongly opposes any offshore drilling activities that could jeopardize the military's ability to conduct operations and training off the coast of Virginia.

Additionally, we urge the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management to allow the citizens of our communities to have their voices and concerns heard during the public comment



period ending on March 9, 2018. The only previously planned public comment session was to be held in Richmond nearly 100 miles away from Hampton Roads. Since this event was cancelled due to inclement weather, we request BOEM reschedule public comment sessions at locations in Hampton Roads and Virginia's Eastern Shore so the citizens most affected by this issue can voice their opinions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Thomas G. Shepperd, Jr." in a cursive style.

Thomas G. Shepperd, Jr.  
Chair