

## DOI reconsiders seismic surveying in the Atlantic

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On May 10, the Department of the Interior (DOI) announced that it will reconsider applications from ocean seismic survey companies to carry out geological and geophysical activities off the Atlantic coast. Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke released Secretarial Order 3350 to further implement President Donald Trump's executive order entitled "Implementing an America-First Offshore Energy Strategy," and to enhance opportunities for offshore energy exploration and development on the Outer Continental Shelf (OCS) of the United States.

President Trump's executive order directs the Secretary of the Interior to consider revising the schedule of proposed oil and gas lease sales in each of the OCS Planning Areas, as designated by the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (BOEM). The Secretary's order directs BOEM to immediately initiate development of a new five-year program for offshore oil and gas exploration, and to establish a plan to expedite requests for seismic survey permits and other OCS activities for the Atlantic Ocean, despite the BOEM's 2017-2022 Outer Continental Shelf Oil and Gas Leasing Program, which removed the Atlantic and offshore Alaska from consideration for oil and gas leasing.

DOI announced on May 10 that it will continue reviewing applications from six companies seeking permits to explore the Atlantic with geological and geophysical (G&G) activities, including seismic surveys. According to Secretary Zinke, "Seismic surveying helps a variety of federal and state partners better understand our nation's offshore areas, including locating offshore hazards, siting of wind turbines, as well as offshore energy development." The Secretary's order reverses a decision by the previous administration that ordered BOEM to deny G&G permitting applications for the Mid- and South-Atlantic OCS. The secretarial order does not force BOEM to approve the applications, but allows BOEM to resume its evaluation to determine whether they will be individually approved or denied.

Sources: Bureau of Ocean Energy Management, Department of the Interior, E&E News, White House Office of the Press Secretary