

Atlantic offshore oil and gas development discussed in House

July 12, 2017

The House Natural Resources Subcommittee on Energy and Mineral Resources held an oversight hearing on July 12 to evaluate the potential development of offshore drilling on the Outer Continental Shelf (OCS).

Earlier in the year, President Donald Trump issued an executive order “Implementing an America-First Offshore Energy Strategy,” which authorizes the Department of the Interior (DOI) to begin oil and gas leasing on the OCS. Following the Executive Order, Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke issued Secretarial Order 3350 to implement the president’s order and establish regulations for the leasing process.

While offshore drilling has long been a part of American energy production, it is currently limited to the Gulf, North Atlantic, and West coasts. One provision of the secretarial order is to expedite the consideration of seismic permitting applications in the Atlantic. A witness at the hearing, Dr. James Knapp, pointed out in his testimony that the Mid- and South Atlantic regions have never been adequately explored for oil with commercial seismic surveys.

Several representatives from coastal states, however, were hesitant at the prospect of leasing on the Mid- and South-Atlantic OCS. Representatives Niki Tsongas (D-MA-3) and Anthony Brown (D-MD-4) voiced their concerns about the impact OCS energy production would have on the tourism, recreation, and fishing industries for their respective states.

Sources: E&E News, Office of the Federal Register, U.S. House of Representatives
