



**New Jersey Chapter
The Wildlife Society**
<http://wildlife.org/new-jersey/>



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Ms. Joelle Gore, Chief
Stewardship Division
Office of Coastal Management
SSMC4, Room 10622
1305 East West Highway
Silver Spring, MD 20910

RE: Program Change to New Jersey's Federally-approved Coastal Management Program

Dear Ms. Joelle:

The New Jersey Chapter of The Wildlife Society (NJTWS) supports the recommendation brought forth by the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (NJDEP) to amend the Federally-approved New Jersey Coastal Management Program (NJCMP) to include the Shore Tourism and Ocean Protection from Offshore Oil and Gas Act (Act) as a routine program change to Federal Regulation 15 C.F.R. 923.80-923.84.

Approval from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's (NOAA) Office for Coastal Management to modify the NJCMP would offer protection from practices associated with offshore drilling for oil and natural gas in New Jersey waters. The Act encourages the conservation of biologically rich, hurricane-prone, marine and coastal ecosystems by prohibiting offshore oil or natural gas activities (i.e. exploration, development, production), preventing the leasing of New Jersey's tidal or submerged waters for such activities, and precluding NJDEP the issuance of permits/licenses that would approve related activities.

New Jersey's coastal habitat includes a rich and diverse network of bays, mudflats, estuaries, and 126 miles of Atlantic coastline that support an array of wildlife species.

The Wildlife Society (TWS), founded in 1937, is an international non-profit scientific and educational association dedicated to excellence in wildlife stewardship through science and education. Our mission is to enhance the ability of wildlife professionals to conserve diversity, sustain productivity, and ensure responsible use of wildlife resources for the benefit of society. The Wildlife Society encourages professional growth through [certification](#), [peer-review publications](#), [conferences](#), and [working groups](#).

These habitats are critically important to many migratory bird species throughout the year including the federally endangered piping plover (*Charadrius melodus*) who require sandy beaches for nesting habitat, the federally threatened red knot (*Calidris canutus*) who rely on the Delaware Bay as a stopover site to replenish energy reserves during spring migration, and nearly 50% of the North American Atlantic brant (*Branta bernicla hrota*) population that overwinter in New Jersey's salt marsh. Over 20 marine mammals and approximately 300 marine finfish have been known to inhabit the salt marshes and marine waters at some point throughout the year. Additionally, New Jersey's attractive coastline, bays, and salt marsh supports important activities that contribute to a \$16 billion tourism industry. Over 1.2 million anglers and more than 50 species of fish and shellfish contribute to the recreational successes of New Jersey's economy that generate over \$2 billion annually.

Activities associated with offshore drilling threaten the health of sensitive marine ecosystems and coastal-dependent species, but also threatens recreation and fishing industries within the state. Drilling for oil and natural gas could pose an ever-present risk to New Jersey's valued wildlife and natural resources.

NJTWS recognizes that coastal management involves a balance between economic, societal, and environmental spheres. Endorsement of the recommendation by NJDEP to incorporate the Act as a routine program change would help safeguard New Jersey's coastal habitat, coastal tourism, and revenues generated by recreational and commercial fishing from the threats associated with offshore drilling.

NJTWS appreciates the opportunity to provide comment on the New Jersey Coastal Management Program, and for your dedication to land stewardship, ecosystem health, and habitat conservation.

Sincerely,



Elizabeth Ciuizio Freiday, CWB®
President
New Jersey Chapter of The Wildlife Society

http://www.nj.gov/dep/cmp/czm_news.html

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