Part 2C. Offshore Oil and Gas Activities. Adverse Environmental Impact Protection.

§ 143-215.94AA. Declaration of public policy.

The General Assembly hereby finds and declares as follows:

(1)   The traditional uses of the seacoast of the State are public and private recreation, commercial and sports fishing, and habitat for natural resources;

(2)   The preservation of these uses is a matter of the highest urgency and priority, and such uses can only be preserved effectively by maintaining and enhancing the existing condition of the coastal waters, estuaries, wetlands, tidal flats, beaches, and public lands adjoining the seacoast;

(3)   The coastal economy, including access to the coast of the State, depends, either directly or indirectly, upon a ready and continuous reserve of petroleum products and by-products, including that portion of the supply resulting from oil and gas activities on the Outer Continental Shelf;

(4)   Offshore oil and natural gas exploration, production, processing, recovery, and transportation pose increased potential for damage to the State's coastal environment, to the traditional uses of the area, and to the beauty of the North Carolina coast;

(5)   Spills, discharges, and escapes of pollutants occurring as a result of procedures involving offshore oil and natural gas related activities have occurred in the past, and future threats of potentially catastrophic proportions from such activities require adoption of this Part as mitigation against such events;

(6)   The economic burdens imposed by the General Assembly upon those engaged in the offshore exploration, production, processing, recovery, and transportation of oil and natural gas are reasonable and necessary in light of the traditional uses and interests herein protected, which are expressly declared to be of grave public interest and concern to the State in promoting its general interest and welfare promoting the public health, preventing diseases, and providing for the public safety. (1989, c. 656, s. 5, c. 770, s. 75.5.)