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**Palmetto AgriBusiness Council**

**Op/Ed - Seismic Testing Off Atlantic Coast**

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With the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (BOEM) initial approval for seismic testing off the Atlantic States, South Carolina is presented with a unique opportunity to evaluate our available resources in an environmentally responsible manner. We must not let misinformation cause us to bypass this opportunity which could lead to creating thousands of jobs and boosting our state's economy.

We need up to date and accurate information using the latest technology in order to assess what resources are off our coasts, which has not been done extensively in 40 years. Seismic testing is highly regulated and conducted all over the world. According to industry professionals, modern seismic surveys are like ultrasound technology- a non-invasive technique built upon sound waves. BOEM officials say they will review permit requests for seismic testing off the Atlantic coast to make sure there are provisions to protect marine mammals.

As we take the necessary steps to assure that we protect South Carolina's coasts, we must consider what finding additional energy sources will mean to our state and nation. An economic impact study conducted by economist Dr. Harry Miley, demonstrated the potential for \$2.3 billion in annual economic activity from a combination of gas, oil and a natural gas production facility with up to 7,700 on going jobs.

All businesses, consumers and agriculture would benefit from a greater supply of domestically produced fuel strengthening America's energy security and keeping energy costs under control. For South Carolina's agribusiness and farming, we are developing strategies to increase the economic impact of our industry, which contributes \$34 billion to the state's economy and provides 200,000 jobs. Sustaining and expanding our industry depends on our ability to remain competitive, which is affected by surging energy costs. Food harvesting, production and transportation are heavily dependent on energy. Exploration of many fuel alternatives can serve to assist us in finding ways to reduce the cost of food to consumers and discourage the importing of foods that are not as tightly regulated and therefore not as safe as what we can produce here in our own back yards.

While North Carolina and Virginia are actively moving ahead to begin the process of seismic testing off their coasts, it is crucial that South Carolina be able to move forward as well. We cannot take advantage of this economic potential without being able to measure our resources.

There is no question that we must protect our pristine coastline; but we can continue to preserve our land, air and water resources; while at the same time explore our assets for the economic benefit of all South Carolinians.

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