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## **Risks from Expanded Offshore Drilling To Ocean and Beaches**

West Hartford, CT – America’s coasts have wonderful beaches, parks, marshes, remarkable underwater ecosystems and amazing wildlife, all of which would be threatened by more offshore oil drilling, currently under debate in Washington DC. According to “*Oceans Under the Gun*”, a new report written by Environment America and the Sierra Club, our clean beaches and oceans support a vibrant coastal tourism and fishing economy that generates \$61 billion per year in the North Atlantic States from Maine to New Jersey.

“Our oceans are truly ‘under the gun’, threatened by Big Oil and their allies in Congress who want to expand offshore drilling,” said Environment Connecticut Program Director Christopher Phelps. “Our beaches and ocean enable coastal business and jobs from tourism, commercial fishing and recreational fishing conservatively valued at \$4 billion per year in Connecticut.”

The report shows that the value of the sustainable economy based on tourism and fishing in the North Atlantic region is 12 times larger than the oil and gas resources that we might be able to find there.

Over the next few months Congress will decide whether to allow expanded drilling off our coasts as part of the energy and global warming legislation now moving through Congress. The eastern Gulf of Mexico is the area most at risk, but other regions like California, New England, the Mid-Atlantic and Southeast are also threatened by one proposal or another.

“Our research makes it clear that our clean beaches and coastal parks are worth more than drilling for the last drops of oil that will serve us for a few weeks or months. It’s time to protect our coasts from more spilling and drilling,” Phelps concluded.

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*Environment Connecticut is a state-based, citizen funded environment group working for clean air, clean water and open space. It is a member of the Environment America federation of state-based environment groups.*

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