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North Carolina Coastal Federation Announces Forum Speakers, Explores "Offshore Drilling & Our Economic Future"

Ocean, North Carolina- At the invitation of the North Carolina Coastal Federation, an all-star cast of experts will come together July 31 at the New Bern Convention Center to discuss potential effects of developing oil and gas off the North Carolina coast. They will share their scientific knowledge and direct experiences with coastal decision-makers, residents and visitors. Some of the topics to be presented include:

- How federal and state agencies regulate the exploration and development of offshore oil and gas,
- What the potential impacts could be to fisherman, the tourist industry, as well as coastal and marine resources,
- The economic impact of the industry, both benefits and costs, including what additional revenues could come to coastal communities in the form of revenue sharing.

One expert that will be attending is Steve Roady, managing attorney with *Earthjustice* since 1998. Working for the nation's largest nonprofit environmental law organization in the country, he will bring his expertise and insight on the prospects that the U.S. Congress and President will pass new laws to share revenues from drilling with North Carolina. He will also review some of the major vexing obstacles that coastal businesses and communities encounter when they seek financial damages after oil spills.

Another speaker will be Robert Fritchey, author of *Wetland Riders*. Fritchey is a strong advocate for commercial fisherman around the United States, and will share his firsthand experience with how fishing and big oil get along in coastal Louisiana.

The nearly dozen other federal and state governmental officials, local and regional

researchers, regulators, and coastal residents scheduled to speak will address the theme of the forum, "***Shaping Our Economic Future: Offshore Drilling in N.C.***" and relate their **experience and views on the economic and environmental implications of oil and gas exploration and development.**

The open forum format will allow for ample audience Q & A throughout the sessions. As an issue that will affect all North Carolinians, the oil forum provides a great opportunity for individuals to talk with experts and to fully understand the scope of the proposed offshore drilling issue in order to make informed decisions that will benefit their needs and their communities.

Registration is now open to the public; the \$20 registration fee includes lunch and refreshments.

The agenda and complete roster of speakers is available at nccoast.org/oil.

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