

Spett.le Regione Abruzzo  
Direzione Affari della Presidenza Politiche Legislative e Comunitarie,  
Programmazione, Parchi, Territorio, Valorizzazione del paesaggio,  
Valutazioni Ambientali  
UFFICIO Valutazione Impatto Ambientale  
Via Leonardo da Vinci (Palazzo Silone) 67100 L'Aquila (AQ)

Assessorato Politiche Agricole e di Sviluppo Rurale, Forestale, Caccia e Pesca  
Via Catullo 17 65100 Pescara

e per conoscenza: ARTA Abruzzo, Comune di Pineto,  
Comune di Roseto degli Abruzzi, Provincia di Teramo Ministero dell'Ambiente

St. Paul, Minnesota, December 6th 2011

Dear representatives of the Abruzzo governmental region:

I am writing to you to recommend that you deny authorization to the exploratory drilling permits Villa Mazzarosa and Villa Carbone as filed to your office by Mediterranean Oil and Gas, based in London and through its Italian subsidiary Medoiligas.

These permits would allow a foreign company to perform seismic explorations and drill the Teramo/Pescara region for what most likely will be heavy sour crude or gas, right off the Adriatic coast, in a touristic, agricultural and naturalistic area. These operations would be the beginning of the transformation of the beautiful Abruzzo riviera into oil and gas territory.

As Medoil mentions in its environmental report, their lease is within a natural reserve, called il Borsacchio, where they intend to conduct seismic exploration via vibrating heavy equipment and trucks and where they intend to drill an exploratory well, that could reach 3,000 meters below ground. These operations, in my opinion would be detrimental to the natural beauty of the location and be dangerous for residents, due to possible drinking water

contamination, air pollution, well blowouts and spills which are common consequences of on-shore drilling.

Water contamination issues are severe. Thanks to fissures in well casings or voluntary dumping, chemicals from drilling muds may enter the water supply and turn what was once a resource into unusable waste. Chemicals may also permeate the air, entering into people's homes and lungs. Toxins will be inhaled by all - the healthy, but also the young, the vulnerable, the elderly, twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week. Disorders include neurological damage, brain damage, respiratory problems, eye irritation, kidney inflammation, liver problems, cancer, leukemia.

There is a myth that natural gas may be better than coal or crude oil. In terms of emissions, however, natural gas is actually on a par with coal. The oil and gas industry has put a lot of effort in presenting natural gas the cleanest hydrocarbon alternative. In fact, if one considers heavy sour gas, such as the one present in Abruzzo, we know that is not true: they both require toxic drilling muds, they both require additional refining, they both emit toxic fumes. Heavy sour gas and oil are both extremely polluting and far more toxic than renewable energy. Natural gas is a dirty fossil fuel just like oil is.

Drilling disenfranchises people, taking them away from their homes, killing tourism, agriculture, small businesses. It should not be tolerated that Medoil gas can drill inside a natural reserve. These are meant to be havens for people, where nature dictates rhythms and cycles, not oil pumps.

Indeed, if successful, seismic testing will be followed by drilling of permanent wells. Most likely, industrial facilities will have to be built turning a touristic place into an oil processing location. The people who live along the Abruzzo coast stand to gain very little in return, since the oil will be sold on the open market and since Italian royalties are among the lowest in the world - about 10% of all profits, which will mostly end up in Roman coffers.

Mediterranean Oil itself acknowledges the fact that drilling the Italian countryside is a highly

profitable enterprise for them.

Having visited Louisiana a number of times over the course of my academic career as a mathematician, and for many years having closely followed the environmental challenges faced in the United States, I am keenly aware of the dangers of on and offshore drilling and the great need for energy production from renewable resources.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Chad M. Hixson-Topaz". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long, sweeping tail on the last name.

Chad Topaz  
Associate Professor of Mathematics  
Macalester College  
St. Paul, MN  
USA