

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,  
Provincia di Teramo, Provincia di Pescara

Dear representatives of the Italian government:

I am writing to you to recommend that you deny authorization to the drilling permits Cipressi and Santa Venere, as filed to your office by Adriatica Idrocarburi, a spinoff of the Italian oil company ENI.

These permits would allow Adriatica idrocarburi to perform seismic explorations and drill the Teramo/Pescara area 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 beautiful Abruzzo and its coastline into a gigantic oil and gas field.

Oil exploration requires massive seismic testing first – via vibrating heavy equipment and trucks, and later drilling up to three, four, or five kilometers under ground. These operations, in my opinion, would be detrimental to the natural beauty of Abruzzo and may be dangerous for residents, due to possible drinking water contamination, air pollution, well blowouts and spills which are common consequences of on-shore drilling.

In particular, water contamination issues are severe. Due 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 par with coal. The oil and gas industry has put a lot of effort in presenting natural gas as the cleanest hydrocarbon alternative. In fact, if one considers heavy sour gas, such as the one present in Abruzzo, we know that it is not true: both natural gas and crude oil 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 Ariatic hydrocarbons can drill so close to people's homes, to the beach, to crops and wineries.

Indeed, if successful, exploratory drilling will be followed by drilling of more permanent wells. Most likely, industrial facilities will have to be built, turning a touristic area 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.

We have all seen the devastation caused by the massive BP oil spill in Louisiana one year ago and prior to that of the lesser known, but still devastating explosion in Australia, where the Montara oil rig released millions of gallons of oil uncontrollably for more than two months.

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 off shore drilling and the need for energy production from renewable resources.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Chad M. Hayden-Topaz". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long, sweeping underline.

December 6<sup>th</sup> 2012

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