

United States Senate
WASHINGTON, DC 20510-0908

April 5, 2021

The Honorable Antony Blinken
Secretary
U.S. Department of State
2201 C Street, NW
Washington, D.C. 20520

Dear Secretary Blinken:

We write to bring to your attention an issue of great importance to the State of Florida. We respectfully urge you to engage with the government of the Commonwealth of The Bahamas in preparation for any possible exploratory drilling in Bahamian waters.

In February, the British-based Bahamas Petroleum Company (BPC) ceased exploratory drilling operations at its exploratory well, Perseverance, which sat just 150 miles from Florida. Thankfully, the exploration did not result in any notable environmental harm, and there have not been any reports of spilled oil from Perseverance. Although BPC has reportedly determined that this site is not viable for additional drilling, it is our understanding that additional leases in Bahamian waters, some just 50 miles from Florida's shores, are still valid through 2026.

While there are no indications of imminent drilling at these other locations, Floridians are rightly concerned by the possibility of additional oil exploration so close to Florida's shores. Floridians are reminded of the 2010 Deepwater Horizon disaster, which caused billions of dollars in harm to the economies of the Gulf States, and took an enormous toll on our coastal ecosystems and fisheries. The area of southern Florida closest to Bahamian waters is home to the Florida Reef Tract, the third largest coral barrier reef in the world. This fragile ecosystem is one of the most biodiverse in the United States, and is integral to the culture and economy of the Florida Keys. Further north, from Miami to Jacksonville, millions of Floridians live along pristine beaches and the Biscayne Bay and Indian River Lagoon estuaries, which are irreplaceable economic engines on which their livelihoods depend. All precautions and preparations to protect these critical ecosystems must be taken.

As such, we urge you to engage with the Bahamian government to facilitate discussions between the United States Coast Guard, which is the primary American agency tasked with responding to maritime oil spills, and their Bahamian counterparts to ensure that our nations are prepared to respond jointly to any oil spill threats that may occur during any future exploratory oil drilling in sovereign Bahamian waters.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,



Marco Rubio
U.S. Senator



Rick Scott
U.S. Senator

CC: Admiral Karl Schultz, Commandant of the U.S. Coast Guard