

# The Sun Herald

[Previous Story](#)

[Next Story](#)

## SUN HERALD | Editorial: Like many of us, judge finds that the MDA is 'arbitrary and capricious' about drilling

June 21, 2014

[Facebook](#) [Twitter](#) [Google Plus](#) [Reddit](#) [E-mail](#) [Print](#)

AHinds County chancery judge has ruled officials with the Mississippi Development Authority were less than candid with Coast residents and businesses about the effects of offshore drilling.

Chancery Judge William H. Singletary has tossed out MDA's proposed regulations for offshore drilling in state waters, finding the MDA failed to complete any meaningful study of the economic impact oil exploration and extraction would have on South Mississippi's ecology and economy.

Singletary's ruling should put any drilling in state waters on hold until the MDA resolves the concerns the chancellor outlined. Singletary issued the ruling in a 2012 lawsuit the Sierra Club and Gulf Restoration Network filed against the MDA.

Singletary said the state's offshore drilling regulations are "arbitrary and capricious and are not supported by substantial evidence."

The MDA, he said, wrongly concluded the state's role in leasing oil and natural gas rights is "purely administrative." Instead, he said, the state's leasing process is directly linked to drilling and the agency cannot ignore or evade the consequences of drilling. The chancellor also took issue with the MDA's attempt to postpone any meaningful examination of the costs of offshore drilling.

For its part, the MDA sent out an email saying: "We are aware of the court's ruling, and we are working with our attorneys to determine our next steps."

Robert Wiygul of Ocean Springs, attorney for the environmental groups, told the Sun Herald's Anita Lee he believes it will be "extraordinarily difficult" for the MDA to show offshore drilling benefits Coast residents and businesses.

The state proposes drilling near barrier islands in the protected Gulf Islands National Seashore. The islands draw tourists and residents for fishing and recreation.

"When you balance those resources against what you get from drilling out there, I think it's very unlikely drilling wins out," Wiygul said. "There are certain places where you don't need drilling and around our barrier islands is one of them."

We agree.

This editorial represents the views of the Sun Herald editorial board. Opinions expressed by columnists, cartoonists and letter writers are their own.

[Facebook](#) [Twitter](#) [Google Plus](#) [Reddit](#) [E-mail](#) [Print](#)

## Join The Conversation

The Sun Herald is pleased to provide this opportunity to share information, experiences and observations about what's in the news. Some of the comments may be reprinted elsewhere in the site or in the