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GREAT AUSTRALIAN BIGHT ALLIANCE MEDIA RELEASE January 18, 2016

## **Sea Shepherd, Surfrider join campaign to stop BP's Bight drilling**

- **Great Australian Bight Alliance launched to fight BP's oil drilling plans**
- **BP can't be trusted after Gulf of Mexico spill and its first Bight drilling application**
- **Bight oil spill could impact all southern Australia's coast, from WA across to Tasmania**

BP will be facing increasing opposition to its plans to drill for oil in the Great Australian Bight, with many environment groups forming an alliance with Traditional elders and locals to campaign against the British company's plans.

The Great Australian Bight Alliance includes Sea Shepherd, Surfrider Foundation Australia, the Wilderness Society, Mirning and Kokatha elders, Oil Free Seas Kangaroo Island and Clean Bight Alliance Australia (West Coast SA).

"Given the state of the world's oceans, the Great Australian Bight is rare and unique, an area of global significance and deserves the utmost protection," said Sea Shepherd Australia Managing Director Jeff Hansen.

"The Bight is rich in beauty and biodiversity, boasting the world's most significant southern right whale nursery as well as humpback, sperm, blue and beaked whales. It's also Australia's most important sea lion nursery and supports orcas, great white sharks and fish down to the small pelagic."

Surfrider Foundation Australia Brendan Frawley said: "Surfrider wants to continue to see barrels made of water not filled with oil for this part of the world. The Bight is where a wild ocean hits a wild coastline producing wild waves loved by surfers worldwide."

Mirning elder Bunna Lawrie said: "I am a Traditional Owner and song man of the Mirning people from the Great Australian Bight and the land you call Nullarbor but we call Ngargangooridri. The whale is our Dreamtime totem, he is central to our beliefs, our stories and our culture. My ancestors and I have looked after the whale, the land and the sea for 50,000 years, preserved it and protected it from the beginning of time. My duty and responsibility is to teach respect for the sea and land so that all marine life will continue to live and survive together in harmony with mankind."

Sue Coleman Haseldine, a Kokatha woman from Ceduna and founding member of the Clean Bight Alliance, said: "Many of my family still rely on a healthy sea as we have done so for thousands of generations. We eat fish, seafood and shellfish regularly. If this Bight is damaged a major part of our food source would be gone, our health would be gone, our way of life would be gone and the places where we teach our children would be gone."

Oil Free Seas Kangaroo Island spokesperson Linda Irwin said: "Kangaroo Island is the jewel in the South Australian crown. An oil spill would devastate our community. We can not afford to tarnish our island home and put at risk our fisheries, tourism industry or our precious marine life."

Wilderness Society South Australia Director Peter Owen said: “BP was responsible for the world’s biggest oil spill accident, the Deepwater Horizon tragedy in 2010, when 800 million litres of oil spewed into the Gulf of Mexico for 87 days.

“An oil spill in the Bight from a deep-sea well blowout would be devastating for fisheries, tourism and marine life, according to independent oil spill modelling released last year. The model shows that an oil spill could result in the closure of fisheries in the Bight, Bass Strait and even the Tasman Sea. Even a low-flow oil spill could impact all of southern Australia’s coast, from Western Australia right across to Victoria through Bass Strait and around Tasmania.”

“BP’s plans have already been rejected once by Australia’s offshore oil and gas authority, NOPSEMA, after it lodged an inadequate application. BP appears to have learnt nothing from the Gulf of Mexico disaster. BP has no right to risk the Great Australian Bight.”

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