

PAGES: 3 DATE: 12 April 2005

TO: Eric Theriault
Advisor, Environmental Affairs
Canada-Nova Scotia Offshore Petroleum Board
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FROM: Sean LeRoy
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MESSAGE:

Dear Mr. Theriault,

The Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency has received the following submission (also attached) during the final public comment period on the Comprehensive Study Report for the proposed **BEPCo Offshore Exploration Project**:

5 April 2005: Sandra Farwell, Seafood Producers Association of Nova Scotia

Pursuant to ss. 55.4 (2) (c) of the *Canadian Environmental Assessment Act*, this submission must be placed in the project file maintained by the CNSOPB.

The Agency requests that the CNSOPB review the submission and suggest whether any additional information should be provided or actions taken to address the concerns raised. The Agency also requests that the CNSOPB suggest whether the conclusions on the significance of effects remain the same and whether additional mitigation, monitoring or follow-up measures are required. You may wish to consult with the expert federal authorities who have been involved in this environmental assessment. Any additional information that you may submit will be considered by the Minister of the Environment before he issues his environmental assessment decision statement.

Please let me know if you intend to provide the Agency with additional information. I will await your response before submitting a recommendation to the Minister of the Environment.

Yours sincerely,

Sean LeRoy
Project Assessment Analyst



Seafood Producers Association of Nova Scotia

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April 5, 2005

Mr. Sean LeRoy
Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency
22nd Floor, Place Bell Canada
160 Elgin St., Ottawa, Ontario, K1A 0H3

Dear Mr. LeRoy:

Re: BEPCo Canada Exploration Drilling Comprehensive Study Report

We are pleased to have the opportunity to provide input into the CNSOPB's Comprehensive Study Report of BEPCo Canada's proposed exploration drilling program on EL 2407. Seafood Producers Association of Nova Scotia is a major trade association representing fish and seafood processors and exporters in Nova Scotia. We represent a large percentage of the fish and seafood production in Nova Scotia and our member companies operate most of the larger vessel fleet fishing out of Nova Scotia. Our members harvest and process various species including groundfish, scallops, herring, lobster, shrimp, crab and a number of other species.

Our comments and concerns are as follows:

1. Well Head Removal.

The proponent is recommending wellheads be abandoned in place for all wells to be drilled, possibly as many as seven. The water depth is 1450 metres for the first well with the remaining wells to be drilled as shallow as 1200 metres. Wellheads represent a significant potential safety hazard for the fishery due to gear snagging. Currently there is limited fishing in the portion of EL 2407 below 1200 metres. In other Canadian areas the fishery is active in water as deep as 1500 metres. We are concerned that these wellheads will remain in place as obstructions for many, many years and will be a safety hazard when new commercial fisheries extend to this area.

It is our understanding that all wellheads in Nova Scotian waters within 1000 metres have been removed but wellheads in the vicinity 1700 to 2100 metres have been abandoned in place. The BEPCo proposal would represent the most shallow wellhead abandonment to date.

The fisheries industry is not permitted to leave obstructions on the ocean floor as it is considered a form of ocean dumping. We consider it rational that other industries should also be required to remove obstructions from the ocean bottom.

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We recommend that the CNSOPB require BEPCo Canada to remove all wellheads for wells drilled as part of their proposed exploration drilling program.

2. Commitment for a Fisheries Observer.

BEPCo has committed to having Fisheries Observers on site during operations. We are pleased to see that the CNSOPB is making this commitment a condition of approval of BEPCo's exploratory drilling application.

3. Fisheries Interaction and Impact.

We note that there is limited fishing at the present time in the area proposed to be drilled by BEPCo Canada. There are, nonetheless, commercially important stocks of fish in the EL 2407 general area. There is a significant fishery in the shallower portions of the block and adjacent waters. We request that the CNSOPB continue with its approach for oil and gas operators to conduct exploration activity in a manner that minimizes the impact on the fishery, marine fish resources and fish habit in general. This means, to mention but a few potential mitigation measures, routing supply vessels away from areas where fishing is occurring, eliminating deleterious discharges in accordance with the Offshore Waste Treatment Guidelines or bringing all waste to shore, timing vertical seismic profiles to avoid potential impact on fish larvae and fish spawning activity and using water based drilling muds.

4. CEEA Process.

We note that there was participant funding available for stakeholder groups to conduct a more in-depth analysis of BEPCo's Exploratory Drilling Project during the environmental assessment process. CEEA, however, did not directly notify long-standing parties in the fishery such as SPANS about the potential for funding. We request that the CNSOPB and CEEA work together to disseminate information to fisheries representatives through the Fisheries Advisory Committee (FAC) or another direct method to ensure all potential participants are aware of all aspects of the review process.

Thank-you in advance for considering our comments on the comprehensive study report for this project.

Sincerely,

Sandra Farwell
Executive Assistant