

Scotian Basin Exploration Drilling Project: Timeline

When it comes to exploratory drilling programs that an operator proposes to conduct, the Canada-Nova Scotia Offshore Petroleum Board (CNSOPB) goes to great lengths to ensure that operators meet strict requirements before they may be granted an authorization to commence any offshore work. We also make sure that effective monitoring programs are in place to confirm compliance during the execution of a drilling program.

What does this mean?

The lifecycle of any offshore activity goes well beyond simply submitting an application for authorization to our dedicated team of experts, and it starts well before an application to conduct an exploratory drilling program is submitted. It is governed by a strong regulatory framework established by governments through legislation (Accord Acts) and regulations, which are supplemented by CNSOPB guidelines laying out expectations on industry in meeting statutory requirements.

Our guidelines take into consideration global industry standards used in similar operating environments, along with lessons learned from past incidents. In implementing the regulatory framework, our team of experts relies on the best available science, and works in a collaborative manner to gather and review additional information from other government departments, with relevant and extensive expertise.

How does BP Canada and the Scotian Basin Exploration Drilling Project fit within this framework?

The Scotian Basin Exploration Drilling Project is no exception. As part of the Call for Bids process for exploration licences that BP Canada acquired in 2012, CNSOPB conducted a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) to identify any potential environmental concerns ahead of any major decisions made.



Furthermore, before an operator is allowed to undertake any offshore exploratory work, such as a seismic survey or an exploratory drilling program, a rigorous application review process is triggered. This includes a requirement for a project specific environmental assessment to be completed. Subsequent monitoring and enforcement programs are also designed, reviewed and implemented to ensure regulatory compliance with federal-provincial legislation and regulations.

Call for Bids NS12-1 timeline

February 2012: CNSOPB begins SEA with respect to Call for Bids NS12-1.

April 2012: Call for Bids NS12-1 initiated.

August 2012: CNSOPB issues draft SEA for public comment. The SEA is a key opportunity for stakeholders to identify initial concerns related to a particular region with respect to potential future oil and gas exploration, and to provide feedback. The public comment period is open for input for 30 days, and is shared via the CNSOPB website, with further distribution to the CNSOPB Fisheries Advisory Committee, relevant government departments and key stakeholder groups.

October 2012: CNSOPB finalizes SEA.

November 2012: BP Canada submits its bids for exploration licences in the Scotian Basin, and is announced as the successful bidder for four licences (EL 2431, EL 2432, EL 2433, EL 2434).

BP Canada Scotian Basin Exploration Drilling Project timeline

July 2013: BP Canada submits a Project Description for a proposed seismic program to the CNSOPB. This initiates the Environmental Assessment (EA) process to satisfy legislative requirements set out in the Accord Acts.

January 2014: BP Canada's draft EA for the proposed seismic program is submitted to CNSOPB for review, which is then posted to our website for public comment. This public comment period, with further distribution to key stakeholder groups, is open for input for 30 days.

March 2014: The seismic program EA is finalized, and authorization is granted by CNSOPB.



May-October 2014: BP Canada conducts their seismic surveying.

September 2014-Ongoing: BP Canada processes and analyzes the data collected from their seismic survey to determine if and where they may wish to proceed with the drilling of one or more exploratory wells.



August 2015: BP Canada files a Project Description with the Canadian Environmental Assessment (CEA) Agency, with the intent to move forward with an application for exploration drilling. Drilling an exploration well is a Designated Project pursuant to the Canadian Environmental Assessment Act (CEAA) 2012, and requires a federal EA.

The CEAA 2012 EA process includes a number of public comment and consultation opportunities, as well as direct consultation with Indigenous groups, all led by CEA Agency. This is supplemented by ongoing direct outreach with fisheries stakeholders, led by BP Canada.

August 2015: BP Canada's Project Description is posted to the Canadian Environmental Assessment Registry (CEAR) for a 20-day comment period.

September 2015: CEA Agency announces that an EA is required and the draft CEA Agency Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) Guidelines are posted to CEAR for a 30-day comment period.

November 2015: CEA Agency posts final EIS Guidelines to CEAR.

August 2015-November 2016: BP Canada prepares EIS.

November 2016: CEA Agency accepts EIS and posts all relevant documents to CEAR for a 30-day comment period.

December 2016-November 2017: CEA Agency works through public, stakeholder, government and Indigenous comments on the EIS.

November 2017: CEA Agency posts draft EA Report and proposed EA Conditions to CEAR for public comment.



December 2017-January 2018: CEA Agency works through comments and findings on EA Report and Conditions, and makes recommendations to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change Canada (ECCC).

February 1, 2018: The Minister of ECCC releases the Decision Statement, indicating that the Designated Project is not likely to cause significant adverse environmental effects, and the project may proceed subject to other statutory approvals.

April 2017-Present: CNSOPB reviews BP Canada's application for authorization to conduct an exploratory drilling program (one well), accompanied by supporting documentation, including:

- An Environmental Protection Plan that sets out the procedures, practices, resources and monitoring necessary to manage the hazards identified in the CEA Agency EA and Conditions outlined in the Minister's Decision Statement to ensure protection of the environment.
- A safety plan demonstrating that all necessary steps will be taken to ensure the safety of personnel and offshore installations, vessels and support craft.
- Emergency response, spill response and other contingency plans that will be implemented, should the need dictate.
- Bridging documents that demonstrate how BP Canada's systems will integrate with their major contractors.
- A Certificate of Fitness issued by a recognized classification society that certifies that the drilling unit is in compliance with regulations, is fit for use and can be operated safely without polluting the environment.
- Canada-Nova Scotia Benefits Plan to provide manufacturers, consultants, contractors and service companies in the Province and other parts of Canada with a full and fair opportunity to participate on a competitive basis.
- Documentation demonstrating that the necessary financial resources are in place to undertake the activity and to respond to any incidents that may occur, including responding to and cleaning up a spill.



After we've reviewed all policies, plans and procedures that BP Canada has submitted as part of their authorization application, then Ready-For-Operations Audits of the operator and their key contractors (drilling, vessel and aviation services) are conducted. Our in-house experts lead on-the-ground inspections and audits of facilities, equipment and arrangements to verify readiness for operations and regulatory compliance. The ultimate goal of these audits is to confirm that the equipment is fit for purpose, the procedures are appropriate and personnel have the necessary training and competency. This an important final step to be completed by our team before an authorization may be granted.

February 13-March 2018: With the Minister's Decision Statement released and CEA Agency Conditions finalized, CNSOPB proceeds with public engagement sessions to discuss the authorization process and provide key stakeholders with the opportunity to identify issues and concerns within our remit. This may trigger further information sharing, development of additional conditions to be made to the granting of an authorization, and adjustments to compliance monitoring and enforcement programs.



We understand that the decisions we make affect our environment and stakeholders – individuals, fisheries, communities, and businesses. Our robust review and approval process holds all parties involved accountable and offers ample opportunity for information gathering and processing, including raising and addressing public concerns that may be considered within our regulatory process.

Have something you'd like to share with us? We want to hear from you! Contact us at info@cnsopb.ns.ca.

