



INTERAGENCY DECOMMISSIONING WORKING GROUP (IDWG)

Minerals Management Service ● California State Lands Commission ● U.S. Coast Guard
California Coastal Commission ● California Department of Fish and Game ● Ventura County
National Marine Fisheries Service ● U.S. Army Corps of Engineers ● Santa Barbara County

STATUS REPORT

JUNE 2000

This status report on oil and gas facility decommissioning activities was published by the County of Santa Barbara Department of Planning and Development Energy Division with input provided by representatives of agencies on the Interagency Decommissioning Working Group (IDWG). The IDWG plans to issue the news letter bi-annually to provide updates to the public on decommissioning projects, scientific research, legislative and regulatory initiatives, workshops, forums, and other events of potential interest. For additional information, you may contact members of the IDWG or refer to the applicable web-site addresses cited in this status report.

Interagency Decommissioning Working Group (IDWG)

The IDWG was formed in late 1997 to proactively address issues that were identified by participants who attended a September 1997 decommissioning workshop sponsored by the Minerals Management Service (MMS) and the California State Lands Commission (SLC). This workshop was held in Ventura, California and was entitled "Decommissioning and Removal of Oil and Gas Facilities Offshore California: Recent Experience and Future Deep Water Challenges." The IDWG is composed of representatives from the Minerals Management Service, California State Lands Commission, California Coastal Commission, California Department of Fish and Game, National Marine Fisheries Service, U.S. Coast Guard, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Santa Barbara County, and Ventura County (see membership list on page 4).

Action Plan and 1997 Workshop Proceedings

To guide its efforts in addressing decommissioning issues, the IDWG has prepared an Action Plan that lists and prioritizes the issues identified during the 1997 decommissioning workshop. The Action Plan and the 1997 Decommissioning Workshop Proceedings are available at: www.mms.gov/omm/pacific/public/whatsnew.htm. The action plan identifies 28 separate issues that were raised by workshop participants. The issues have been grouped into five major categories: (1) Technical, (2) Environmental, (3) Disposition, (4) Site Clearance, and (5) Policy. The plan prioritizes issues within each category and designates agency leads for each issue. A public comment meeting was held on August 22, 1999, to receive comments on the Action Plan.

The goals of the IDWG Action Plan are to develop an effective process for: (1) addressing decommissioning issues, (2) collecting, sharing, and disseminating information with all interested parties, (3) promoting dialogue and communication among all parties, and (4) improving interagency planning and coordination in advance of future decommissioning projects. Since its formation in late 1997, IDWG member agencies have been funding scientific research, collecting information, and sponsoring workshops, symposiums and other public forums to disseminate information in a timely manner and facilitate dialogue and discussion among all interested parties.

DEEP WATER REMOVAL STUDY

The MMS has awarded a contract to

Twachtman, Snyder and Byrd, Inc. of Houston, Texas to conduct a study entitled "State of the Art for Removing Large Platforms Located in Deep Water." The project will provide a review of the technology available for removing large platforms, those having jacket weights over 10,000 short tons, in deep water. The primary focus of the study will be on the removal of large platforms on the Pacific Outer Continental Shelf Region. The review will consider economics, risk (human, commercial, and environmental), and will evaluate explosive and non-explosive methods of removal. The impact of partial or complete removal and conversion to an artificial reef will be considered. The study will address many of the technical issues identified during the 1997 decommissioning workshop that are listed in the aforementioned IDWG Action Plan. The study is scheduled to be completed by September 2000.

PLATFORM FISH ECOLOGY STUDY EXTENSION

Dr. Milton Love, University of California, Santa Barbara, has been conducting scientific research on the ecology of fish around offshore oil and gas platforms in the Santa Barbara Channel. The United States Geological Survey (USGS) is sponsoring and managing the study, at the request of MMS. Two years of research have been conducted and a proposal has been submitted to extend the research for an additional year of field sampling. The California Artificial Enhancement Program (CARE), a nonprofit public benefit corporation, has offered to support a continuation of this research

by providing additional funding to the MMS and USGS, who would continue to cooperatively administer the study. The research proposal is currently being reviewed by the MMS and USGS.

PLATFORM ECOLOGY BIBLIOGRAPHY

In January 2000, the MMS completed a report entitled "Platform Ecology Studies Funded by the Minerals Management Service's Environmental Studies Program: An Annotated Bibliography." The report identifies and describes platform ecology research and related natural reef research funded by the MMS's Environmental Studies Program in the Pacific OCS Region and the Gulf of Mexico OCS Region. The bibliography describes the background, scope, and objectives of the studies and the study results and conclusions. The bibliography was prepared to serve as reference source of information for the public, scientists, and other interested parties including the Select Scientific Advisory Group on Decommissioning. The Advisory Group was formed by the University of California to provide scientific leadership on potential conversion of oil and gas platforms to artificial reef structures. The annotated bibliography is available at: www.mms.gov/omm/pacific/public/whatsnew.htm

CA STATE LANDS COMMISSION RIGS TO REEFS WORKSHOP

Currently offshore California there are 33 oil facilities, 10 in state waters. Six of the state water facilities are islands. Under terms of the current state and federal leases, it is anticipated that the platforms will be completely removed. However, it has been suggested that using the structures for artificial reefs may provide significant benefits and should be considered as a viable alternative removal strategy.

The SLC held a workshop on converting offshore oil platforms to

artificial reefs on December 3, 1999 in Los Angeles. The Commission received testimony from the scientific community, relevant public agencies, the oil and gas industry, ocean users and the environmental community. The workshop resulted from the concerns the commissioners raised last June when discussing the proposal to decommission Belmont Island off the coast of Orange County. The purpose of the workshop was to give the commissioners a better understanding of the facts relating to issues surrounding rigs to reefs.

Abandonment of offshore oil facilities has already started in state waters. But decisions on methods have yet to be made for several sites in State and Federal waters. Rigs to reefs are one method of oil facility abandonment that will continue to be proposed and presented before the Commission.

For more information and complete transcripts (testimony) from the workshop please visit the SLC website at: www.slc.ca.gov

BELMONT ISLAND DECOMMISSIONING PROJECT

On December 3, 1999, the California State Lands Commission (SLC) certified the Mitigated Negative Declaration (ND), and approved the plan to remove Exxon-Mobil's Belmont Island, an artificial island built in 1953 and located offshore of the City of Seal Beach, in Orange County. The commission originally considered the ND and plan in June of last year and requested additional information after

opposition was heard from local sports fishing and diving enthusiasts. A biological study of the area found, as believed, that the area was not suitable for an artificial reef due to water clarity, water depth, and other issues, notably liability and location problems could not be resolved. It was also found that the site represented only 0.2% of the available habitat in the area.

The island will be completely removed down to the mud line using conventional marine construction and decommissioning procedures and equipment. Concrete structures will be cut or broken into transportable pieces and removed. Usable concrete material, and the rip-rap which surrounds the facility, will be made available to the California Department of Fish and Game for the enhancement of the Bolsa Chica artificial reef complex off Huntington Beach, California.

Work on the first of four phases, the total of which is anticipated to last one year, began on May 10, 2000. The first phase involves the cutting of 70 conductors using a high pressure abrasive cutting tool and the removal of smaller metal components such as light poles, electrical piping and lightweight decking. SLC staff is onsite daily to ensure conformance to the mitigation monitoring program adopted for this project.



ExxonMobil's Belmont Island Removal Project

SINKING OF HMCS YUKON

On April 14, 2000, the California Coastal Commission approved an application of the San Diego Oceans Foundation and City of San Diego to sink a 366-foot long decommissioned Canadian naval vessel, HMCS Yukon, approximately 1.85 miles offshore of Mission and Pacific beaches in San Diego County to create a diving attraction.

The Yukon project is modeled on the experience of the Artificial Reef Society of British Columbia, which in 1992 began a program of sinking vessels to create economic benefits for the Province's communities through scuba diving and fisheries enhancement.

The major issues associated with this project include potential impacts to marine resources and water quality which will be mitigated through implementation of a number of special conditions that require the vessel be cleaned to U.S. Coast Guard, State of California Ocean Plan and Environment Canada (*i.e.*, the Canadian equivalent of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency) water quality standards.

The Yukon sinking event is planned for July 15, 2000.

NATIONAL ARTIFICIAL REEF PLAN

The National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) developed the first National Artificial Reef Plan in 1985, as provided for in the 1984, National Fishing Enhancement Act. Significant advances in artificial reef research and technology have taken place since the first national plan was developed. To recognize the better understanding of the science of artificial reefs acquired over the last 15 years, the NMFS is in the process of updating the national plan.

The NMFS Office of Intergovernmental and Recreational

Fisheries has completed a preliminary draft of the Plan, which is presently being reviewed by other NOAA agencies (*i.e.* National Sea Grant College Program, National Geodetic Survey). Completion of the NOAA review will be followed by review by other Federal agencies with a statutory or mission interest (*i.e.* MMS, USCG, Army Corps. of Engineers). The public review and comment period is expected to occur in late 2000, after all Federal reviews have been completed. The final plan will be a blue print for artificial reef planning, management and

SANTA BARBARA COUNTY DRAFT ABANDONMENT PLAN

Energy Division staff plans to release a draft report, titled *Abandonment of Offshore Oil and Gas Fields, Related Infrastructure, and Oil Refineries*, and to conduct two public workshops to discuss the report's contents in July. (Staff will announce the workshop dates upon release of the public draft.) The draft report contains seven chapters as follows: Chapter 1—Introduction; Chapter 2—Abandonment Offshore: Outer Continental Shelf; Chapter 3—Abandonment Offshore: State Tidelands; Chapter 4—Abandonment Onshore: Facilities that Produce Offshore Oil and Gas from Onshore Wells; Chapter 5—Abandonment Onshore: Downstream Facilities; Chapter 6—Abandonment Onshore: Offsite Pipelines; Chapter 7—Abandonment Onshore: Contaminated Soils and Waters.

Each topical chapter presents a summary of the governance, historic experience, and future outlook for abandonment of oil and gas operations. The chapters also contain a summary of potential issues and, where appropriate, offer recommendations for resolving issues.

Once finalized, staff will present the report to the Planning Commission, accompanied with specific proposals for

amendments to the Comprehensive Plan (including the Coastal Plan) and applicable County codes.

STATUS OF CHEVRON 4H SHELL MOUNDS

Chevron is continuing to seek resolution of the concerns expressed regarding the shell mounds that remain after removal of Platforms Heidi, Hope, Hilda and Hazel in 1996. Interim mitigation measures approved by the SLC at their December 3, 1999 meeting, are being implemented by Chevron. Marker buoys have been installed at each shell mound and lights will be added in accordance with the requirements of the US Coast Guard. Differential GPS navigation equipment have been approved by Chevron for 17 qualified trawl fishermen. Chevron and the SLC have drafted a detailed process for handling fishermen damage claims. A Request for Proposals for a feasibility study of removal of the mounds was jointly prepared by the CCC and SLC and mailed out in April to 52 prospective bidders. A bidders meeting was held on April 26 at the Coastal Commission office in San Francisco with final bids due on May 12. The CCC and SLC are jointly reviewing the four bids received and plan to announce the award of the contract to the successful bidder by mid-June

SPILL SYMPOSIUM TO BE HELD IN LONG BEACH

On August 28-30, 2000, the SLC will present its fourth biennial oil spill prevention conference. *Prevention First 2000: An Onshore and Offshore Spill Prevention Symposium & Technology Exhibition* will be held at The Westin Long Beach Hotel.

Over 400 representatives from both the public sector and private industry are expected to attend the event. In addition to our traditional topics of human and organizational factors, pipeline safety, marine facility engineering, and

environmental protection, *Prevention First 2000* breakout sessions will feature emerging issues, such as California's new ballast water management requirements, the "Rigs-to-Reefs" debate, marine oil terminal engineering standards, and SLC's offshore facility safety audit program. The accompanying Technology Exhibition will feature 42 exhibits relating to oil spill prevention at marine terminals and offshore platforms.

**MARINE RECREATIONAL FISHERIES
SYMPOSIUM 2000**

This first of a kind symposium is being convened by the National Marine Fisheries Service and the National Sea Grant College Program. The symposium will be held in San Diego, California, from June 25-28, 2000. The purpose of this symposium is to bring together the diverse segments of the marine recreational fishing community and provide the opportunity to discover improved direction for resource managers and the angling public. The agenda includes panel discussions that will address issues related to artificial reefs, FADS, marine reserves and much more. Detailed information on registration, agenda and poster session are available at the National Marine Fisheries Service's website:
www.nmfs.gov/irf/irf.html

INTERAGENCY DECOMMISSIONING WORKING GROUP

Dettmer, Alison
Coastal Program Manager
State of California
California Coastal Commission
45 Fremont Street, Suite 2000
San Francisco, CA 94105
(415) 904-5205_- Office
(415) 904-5400 - FAX
adettmer@coastal.ca.gov

Marty Golden
Pacific Recreational Fisheries
Office of Intergovernmental and Recreational
Facilities
501 W. Ocean Blvd. Suite 4200
Long Beach, CA 90802-4213
(562) 980 - 4004 - Office
(562) 980 - 4047 - FAX
marty.golden@noaa.gov

Graves, Yuri
Marine Safety Detachment
U.S. Coast Guard
111 Harbor Way
Santa Barbara, CA 93109
(805) 962-7430 - Office
(805) 962-7968 - FAX
ygraves@d11.uscg.mil

Helvey, Mark
National Marine Fisheries Service
777 Sonoma Avenue, #325
Santa Rosa, CA 95404
(707) 575-6078 - Office
(707) 578-3435 - FAX
mark.helvey@noaa.gov

Parker, Dave
California Department of Fish & Game
Marine Resources Division
Southern Operations
330 Golden Shore, Suite 50
Long Beach, CA 90802
(562) 590-5129 - Office
(562) 590-5193 - FAX
dparker@hq.dfg.ca.gov

Perez, Luis
County of Santa Barbara
Planning & Development Department
Energy Division
1226 Anacapa St.
Santa Barbara, CA 93101-2010
(805) 568-2034 - Office
(805) 568-2522 - FAX
lfperez@co.santa-barbara.ca.us

Smith, John
Minerals Management Service
Pacific OCS Region
770 Paseo Camarillo
Camarillo, CA 93010
(805) 389-7833 - Office
(805) 389-7874 - FAX
john.smith@mms.gov

Voskanian, Marina
Chief, Planning and Development
California State Lands Commission
200 Oceangate, 12th Floor
Long Beach, CA 90802-4331
(562) 590-5291 - Office
(562) 590-5295 - FAX
voskanm@slc.ca.gov

Ward, Julie
Oil & Gas Projects Planner
County of Ventura
Planning Division
800 S. Victoria Avenue
Ventura, CA 93009
(805) 654-3588 - Office
(805) 654-2509 - FAX
julie.ward@mail.co.ventura.ca.us

Welch, Tiffany
U. S. Army Corps of Engineers
Ventura Reg. Field Office
2151 Alessandro Drive., Suite 255
Ventura, CA 93001
(805) 641-2935 - Office
(805) 641-0230 - FAX
twelch@spl.usace.army.mil