

# STATE OF ALASKA

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**ALASKA COASTAL MANAGEMENT PROGRAM**

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January 19, 2007

Faye W. Sullivan, Permitting & Regulatory Affairs Supervisor  
Chevron  
909 West 9th Avenue  
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Anchorage, AK 99519-6247

Subject: **Chevron/UOCC Granite Point Onshore/Offshore 3D Seismic Survey**  
State ID NO. AK2007-0104 OG  
**Start of 30-day ACMP Review**

Dear Ms. Sullivan ~

The Office of Project Management and Permitting received the Coastal Project Questionnaire and consistency certification, applications, and supporting information you submitted for the proposed project. OPMP is coordinating a review for consistency with the Alaska Coastal Management Program (ACMP) (AS 46.40). This letter initiates the State of Alaska review of this proposed project under the schedule and process described in State regulations (11 AAC 110).

**Project Description**

Chevron/Union Oil Company of California (UOCC) proposes to acquire seismic data during spring 2007 from the onshore/offshore transition zone around Granite Point in Upper Cook Inlet on lands managed by the State, Native Corporation and Private ownership. UOCC would conduct an ocean bottom-cable seismic (OBC) survey immediately offshore and northwest of Granite Point. The offshore portion of the operation would be confined to a single 28.2 km<sup>2</sup> (10.9 mi<sup>2</sup>) block bordering the shoreline, extending to a water depth of 18 m (60 ft). Offshore operations would involve a 900 cu in BOLT airgun array with two sub-arrays of 3,225 cu in guns and 3,75 cu in guns. The seismic operation would be active 24 hours per day, but the airguns would only be active for 1-2 hours during each of the 3-4 slack tide periods. Vessels will lay and retrieve cable on the bottom between periods of acquiring seismic data. The seismic vessel currently planned for use is the *MN Peregrine Falcon*, supported by 3-4 bow pickers. The project is anticipated to require 30 days, starting as early as 1 May and

ending no later than 15 June depending on the completion date of ConocoPhillips Beluga River seismic program and weather conditions. The proposed Granite Point seismic operation would be conducted immediately after ConocoPhillips completes its Beluga River seismic survey, as the same vessels and equipment would be used.

UOCC has contracted Veritas DGC to acquire the seismic data. Assuming a spring start, mobilization of equipment and personnel would commence early February, 2007. UOCC hopes to have permits by early February to allow the mulching/drilling equipment to be barged to the worksite and Veritas DGC would start survey operations near February 1.

### **Onshore Surveying**

Veritas DGC will support the crew with a number of vans, pick-ups and all terrain vehicles. Veritas will contract the land survey portion out to EXTREME surveys and navigation to HAFTA surveys. EXTREME SURVEYS will utilize several roving RTK units equipped with telemetry radio and 12 channel GPS cards. The roving units will move along pre-chained lines and collect data from each receiver and shot point location.

### **Onshore Mulching**

2-4 Mulchers will be used to clear heavy alder and spruce areas of this program. D5G and/or D6N mulchers will clear an area of 3.5 to 4 meters without disturbing the top mat of soil. Mulchers are mounted on low ground pressure machines exerting only 3- 3.75 psi. The low ground pressure mulchers remove unwanted vegetation leaving fine rapidly bio-degradable nutrient-rich mulch in its wake. The Mulchers meander through forested areas avoiding old-growth spruce and alders while clearing brush and smaller trees, in a manner that does not result in long stretches of visible cut line. Mulchers leave soil structures and root systems intact. The Mulchers will maintain DNR required set-backs from established roads, creeks and river drainages.

### **Onshore Drilling**

Veritas believes all drilling can be accomplished with track drills and/or heliportable drills. To accomplish this they would use FN 110 drill rigs. The tracked drill rigs are auger units equipped with air compressors. These drills have performed well on several similar programs in the Cook Inlet over the past 5 years. The track drills will be run on a 14-hour shift per day. Veritas plans to support the heliportable drilling with an AS 350 BA (A Star) helicopter. Veritas has estimated that each drill will average 10-15 holes/day, 80 total. Explosives will be 5 pound cast primer cut to fit detonation system. The cut to fit system brings a new level of safety to drilling and recording operations. All holes will be 3" diameter, drilled to 25 feet.

### **Offshore Mobilization; Cable Deployment & Retrieval**

The seismic source/ cable vessel planned for use is the M/V *Peregrine Falcon*, supported by 3-4 bow pickers. These vessels will be supporting the Beluga program prior to Granite Point. As well, there will be the Mothership Vessel, *Arctic Wolf*, providing housing for

personnel; repair facilities and Marine Mammal Observers. The deployment and retrieval of the bottom cables during the Granite Point program will be accomplished with the use of shallow draft vessels, the Peregrine and several bow pickers. The vessels will be rigged with hydraulically driven deployment and retrieval power rollers similar to those found in the drift net fishery. The systems Veritas DGC will use in the Cook Inlet are two wheel pulleys and bow mounted power rollers.

The source for acquisition would be a 900 CUI Bolt air gun array situated on the M/V *Peregrine Falcon*. The array would be made up of two sub arrays, each with two three gun clusters separated by 1.5 meters off the stern of the vessel. One cluster will consist of 3, 225 cu in guns and the second cluster will have 3, 75 cu in guns. During recording, the subarrays will fire at 25-50 m intervals and they are designed to focus energy in the downward direction as the vessel travels at 4 to 5 knots. Source level of the airgun array is 249 dB re 1 microPa at 1 m (0 - peak), and the dominant frequency range is 8 - 40 Hz.

A total of three cetacean and two pinniped species are known to occur in the vicinity of the project area. One of the species, the northern sea lion, is listed as Endangered under the Endangered Species Act (ESA). The beluga whale is listed as depleted under the Marine Mammal Protection Act (MMPA). The other species (killer whale, harbor porpoise, and harbor seals) have no special designation under the ESA or the MMPA. NMFS is currently reviewing the status of the Cook Inlet beluga whale population to make a determination for possible listing under the ESA. The National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) is currently requesting comments on its proposal to issue authorizations to UOCC for incidentally take, by harassment, small numbers of these species between approximately mid-March and mid-June, 2007. Comments and information must be received by NMFS no later than February 5, 2007 (see **Federal Register** / Vol. 72, No. 3 / January 5, 2007).

### **Project Location**

The proposed seismic survey is located within a 39 square mile area, in various onshore and offshore sections of T. 10 & 11 N., R. 11 & 12 W., Seward Meridian, in western Cook Inlet, near Old Tyonek, Alaska. Offshore activities proposed by UOCC encompass a 28.2 km<sup>2</sup> (10.9 mi<sup>2</sup>) area in northwestern Cook Inlet, paralleling the shoreline of Granite Point, extending from shore into the inlet to an average of about 1.6 km (1 mile). The approximate boundaries of the region of the proposed project area are 61°00.827'N, 151°24.071'W; 61°02.420'N, 151°15.375'W; 61°00.862'N, 150°15.313'W; and 61°57.979'N, 151°23.946'W. There are no major rivers flowing in the open water seismic project area. Water depths range from 0 to 18 m (60 ft).

### **Scope of Project to be Reviewed**

The present review will determine if those proposed activities requiring the issuance of State of Alaska Geophysical Exploration Permit; Temporary Water Use Permit; and Title 41 Anadromous Fish Habitat Permit(s) would be consistent with the statewide

standards of the Alaska Coastal Management Program at 11 AAC 112.200 - 11 AAC 112.990 and the enforceable policies of the Kenai Peninsula Borough Coastal Management District. Note that issuance of Temporary Water Use Permit(s) covering Water use for ice-road /pad/air-strip construction would be authorized via GCD-8, and are thus outside of the scope of this ACMP review. Similarly, issuance by the United States Corp of Engineers of a Federal permit authorizing Survey Activities in waters of the U.S. (per 33 CFR 325) would be under Nationwide-6 and consequently outside of the scope of ACMP review.

Recent legislation excludes activities from the consistency review that are subject to authorization by the Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation (ADEC) under the requirements described in 46.40.040(b). For such purposes, the issuance of the ADEC authorization determines consistency with the Air, Land and Water Quality Standard.

### **Review Process**

I distributed the packet of information you submitted to the following review participants: Alaska Department of Fish and Game, Division of Sport-Fish; Alaska Department of Natural Resources, Division of Oil & Gas; Alaska Department of Natural Resources, Office of Habitat Management & Permitting; Alaska Department of Natural Resources, Division of Geological & Geophysical Surveys; Alaska Department of Natural Resources, Alaska State Historic Preservation Office; Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation; and the Kenai Peninsula Borough Coastal Management District. These review participants will be reviewing the proposal for consistency with the enforceable policies of the Alaska Coastal Management Program.

A notice has been sent to Post Offices in: Anchorage, Kenai and Tyonek, Alaska. Also the notice has been sent to the DNR website: [www.alaskacoast.state.ak.us](http://www.alaskacoast.state.ak.us). A copy of this review package is available for public inspection and copying at the OPMP office in Anchorage.

### **Authorizations**

The project must be found consistent with the ACMP before the following State and Federal authorizations may be issued:

- Alaska Department of Natural Resources (DNR), Division of Oil & Gas  
-- Geophysical Exploration Permit
  - Alaska DNR, Office of Habitat Management & Permitting (OHMP)  
-- Title 41 Fish Habitat Permit
  - Alaska DNR, Division of Mining, Land, and Water  
-- Temporary Water Use Permit (Water to support exploration, operational & maintenance activities, including drilling and camp supply)
- The project will *also* require the following authorizations (issuance not contingent upon ACMP Determination):

- Alaska DNR, Division of Mining, Land, and Water
  - Temporary Water Use Permit (GCD-8 will be applied to the permit application for Temporary Water Use Permit(s) covering Water use for ice-road/pad construction.)
- U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (COE)
  - Section 404 Permit (#POA-2007-229-D, Beshta Bay *authorized using NWP-6*)
- U.S. National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS)
  - Incidental Harassment Authorization (see **Federal Register** / Vol. 72, No. 3 / January 5, 2007, Comments due to NMFS by February 5, 2007)

State agencies shall issue permits within five days after OPMP issues the final consistency determination that concurs with the applicant's consistency certification, unless the resource agency considers additional time to be necessary to fulfill its statutory or regulatory authority.

Please note that, in addition to their consistency review, State agencies with permitting responsibilities will evaluate this proposed project according to their specific permitting authorities. Agencies will issue permits and authorizations only if they find the proposed project complies with their statutes and regulations in addition to being consistent with the coastal program. Applicants may not use any State land or water without DNR authorization.

**Review Schedule**

OPMP is coordinating the consistency review of this project under a **30-day** review schedule. Review deadlines are as follows:

Request for Information	January 31, 2006
<b>Comment Deadline</b>	<b>February 05, 2007, 5:00 p.m.</b>
Proposed Response	February 12, 2007
Final Response	February 20, 2007

**State review participants will evaluate this proposed project for consistency with the enforceable policies of the ACMP that include statewide standards in 11 AAC 112, and enforceable policies of the North Slope Borough Coastal Resource District, with the exception of the Air, Land and Water Quality Standard (11 AAC 112.310). DEC will review any activities subject to DEC permits, certifications, approvals, and authorizations for consistency with 11 AAC 112.310. The issuance of the permits, certifications, approvals, and authorizations by DEC establishes consistency with 11 AAC 112.310 for those specific activities.** The public may also submit comments regarding the consistency of the project with the ACMP. Any comments concerning consistency with **11 AAC 112.310** must be submitted directly to DEC. Comments concerning consistency with all other standards and policies must be submitted to OPMP.

OPMP will give careful consideration to all comments. The proposed consistency determination will notify you of OPMP's concurrence with or objection to your certification. If OPMP objects, the consistency determination may include alternative measures required to make the proposed project consistent with the ACMP. You may choose to adopt the alternative measures, or propose other modifications that would achieve consistency for review participants and OPMP to consider.

By a copy of this letter I am informing the State and Federal agencies that the OPMP has begun its consistency review.

We encourage you to visit OPMP's web site for more information about the ACMP. The web site contains the State's consistency review regulations 11 AAC 110, the public notice for this project, and other information. Please contact me at 269- 7474, or via email at: [ben\\_green@dnr.state.ak.us](mailto:ben_green@dnr.state.ak.us) if you have any questions.

Sincerely,



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DEC

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Shane Guan, NOAA  
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