Petroleum news

page 4 Latest news on Alaska's pitch for stake in gas pipeline

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Governor offers help to Agrium

COURTESY OF AGRIUM

Alaska Gov. Frank Murkowski said he is concerned about the possible closure of the Agrium fertilizer plant on the Kenai Peninsula and has offered state help in forming a working group to assess the natural gas supply problem and other options. Alternatives the governor expects the group to look at include exploration in the Kenai National Wildlife Refuge and the possibility of replacing natural gas generation with coal generation from the Healy Clean Coal facility. See story and sidebar on page A14.

Anadarko challenges proposed TAPS tariff hike, existing rate

Anadarko Petroleum filed a protest with the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission Dec. 16 challenging the 2005 tariff increases proposed by the five owners of the trans-Alaska oil pipeline system. The company also filed a complaint with FERC protesting the existing tariffs, calling them unjust and unreasonable.

Anadarko asked the commission to "suspend the 2005 tariffs, declare those rates subject to refund, initiate hearing procedures, establish just and reasonable TAPS rates … and grant Anadarko refunds, reparation, damages (with interest) and other appropriate relief, including attorney fees."

This will be the first time FERC has been asked to review the reasonableness of the tariff on North Slope oil being shipped

see **ANADARKO** page A19

First Calgary can't get no respect; Sempra working on Alaska LNG project

FIRST CALGARY PETROLEUMS announced a natural gas find in Algeria on Dec. 8 and got shunted to the inside pages of Canada's business sections.

The same day Shell Canada announced a gas discovery in west-central Alberta and, in the words of one Canadian newspaper columnist, it was "as if the company had found an image of Jesus on a rock structure 5,000 meters below the surface."

First Calgary, once a penny stock and now trading at over C$18 a share, said the flow rate from its well in Algeria was

see **INSIDER** page A19

BREAKING NEWS

NORTH SLOPE

A step closer

Armstrong files plan, permits for first North Slope production by independent

By KAY CASHMAN

Petroleum News Publisher & Managing Editor

A key member of Armstrong Alaska's team was in Anchorage in mid-December filing a plan of production operations with the state for what will likely be the North Slope's first field to be produced by an independent oil company.

STU GUSTAFSON

Stu Gustafson, Armstrong's vice president of operations, and Bob Britch, an Anchorage-based consultant who works closely on permitting with Armstrong, have submitted both a plan of operations and all the necessary state, federal and borough permits associated with producing the company's Two Bits prospect, which is just off the western edge of the ConocoPhillips-operated Kuparuk River unit.

BOB BRITCH

If this winter's confirmation drilling is successful at Two Bits, Armstrong anticipates beginning production by late 2005 from its own standalone facilities. Initial production is expected to be approximately 15,000 barrels per day. According to the plan of operations, as many as 20 wells may eventually be drilled as part of the proposed development.

"We'll drill two exploratory wells over this winter. It's two prospects," Gustafson told the Alaska Support Industry Alliance this past

see **ARMSTRONG** page A18

CANADA

Trusts: explore or expire

Experts predict that Canada's energy trust sector faces round of consolidation to counter shrinking reserves, production, consensus is exploration needed

By GARY PARK

Petroleum News Calgary Correspondent

Commodity prices, interest rates and the value of the Canadian dollar could all be factors in the future direction for Canada's energy trusts.

But those unknowns aside, there is a growing consensus that trusts can no longer simply buy assets to sustain production at their current combined level of about 750,000 barrels of oil equivalent per day, they must also explore.

For those who resist that pressure, consolidation may be their only option.

see **TRUSTS** page A18

Bonavista ventures into NE British Columbia

Natural gas assets in northeastern British Columbia have lured Bonavista Energy Trust to make its largest acquisition yet — a C$414 million deal that will fatten its proved and probable reserves by 37 percent.

The properties, concentrated within a 60 mile radius northwest of Fort St. John, currently produce 44 million cubic feet per day of natural gas

see **BONAVISTA** page A18

HOUSTON

RTP pitched as 'Holy Grail' for developing heavy oil

Ivanhoe Energy agrees to take Ensyn Petroleum in $85 million cash, stock deal

By RAY TYSON

Petroleum News Houston Correspdent

Rapid Thermal Processing, RTP, heralded by one advocate as the "Holy Grail" of heavy oil development, was at the center of an otherwise unremarkable merger announced Dec. 13 between Ivanhoe Energy, a small exploration and production independent based in Canada, and RTP patent holder Ensyn Group of Boston, Mass.

RTP supporters say the technology, already employed by Ensyn to convert wood residues into liq-

see **RTP** page A19

COURTESY OF ENSYN

Ensyn's 1,000-barrel per day RTP commercial demonstration plant, located in the Belridge heavy oil field near Bakersfield, Calif

Alaska - Mackenzie Rig Report

Rig Owner/Rig Type	Rig No.	Rig Location/Activity	Operator or Status

Alaska Rig Status

North Slope - Onshore

Rig Owner/Rig Type	Rig No.	Rig Location/Activity	Operator or Status
Doyon Drilling			
Dreco 1250 UE	14 (SCR/TD)	Kuparuk H-Pad IH-05a	ConocoPhillips
Sky Top Brewster NE-12	15 (SCR/TD)	Deadhorse yard, expected start 2005	ConocoPhillips
Dreco 1000 UE	16 (SCR)	S-pad. S-213 multilateral	BP
Dreco D2000 UEBD	19 (SCR/TD)	Alpine, drilling CD1-20	ConocoPhillips
OIME 2000	141 (SCR/TD)	Infield Kuparuk, drilling 1E-102 multilateral	ConocoPhillips
Nabors Alaska Drilling			
Trans-ocean rig	CDR-1 (CT)	Stacked, Prudhoe Bay	Available
Dreco 1000 UE	2-ES (SCR)	Prudhoe Bay, Y-03A	BP
Mid-Continent U36A	3-S	Stacked, Deadhorse	Available
Oilwell 700 E	4-ES (SCR)	Milne Point, MPC-01	BP
Dreco 1000 UE	7-ES (SCR/TD)	Prudhoe Bay, Z-31	BP
Dreco 1000 UE	9-ES (SCR/TD)	Prudhoe Bay, L-02	BP
Oilwell 2000 Hercules	14-E (SCR)	Stacked, Deadhorse	Available
Oilwell 2000 Hercules	16-E (SCR/TD)	Stacked, Prudhoe Bay	Available
Oilwell 2000	17-E (SCR/TD)	Stacked, Point McIntyre	Available
Emsco Electro-hoist -2	18-E (SCR)	Stacked, Deadhorse	Available
OIME 1000	19-E (SCR)	Stacked, Deadhorse	Available
Emsco Electro-hoist Varco TDS3	22-E (SCR/TD)	Stacked, Milne Point	Available
Emsco Electro-hoist	28-E (SCR)	Stacked, Deadhorse	Available
OIME 2000	245-E	Stacked, Kuparuk	Available
Nordic Calista Services			
Superior 700 UE	1 (SCR/CTD)	Kuparuk, Drillsite 11, Well 6	BP
Superior 700 UE	2 (SCR/CTD)	Lisburne, L-5-17	BP
Ideco 900	3 (SCR/TD)	Kuparuk, stacked at 1-Q	ConocoPhillips

North Slope - Offshore

Rig Owner/Rig Type	Rig No.	Rig Location/Activity	Operator or Status
Nabors Alaska Drilling			
Oilwell 2000	33-E (SCR/TD)	Stacked, NorthStar	BP
Emsco Electro-hoist Canrig 1050E	27-E (SCR/TD)	Stacked at 12-acre pad	Kerr-McGee

Cook Inlet Basin – Onshore

Rig Owner/Rig Type	Rig No.	Rig Location/Activity	Operator or Status
Aurora Well Service			
Franks 300 Srs. Explorer III	AWS 1	Stacked in Nikiski	Available
Pioneer (Evergreen)			
Wilson Super 38	96-19	Stacked in Wasilla yard	Pioneer (Evergreen)
Inlet Drilling Alaska/Cooper Construction			
Kremco 750	CC-1	Stacked, Kenai	Available
Kuukpik	5	Moving to Osprey for workover	Forest Oil
Marathon Oil Co. (Inlet Drilling Alaska labor contractor)			
Taylor	Glacier 1	Working on Susan Dionne #4	Marathon
Nabors Alaska Drilling			
Rigmasters 850	129	Three Mile Creek #1, west of Beluga	Aurora
National 110 UE	160 (SCR)	Stacked, Kenai	Available
Continental Emsco E3000	273	Stacked, Kenai	Available
	51	Steelhead platform, done 12-1-03	Unocal
Franks	26	Swanson River, Well 312-09	Unocal
IDECO 2100 E	429E (SCR)	Stacked, removed from Osprey platform	Available
Water Resources International			
Ideco H-35 KD		Drilling Beluga 1 well	Pelican Hill

Cook Inlet Basin – Offshore

Rig Owner/Rig Type	Rig No.	Rig Location/Activity	Operator or Status
Cudd Pressure Control	340K	Stacked	Available
Unocal (Nabors Alaska Drilling labor contractor)			
Not Available			
XTO Energy (Inlet Drilling Alaska labor contract)			
National 1320	A	Preparing to run slotted liner, will move to C41-26LN	XTO
National 110	C (TD)	Drilling well C22A-26LN	XTO

Mackenzie Rig Status

Mackenzie Delta-Onshore

Rig Owner/Rig Type	Rig No.	Rig Location/Activity	Operator or Status
AKITA Equtak			
Dreco 1250 UE	62 (SCR/TD)	Unloading barges and moving rig to Burnt Lake	EnCana
Dreco 1250 UE	63 (SCR/TD)	Rigging up Oliver H-1	Chevron Texaco
National 370	64	Stacked, Inuvik, NT	EnCana

Central Mackenzie Valley

Rig Owner/Rig Type	Rig No.	Rig Location/Activity	Operator or Status
AKITA/SAHTU			
Oilwell 500	51	Stacked, Fort Good Hope, NT	Apache Canada
Nabors Canada			
	62	Racked	Available

Yukon Territories Rig Status

Yukon

Rig Owner/Rig Type	Rig No.	Rig Location/Activity	Operator or Status
AKITA/Kaska			
National 80UE	58	Kotaneelee, drilling L-38	Devon Canada

The Alaska - Mackenzie Rig Report as of December 16, 2004.
Active drilling companies only listed.

TD = rigs equipped with top drive units WO = workover operations
CT = coiled tubing operation SCR = electric rig

This rig report was prepared by Wadeen Hepworth

JUDY PATRICK

Nabors 3-S

Baker Hughes North America rotary rig counts*

	December 10	December 3	Year Ago
US	1,250	1,245	1,109
Canada	500	459	485
Gulf	101	98	101

Highest/Lowest

US/Highest	4530	December 1981
US/Lowest	488	April 1999
Canada/Highest	558	January 2000
Canada/Lowest	29	April 1992

*Issued by Baker Hughes since 1944

Rig start-ups expected in next 6 months

Rig Owner/No.	Rig Location/Activity	Operator
Akita Equtak 62	Umiak No. 5 camp and construction equipment are on barges at staging site at Mason Bay.	EnCana
Akita Equtak 63	West Ellice rig camp and construction equipment are on barges at staging site at Ellice Island.	Chevron Canada
Akita/Sahtu Drilling 51	Will be drilling in the Colville Lake area	Apache Canada
Akita/Sahtu Drilling 40	Will be drilling in the Summit Creek area, west of Tulita NT.	Northrock Resources
64	Will move in early February to complete Umiak N-16 well drilled last winter	EnCana

ALASKA

Aurora plans first Kenai Peninsula wells

Aurora Gas LLC, which has been drilling exclusively on the west side of Cook Inlet, is now adding Kenai Peninsula prospects to its drilling schedule.

The company has filed for an oil discharge prevention and contingency plan with the Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation for wells to be drilled during the 2004-05 winter season on both sides of the inlet.

Aurora has four prospect locations on the west side of Cook Inlet ranging from four to 10 miles west-northwest of Tyonek.

There are two prospect locations on the east or Kenai Peninsula side of the inlet, approximately 15 miles from the city of Kenai near Forest Lake.

And there is one prospect location on the east or Kenai Peninsula side approximately three miles east of Anchor Point and 15 miles northwest of Homer.

USGS estimates 5.5 tcf of gas, 173 million barrels of oil in Yukon Flats region

The U.S. Geological Survey said today that it has completed a new assessment of undiscovered oil and gas resources in the Yukon Flats region of east-central Alaska, and estimates 5.5 trillion cubic feet of undiscovered, but technically recoverable, natural gas, 173 million barrels of undiscovered, but technically recoverable, oil, and 127 million barrels of natural gas liquids in conventional accumulations.

Technically recoverable resources are the amount that may be recovered using current technology.

Yukon Flats, some 100 miles northeast of Fairbanks and east of the trans-Alaska pipeline, is some 13,500 square miles in which the major landowners are the federal government, the state of Alaska and Native corporations and villages.

The USGS said its assessment is based on available geological, geophysical

see **YUKON FLATS** *page A4*

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Petroleum news

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ALASKA

Governor: producers submit unified response to state's pipeline equity offer

Alaska Gov. Frank Murkowski said Dec. 16 that the North Slope producers' group has responded to the state's proposal to take an equity interest in the Alaska gas pipeline.

"Yesterday, Santa Claus came early," the governor said.

In October, the governor said, the state put a major proposal before the North Slope producers for the state to take an equity position in a gas pipeline project "in return for a trade of the severance and royalties, and on Dec. 15 … the producers came back with a comprehensive joint response to the state's proposal."

This response, he said, "represents a unified position of all the three producers." What the state received is a "comprehensive proposal" to the state from BP, ConocoPhillips and ExxonMobil.

"I want to make it very, very clear to the people of Alaska that for the first time ever, ever, ever … the producers have made a proposal to build a natural gas pipeline. … What we have here, in my opinion, is very significant, because it's the first time we've ever had a specific submission to build this project and clearly it comes from those who hold the gas leases."

With other proposals, he said, there is always the issue of getting the gas.

"We finally have a concrete proposal," the governor said, "from producers that hold the gas leases..." The governor said the state will now negotiate the Dec. 15 proposal with the producers. Once agreement is reached, a final proposal will go to the Legislature for approval. The state is also negotiating with TransCanada under the stranded gas act, the governor said, "and we intend to proceed with that."

The state will also, he said, proceed with discussions it is having outside the stranded gas act with the Alaska Gasline Port Authority, Sempra, Calpine, the Alaska Natural Gas Development Authority and MidAmerican.

ALASKA

Ben Stevens takes another hot seat

As if balancing Alaska's strained finances wasn't enough, Alaska Senate majority leader Ben Stevens has joined the board of Semco Energy Inc., parent of Enstar in Alaska and a similar gas distribution business in Michigan. He's been on an Enstar advisory panel since 2001.Semco has been skating dangerously close to bankruptcy after buying several construction companies that did underground utility work. But those companies didn't win enough contracts to be profitable and Semco later sold the construction businesses, suffering a loss of roughly $50 million.

It had to eliminate its dividend and may have to find additional equity to stay afloat, further diluting the interests of current stockholders who are already saddled with half a billion in debt and a lawsuit over sale of part of Enstar's pipeline network. Management has been changed since most of the disasters. Stevens is replacing John Hinton, the former company chairman who left the board in October.

● LOUISIANA

Cheniere gets FERC approval for Sabine Pass LNG terminal

Decision closely followed ChevronTexaco finalizing Sabine Pass capacity agreement

By ALLEN BAKER

Petroleum News Contributing Writer

Cheniere Energy Inc. got good news on two fronts as the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission gave its approval to the Sabine Pass LNG terminal and ChevronTexaco's global gas subsidiary approved a 20-year contract for liquefaction capacity there.

FERC approval came Dec. 15, just a couple days after ChevronTexaco finalized its agreement for Sabine Pass capacity. The Louisiana terminal, with a capacity of 2.6 billion cubic feet daily, is the largest FERC has ever approved. Construction is expected to begin early next year, with first shipments in 2008.

With major commitments from Total as well as ChevronTexaco, tiny Cheniere appears to be on pretty firm ground. The Dec. 13 deal calls for Cheniere to regasify 700 million cubic feet daily for the San Ramon, Calif., energy giant, which will provide the LNG and then buy it back after it's put into the pipeline system. Options in the contract allow adjustments up or down in that total, to as little as 500 million cubic feet or as much as a billion.

Cheniere stockholders got a jolt less than a week earlier as ChevronTexaco announced it would not take an equity interest in the terminal. That was part of the preliminary agreement in November between the two companies.

The announcement on the equity deal falling through was twinned with the issuance Dec. 9 of 5 million new Cheniere shares at $60 each. The stock dove below $50 for a period before recovering. It was trading around $63 a share on Dec. 15, when the FERC approval came.

Just how the equity deal fell through isn't clear, but there were rumors that ChevronTexaco wanted a bigger chunk than Houston-based Cheniere was willing to yield, especially with the additional $300 million from the new stock issuance. But the capacity deal wasn't torpedoed, as it turned out.

Cheniere recently announced a second terminal project about 20 miles from Sabine Pass. Both will cost about $750 million, both are in sparsely-populated Cameron Parish, just across the border from Port Arthur, Texas, and both are 100 percent Cheniere owned. Cheniere also has interests in Texas terminal projects near Corpus Christi and Freeport. The Freeport terminal got FERC approval in June, and the Corpus Christi terminal got a favorable draft environmental statement from the agency in November. ●

continued from page A3

YUKON FLATS

and geochemical evidence, "including new information obtained by recent USGS field and laboratory studies.

"This work found strong evidence for the existence of potential source rocks and reservoirs of oil and gas in Yukon Flats," the agency said. The USGS said the one exploration well drilled in the area found small quantities of natural gas, but no petroleum production has occurred from the Yukon Flats region.

Editor's note: See story in Dec. 26 issue of Petroleum News.

BATON ROUGE, LA.

Louisiana: No share, no drilling licenses

Louisiana Gov. Kathleen Babineaux Blanco, a Democrat who took office in January, plans to ask the federal government to share the $5 billion-plus it gets annually from oil and gas companies operating in the Gulf of Mexico with the adjacent gulf states. According to a recent report in the Los Angeles Times, the state would use the money to help fuel programs that could rescue the disappearing Louisiana coast.

Blanco's campaign – the first of several from the state of Louisiana over the years — would likely send more than half a billion dollars each year to gulf states.

If Blanco's proposal falls on deaf ears in Washington — she hopes to discuss it with President Bush in February — her aides told the Times the state is prepared to begin rejecting new requests for drilling licenses and go as far as suing the federal government.

—PETROLEUM NEWS

CANADA

Soaring loonie trims Canadian economy

Sales of Alberta oil and natural gas in the United States could be worth more than C$45 billion this year.

But the net return to the Alberta government treasury could be C$800 million less than it would have been two years ago.

It's all because the Canadian dollar (known as the loonie because of the bird depicted on one side of the $1 coin) has taken flight at the same time the U.S. greenback has gone into a precipitous dive.

Regardless of a recent strengthening in the U.S. currency, the more robust Canadian dollar — once disparagingly referred to as the Northern Peso — is likely to shrink Alberta's budget surplus for 2003-04 to C$4.1 billion from what would have been close to C$5 billion two years earlier.

For every cent the loonie gains, Alberta's finances take a C$118 million hit because of the impact on resource exports, said a spokesman for Alberta Finance.

However, a spokesman for Premier Ralph Klein said the province can do nothing but take the currency shifts into account in making budget projections. The rise in the loonie is also taking a bite out of Canada's job market.

With Canada's manufactured exports now more expensive in the United States, the sector has lost 52,000 jobs since July, with more than 25,000 full-time jobs cut across the entire economy in November, pushing national unemployment to 7.1 percent.

—GARY PARK

● HOUSTON

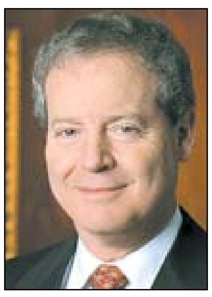
ConocoPhillips OKs $6.9 billion 2005 capex budget

Capital and exploration spending in Canada will be up $300 million; Alaska North Slope increase is $100 million

By KAY CASHMAN

Petroleum News Publisher & Managing Editor

ConocoPhillips board of directors said Dec. 10 that it has approved 2005 cash capital expenditures of approximately $6.9 billion. This total excludes approximately $300 million in capitalized interest and $200 million in minority interest.



Jim Mulva, ConocoPhillips chairman and CEO

"Two-thirds of our 2005 capital program is focused on payout projects, those that will build on our strengths and advantaged positions in certain areas of the world to even further improve returns to our shareholders," said Jim Mulva, chairman and chief executive officer.

75% of capex to E&P projects, midstream

The company will allocate approximately 75 percent of its 2005 capital budget to its exploration and production and midstream segments. Refining and marketing will receive about 22 percent of the budget. The remaining budget will be allocated to emerging businesses and corporate.

E&P's 2005 capital budget is approximately $5.1 billion, excluding capitalized interest and minority interest related to the Bayu-Undan project in the Timor Sea. Approximately $500 million budgeted for worldwide exploration activities is included in the regional totals that follow.

Approximately $1.4 billion of the E&P budget is allocated toward projects in the North Sea and West Africa.

ConocoPhillips said E&P anticipates spending approximately $900 million in the development of projects in the Asia Pacific region. The majority of these funds will go toward continued development of the Bayu-Undan project in the Timor Sea, oil and gas reserves in the offshore Block B and onshore South Sumatra blocks in Indonesia, and the second phase of Bohai Bay in China.

The company has allocated roughly $900 million of the E&P budget to developments in the U.S. Lower 48 and Latin America. The focus in these areas will be on ongoing development programs in Lobo and San Juan in the Lower 48, as well as the development of the offshore Corocoro field and the Plataforma Deltana project, both in Venezuela.

Alpine satellites not sanctioned — yet

The company intends to spend approximately $700 million of the E&P budget for its Alaska operations – up $100 million from 2004. (A total of $1.6 billion will be spent in Alaska in 2005, including $900 million in operations.)

Alaska E&P projects include the development of the Alpine satellites and the West Sak heavy oil field, but ConocoPhillips Alaska spokeswoman Dawn Patience told Petroleum News Dec. 10 that the company is still reviewing the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers record of decision on the Alpine satellites received Dec. 6 and will not be sanctioning satellite work until that review is complete. She also said ConocoPhillips will be drilling four exploration wells on the North Slope this winter – two wildcat wells and two appraisal wells.

Focus on western Canada, Mackenzie

In Canada, E&P capital expenditures are expected to be about $700 million – up $300 million from 2004 – "with a focus on ongoing development programs in Western Canada, Syncrude expansion, Surmont heavy oil development, and continued work on the Mackenzie Delta gas pipeline," the company said. ConocoPhillips allocated roughly $400 million for projects in the Russia and Caspian region, primarily for continued development of the Kashagan field in the Caspian Sea and for the Timan-Pechora joint venture in northern Russia.

E&P estimates it will spend approximately $100 million in the Middle East and North Africa. ●

SOUTHCENTRAL ALASKA

State releases coalbed methane enforceable standards

The state of Alaska has released its enforceable standards for coalbed methane development on state-owned acreage in the Matanuska-Susitna Borough.

"When these standards are viewed in conjunction with HB 531, passed by the Legislature last session, the state of Alaska has put in place a comprehensive set of measures to keep the quality of life enjoyed by the residents of the Mat-Su Borough, while allowing for reasonable exploration and possible development of coalbed methane resources," Commissioner of Natural Resources Tom Irwin said Dec. 13.

Irwin said the measures "will protect residents' drinking water, significantly reduce any potential noise impacts, require careful planning for any new roads or pipelines and maintain real property values."

The department has also released responses to comments on the public review draft.

Both documents can be viewed at www.dog.dnr.state.ak.us/oil.

—PETROLEUM NEWS

Part of governor's roads plan will serve gasline construction needs

Among Anchorage-area road projects proposed by Alaska Gov. Frank Murkowski Dec. 14 are two that would benefit a proposed natural gas pipeline project.

The governor said in a statement that "by investing in projects in east Anchorage that clear up the significant traffic congestion problems we have there, we can also create a major truck route through Anchorage that will serve construction of the natural gas pipeline."


JUDY PATRICK

Alaska Gov. Frank Murkowski

The Dowling Road east extension, pegged at $19 million, would create a truck bypass route that supports the gas pipeline construction. The project includes reconstructing 2,100 feet of Dowling Road between Lake Otis Parkway and Norm Street to five lanes and a 3,200-foot extension of Dowling to the new Abbott Loop Road (Bragaw Street); this portion would be four lanes.

On the other side of Anchorage, the $30 million proposed for construction of the Glenn Highway-Bragaw Street interchange would "resolve one of the most severe traffic bottlenecks in Southcentral," the state said. This is a major truck route between the Port of Anchorage and points north and east, and "will also

see ROADS page A8

● ALBERTA

Oil sands costs: Alberta government to the rescue

Province invokes rarely used labor code section to open way to 'blanket' contract in oil sands; non-union labor can be used, unions uneasy

By GARY PARK

Petroleum News Calgary Correspondent

The Alberta government has intervened to rein in galloping construction costs in the oil sands sector.

For only the fourth time since changes to the Alberta labor relations code almost 30 years ago, the government has granted special status to a major industrial project.

The designation will allow Canadian Natural Resources (known by its stock symbol CNQ) to negotiate an agreement with one union that would apply to all trades involved in the C$10.5 billion Horizon project.

Human Resources Minister Mike Cardinal told reporters the cabinet order is justified because of the construction jobs and economic benefits Horizon will generate.

The project, which has yet to receive final approval from the CNQ board, is expected to have a peak workforce of 6,500 in 2006 and 2007 and hire 2,500 full-time employees once the bitumen mine and upgrading facilities are operating.

Horizon is targeting eventual output of 232,000 barrels per day.

A spokeswoman for Cardinal said the blanket labor agreement is intended to last for the duration of the project, through 2012.

Non-union labor will be used

CNQ said the designation will allow it to use non-union labor on the project, although it does not expect the provision will actually lower labor costs.

Real Doucet, CNQ's senior vice president, oil sands, said the objective is to "bring stability and long-term forward planning to the process.

"It also ensures we can forecast what happens. We are not interested in doing constant negotiations for each contract," he told the Calgary Herald.

Doucet said that making sure "everybody works under the same kinds of conditions" will give CNQ access to all workers.

An Alberta Federation of Labor spokesman said there would be no objection if the master agreement was signed with a responsible union. That mood would change if the sole purpose was to sign "sweetheart deals with contractors who agree never to strike and things like that," he said.

CNQ has indicated it might seek federal permission to import foreign workers, flying them to a landing strip capable of handling Boeing 737s near the Horizon site.

But Doucet denied rumors that foreign workers are already being recruited.

Labor demand exceeds what area can provide

Mike Glennon, executive director of the Athabasca Regional Issues Working Group, said oil sands developers have little choice but to look far beyond Alberta for the skilled labor needed.

"With so many massive projects under construction concurrently, the demand is going to far outstrip what this area can provide," he said.

If the C$7 billion Mackenzie Gas Project moves forward that will add to pressures on the labor market and is likely to result in similar project designations.

CNQ has already had a taste of the soaring costs that have bedeviled other oil sands ventures. Rising steel prices have seen original estimates climb by C$2.1 billion.

An Alberta Federation of Labor spokesman said there would be no objection if the master agreement was signed with a responsible union.

That mood would change if the sole purpose was to sign "sweetheart deals with contractors who agree

see COSTS page A8

● ALASKA

TAPS owners seek higher tariffs for 2005

By ROSE RAGSDALE

Petroleum News Contributing Writer

Owners of the trans-Alaska oil pipeline system are seeking substantially higher tariffs for crude being shipped outside the state in 2005, according to recent regulatory filings.

In documents filed Dec. 1 with the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, the TAPS owners will ask shippers to pay up to 28 percent higher interstate transportation rates in 2005 for oil moved on the 800-mile trans-Alaska oil pipeline.

Unlike most oil pipelines, which base their tariffs on the producer price index, TAPS charges shipping rates calculated using a cost-based model approved by the owners, the state of Alaska and FERC in a 1985 settlement.

Each of the five owners will seek higher tariffs in 2005, ranging from $3.52 to $3.98 per barrel. The new transportation rates will apply to all crude types shipped destinations outside the state from the North Slope, according to filings made with FERC by the five owner companies.

BP Pipelines (Alaska) Inc., which owns slightly more than a 50 percent interest in TAPS, is asking $3.86 per barrel, up 28 percent from $3.01 per barrel this year.

"The new rate was reached under the (TAPS Settlement Methodology) formula, which takes into consideration operating costs, depreciation, taxes and other components," BP spokesman Daren Beaudo told Petroleum News Dec. 9.

Unlike most oil pipelines, which base their tariffs on the producer price index, TAPS charges shipping rates calculated using a cost-based model approved by the owners, the state of Alaska and FERC in a 1985 settlement.

ConocoPhillips Transportation Alaska Inc., which holds more than a 26 percent stake in TAPS, will ask $3.52 per barrel, up nearly 9 percent from $3.23 per barrel in 2004. ExxonMobil Pipeline Co., which owns the third-largest share of TAPS, will seek $3.60, up 17.6 percent from $3.06, while minority owner Koch Alaska Pipeline Co. LLC wants $3.97 per barrel, or 7 percent more than the $3.71 per barrel that Williams Alaska sought in 2004 for the 3 percent interest in TAPS that it later sold to Koch. Unocal Pipeline Co., another minority owner, aims to charge $3.98 per barrel for 2005, compared with the $3.55- per-barrel tariff it sought for this year.

Assistant Attorney General Wilson Condon told Petroleum News that Alaska has until Dec. 16 to protest the tariff hikes. Condon supervises the oil, gas and mining section of the Alaska Department of Law.

The state of Alaska has filed protests of some aspects of TAPS tariffs in the past, but is precluded from protesting other aspects of the shipping rates under provisions of the earlier TAPS settlement, Condon added. ●

State protests pipeline price hike

The state of Alaska has filed a protest with FERC against the 2005 rate increases proposed by the five owners of the trans-Alaska oil pipeline system, calling the increases excessive.

According to a Dec. 16 story in the Anchorage Daily News, state officials say they disagree with the proposed rates before the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission because of the big difference in the rates for shipping oil for use within the state versus oil that is destined for the Lower 48 via tankers. State officials say this constitutes "discrimination" forbidden under both a 1985 TAPS rate settlement between the state and the pipeline owners, as well as under federal interstate commerce law.

Currently the tariff for oil being purchased for in-state use (for example, by refineries at Valdez) is about $1.96 per barrel as compared to $3.01 per barrel for oil headed outside the state. The largest hike being proposed from TAPS owners is the 28 percent hike BP has requested which would take the out-of-state rate from $3.01 to $3.86 per barrel.

The main reason for the significant difference between the current out-of-state tariff set by FERC and the in-state tariff set by the Regulatory Commission of Alaska is the 1985 TAPS rate settlement agreement that governs how tariffs are determined. That settlement was set aside by RCA following a successful protest by shippers. Those shippers are currently battling TAPS owners in Alaska Superior Court.

State: high tariff could discourage exploration

But Alaska Attorney General Gregg Renkes told the Anchorage Daily News Dec. 15 that the state is also concerned about the impact the higher rates will have on state revenues. According to the Renkes' office, each extra dollar in pipeline transportation costs means about $60 million less in annual oil revenue for the state.

Renkes is also concerned that higher pipeline tariffs will discourage oil companies that don't own a share of the pipeline from exploring for new oil on the North Slope.

Tariff negotiations failed

The state and the pipeline owners have been trying to negotiate a new pipeline rate agreement to either replace or succeed the 1985 settlement.

"Unfortunately, we were not able to do that," Renkes said. "We worked hard, no one's really at fault, but it's a very difficult subject."

BP and Conoco, which together own about 75 percent of the pipeline, told the Anchorage Daily News that the out-of-state shipping rates they are proposing for next year are fair and proper.

Conoco spokeswoman Dawn Patience said her company's proposed tariff reflects, in part, a lower than expected flow of oil down the pipeline recently, raising costs per barrel shipped.

BP spokesman Daren Beaudo said some years his company's tariff has dropped, not risen. He said next year's proposed tariff was calculated precisely under the 1985 agreement to cover the company's pipeline operating costs plus provide a profit.

—PETROLEUM NEWS

continued from page A7

ROADS

serve in the ramp-up for construction of the natural gas pipeline."

The Glenn Highway would be built with six lanes at a lower elevation than today and Bragaw Street would bridge over the highway. This intersection work is a high priority for federal statewide transportation improvement program funds, but recent shortage of federal funds has delayed the project. "The use of state funds would shorten the development timeline and accelerate the construction date such that the project is ready for the gas pipeline," the state said.

—PETROLEUM NEWS

continued from page A7

COSTS

never to strike and things like that," he said.

Given that increase before construction has even started, a spokesman for the Alberta Building Trades Council said his organization understands CNQ's business case and the need to contain costs.

But he said the council is concerned the company "now has the means to sign a lowball, blanket deal that would impact all the construction trades. We hope that is not their intention."

Nexen discloses cost increase

On the same day the special status for Horizon was announced, OPTI Canada and Nexen disclosed a C$98 million increase in costs for their 50-50 Long Lake oil sands project, although the hike will add less than 3 percent to the C$3.4 billion budget.

OPTI President Sid Dykstra said the extra money is needed to cover the cost of drilling additional wells to ensure Long Lake can sustain production at 72,000 bpd when it comes on stream in mid-2007.

If the C$7 billion Mackenzie Gas Project moves forward that will add to pressures on the labor market and is likely to result in similar project designations.

He said the drilling would eventually have been needed, but the partners decided to swallow the cost now to provide insurance against output losses.

OPTI, which is 35 percent owned by Israeli power technology company Ormat Industries, warned there will "continue to be pressure on labor costs and availability of skilled labor which will be monitored closely as field construction ramps up in 2005."

Long Lake plans to expand to about 140,000 bpd, although no timetable has been set. ●

exploration&production

GULF OF MEXICO

Sequoia dry hole casts doubt on Unocal's Mirage prospect

Unocal said its Sequoia exploration well, designed to test the deeper intervals of the company's 1999 Mirage discovery in the Gulf of Mexico came up dry and that means the prospect is likely not commercial.

"The development of the Mirage discovery is now unlikely given the results of the Sequoia well," Unocal said Dec. 15.

Located on Mississippi Canyon block 941, Sequoia was drilled to a total depth of 29,100 feet. The Mirage drilling program included an initial well drilled to 16,600 feet and a sidetrack that reached a depth of 22,400 feet.

"Unocal had hoped that a successful test of the deeper intervals with the Sequoia well would lead to development, but the hydrocarbons encountered in the deeper interval were deemed to be noncommercial," the company said.

Unocal said it expects to take a $29 million pre-tax write-down in the 2004 fourth quarter to cover its share of costs associated with the Sequoia well and the earlier Mirage exploration well.

Unocal estimated that its total fourth quarter dry hole expense will be between $75 million and $85 million versus $50 million to $75 million announced in October.

Unocal operated the well. Other working interest holders include Total E&P USA, Marathon Oil and Spinnaker Exploration.

—RAY TYSON

NORTH AMERICA

North American rig count jumps by 46 to 1,750

The number of rotary rigs operating in North America during the week ending Dec. 10 stood at 1,750, an increase of 46 rigs compared to the previous week and an increase of 156 rigs vs. the same period last year, according to rig monitor Baker Hughes.

Canada accounted for most of the increase in rigs during the recent week, rising by 41 rigs from the prior week to total 500. Canada's rig count also was up by 15 compared to the year-ago period.

The number of rigs operating in the United States during the recent week increased by five to 1,250 compared to the previous week and increased by 141 compared to the same period last year. Compared to the previous week alone, offshore rigs increased by three to 108, while land rigs increased by one to 1,122 and inland water rigs increased by one to 20.

Of the total number of rigs operating in the United States during the recent week, 1,070 were drilling for natural gas and 178 for oil, while two were being used for miscellaneous purposes. Of the total, 799 were vertical wells, 324 directional wells and 127 horizontal wells.

Among the leading producing U.S. states, Oklahoma picked up six rigs during the recent week to total 147, while Wyoming

see **COUNT** *page A10*

● GULF OF MEXICO

BP's Holstein up, running

Eyton says Gulf oil field start-up marks period of rapid technological advancement in deepwater

By RAY TYSON

Petroleum News Houston Correspondent

Oil and natural gas production has been launched from the new Holstein field in the deepwater Gulf of Mexico, operator BP said Dec. 13. The field is owned 50-50 by BP and Shell.

Production from Holstein, on Green Canyon block 645 about 100 miles south of Grand Isle, La., began Dec. 9 and will increase over the next year as additional wells are completed and brought online, BP said. At peak production, Holstein is expected to produce more than 100,000 barrels of oil and 90 million cubic feet of gas per day.

Located in about 4,300 feet of water, the Holstein production spar is the largest of its kind in the world. The development consists of a truss spar, equipped

see **HOLSTEIN** *page A10*

COURTESY OF BP

Production from Holstein, on Green Canyon block 645 about 100 miles south of Grand Isle, La., began Dec. 9

● NORTH SLOPE

EnCana pulling out of Alaska

Alaska joins Gulf of Mexico, Ecuador and UK on the chopping block as independent prepares to put its North Slope oil and gas properties up for sale

By KAY CASHMAN

Petroleum News Publisher & Managing Editor

In a move that EnCana Chief Executive Officer Gwyn Morgan recently referred to as going "back to our roots" the Calgary independent has added its Alaska properties to the list of worldwide conventional oil and gas assets it's selling in order to focus attention on what Morgan says EnCana does best – develop and produce unconventional oil and gas assets in North America.

Paul Myers said the OCS was where EnCana was working to identify drillable targets before Morgan pulled the plug on Alaska.

EnCana, which first entered Alaska in 2000 as Alberta Energy, is just beginning the process of preparing for the sale of its Alaska acreage, Paul Myers told Petroleum News in mid-December.

Myers, who is EnCana's vice president for the Gulf of Mexico and Alaska, was interviewed by PN in late October when the company dropped its leases in the National Petroleum Reserve-Alaska. At that time Myers said there was "one area" in Alaska that EnCana was "most interested in," and the NPR-A leases weren't in it, he said, declining to identify the area.

On Dec. 13 Myers said the "OCS has been our main focus in Alaska. It's the area we picked and have been working on evaluating prospects from G&G to get them drilled. … The majority of our technical work has been in the OCS."

The U.S. Minerals Management Service said

see **ENCANA** *page A10*

GULF OF MEXICO

Technip lands contract for Gulf tiebacks

French engineering and construction firm Technip has been awarded a contract by Dominion for the Triton and Goldfinger fields sub-sea tiebacks in the deepwater Gulf of Mexico, Technip said Dec. 8.

The fields, in 5,600 feet of water on Mississippi Canyon blocks 728 and 772/771, will be tied back to the Devils Tower spar platform, the host processing facility.

The overall project will be carried out by Technip's engineering office in Houston, which will provide project management, engineering, fabrication and installation services for riser, pipe-in-pipe flowline, end manifolds, insulation systems and spar interfaces.

First oil is expected by late 2005.

Dominion Exploration & Production, a subsidiary of Dominion, is operator and owns a 75 percent working interest in the Devils Tower platform, Triton and Goldfinger fields. Pioneer Natural Resources owns the remaining 25 percent interest in the project area.

—RAY TYSON

continued from page A9

ENCANA

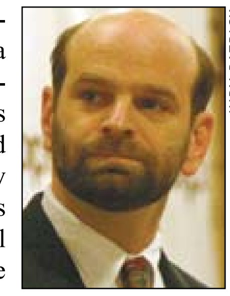
EnCana has 24 leases on Alaska's Outer Continental Shelf, encompassing some 52,265 acres in the Beaufort Sea.

"We also have a significant presence in the (Brooks Range) Foothills. … We were sitting and waiting on gas line issues to be resolved," Myers said, the biggest issue being timing and the second access for explorers.

However, Myers said the North Slope natural gas pipeline issues had nothing to do with EnCana's decision to pull out of Alaska.

"We were quite keen on the OCS. It's just that EnCana's focus is not going to be on that type of play," he said.

In a Dec. 10 interview Tom Homza, a geologist and manager of EnCana's Alaska office, said the company believes Alaska has huge conventional oil and gas resource potential. "We appreciate all that the state and MMS and other companies have done for us while we have been here."



JUDY PATRICK

Tom Homza said EnCana believes Alaska has huge conventional oil and gas resource potential, but company is focusing on oil sands and unconventional gas assets.

As a result of its strategic focusing EnCana has sold its UK assets and announced similar intentions for Ecuador and the Gulf of Mexico. ●

continued from page A9

COUNT

picked up six rigs to total 77. Louisiana's rig count increased by five to 173, California's increased by two to 27 rigs and Alaska's increased by one to 10 rigs. New Mexico was unchanged with 73 rigs. Texas' rig count plummeted by 13 to 533.

—RAY TYSON

continued from page A9

HOLSTEIN

with facilities for simultaneous production and drilling operations

"Holstein start-up marks a period of rapid technological advance in the deepwater, for BP and for the industry," said David Eyton, vice president of BP's deepwater business unit for the U.S. Gulf.

Oil from Holstein will be transported via the Mardi Gras Transportation System to Ship Shoal block 332B, where it will interconnect with the Cameron Highway Oil Pipeline System. Holstein gas will be exported to Ship Shoal block 332A, where it will interconnect with Manta Ray Gathering System, and from there to the Nautilus Gas Transportation System into Louisiana.

Holstein was discovered by BP in 1999, using the Ocean America mobile offshore drilling unit. Construction of the spar components and topsides commenced during 2001 in Pori, Finland and Morgan City, La.

Holstein is one of several BP deepwater developments scheduled for start-up in the Gulf over the next two years. The others are Mad Dog, Thunder Horse and Atlantis.●

Want to know more?

If you'd like to read more about EnCana (formerly Alberta Energy – i.e. AEC Oil & Gas and AEC Marketing) in Alaska go to Petroleum News web site and search the archives. Following are just a few of the articles that you will find. (Note: You must be a paid subscriber to Petroleum News to access the archives.)

Web site: http://www.PetroleumNews.com

2004

- **Nov. 21** EnCana looks to rein in growth
- **Nov. 7** EnCana gets a makeover
- **Oct. 31** EnCana surrenders its five NPR-A leases

2003

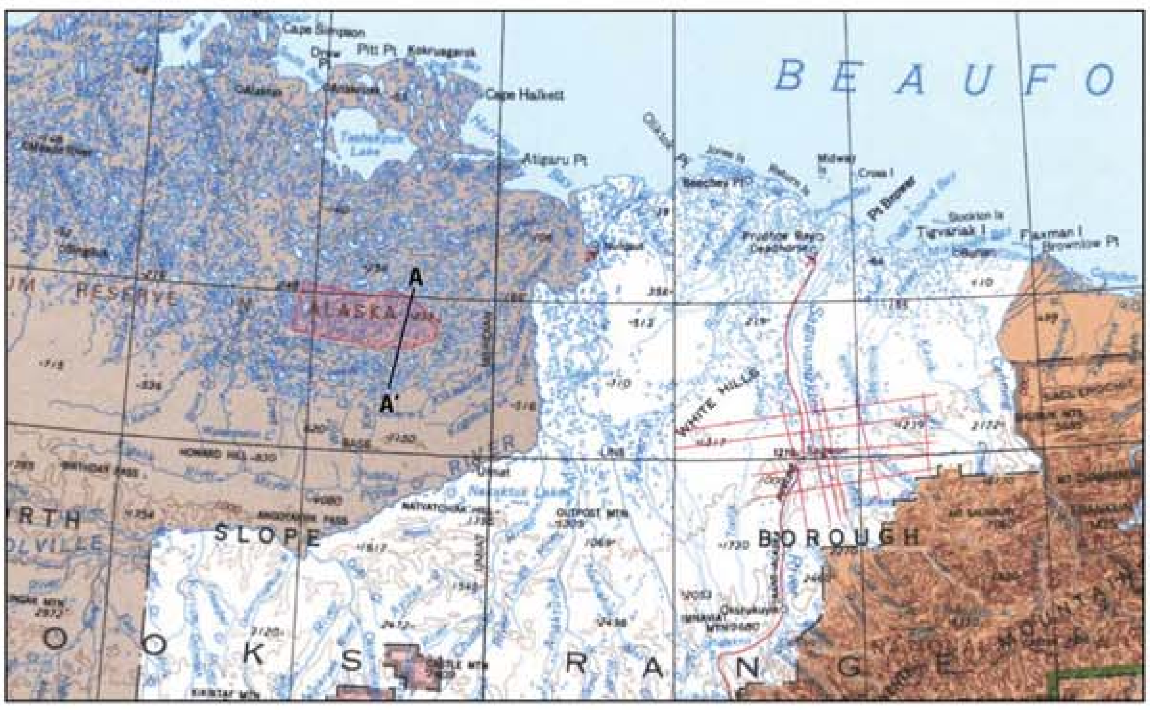
- **Nov. 30** Alaska key area for EnCana
- **Sept. 28** MMS sale draws $10M
- **Aug. 17** 'Tis the season for drilling
- **June 15** McCovey unit set to expire
- **May 18** North Slope winter work completed
- **May 11** Picking up pieces
- **May 4** EnCana, Lynx Enterprises receive MMS awards
- **March 16** It's a bust: ConocoPhillips takes dry hole costs for McCovey
- **March 2** Alaska remains EnCana priority
- **Feb. 16** EnCana plugs, abandons McCovey
- **Jan. 26** EnCana to file second season exploration plan for McCovey

2002

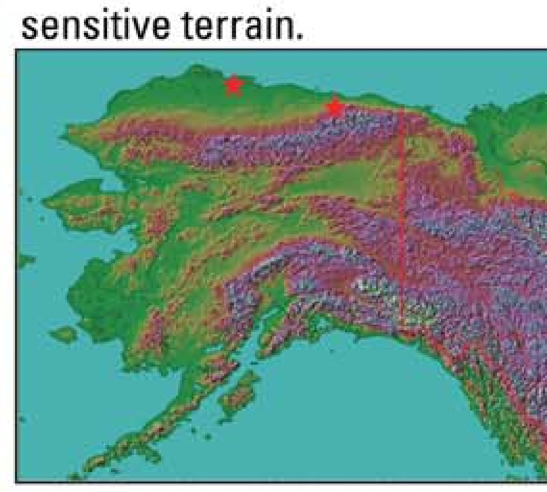
- **Dec. 15** EnCana spud McCovey, MMS says
- **Nov. 3** Bidders appear to be filling in around the edges at Oct. 24 state lease sales
- **Oct. 27** State takes in $2.7 million at North Slope, Beaufort Sea lease sales
- **Sept. 1** Phillips, EnCana take opposite sides on gas pipeline issues
- **Aug. 25** Winter work to include new pads for Phillips, infield drilling for BP
- **Aug. 4** The SDC makes 600 mile journey to McCovey prospect in 12 days
- **June 16** NPR-A lease sale allows exploration momentum to continue westward
- **June 9** Bidding to win
- **May 26** Foothills gets thumbs up
- **May 5** North Slope Foothills bidders set record for acres leased in state sale
- **March 3** AEC investing $32M in Alaska in 2002
- **Feb. 24** Alberta Energy boss refuses to play winners and losers in EnCana deal

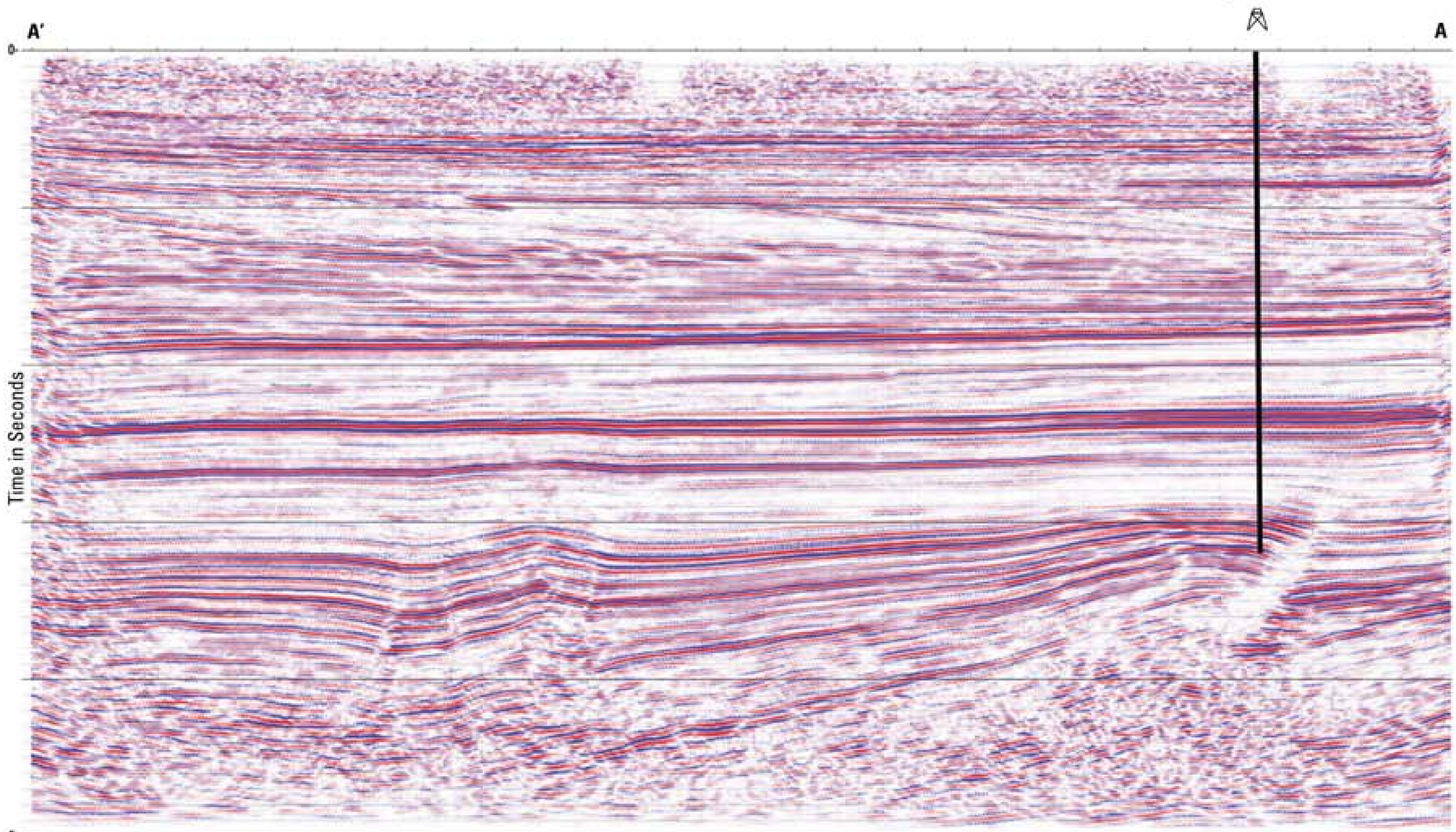
Key Creek North and Alaska Foothills

Any Clue What You're Bidding For on Alaska's North Slope?



PGS Onshore's Key Creek North and Alaska Foothills surveys offer incomparable data quality in this extreme and ecologically sensitive terrain.





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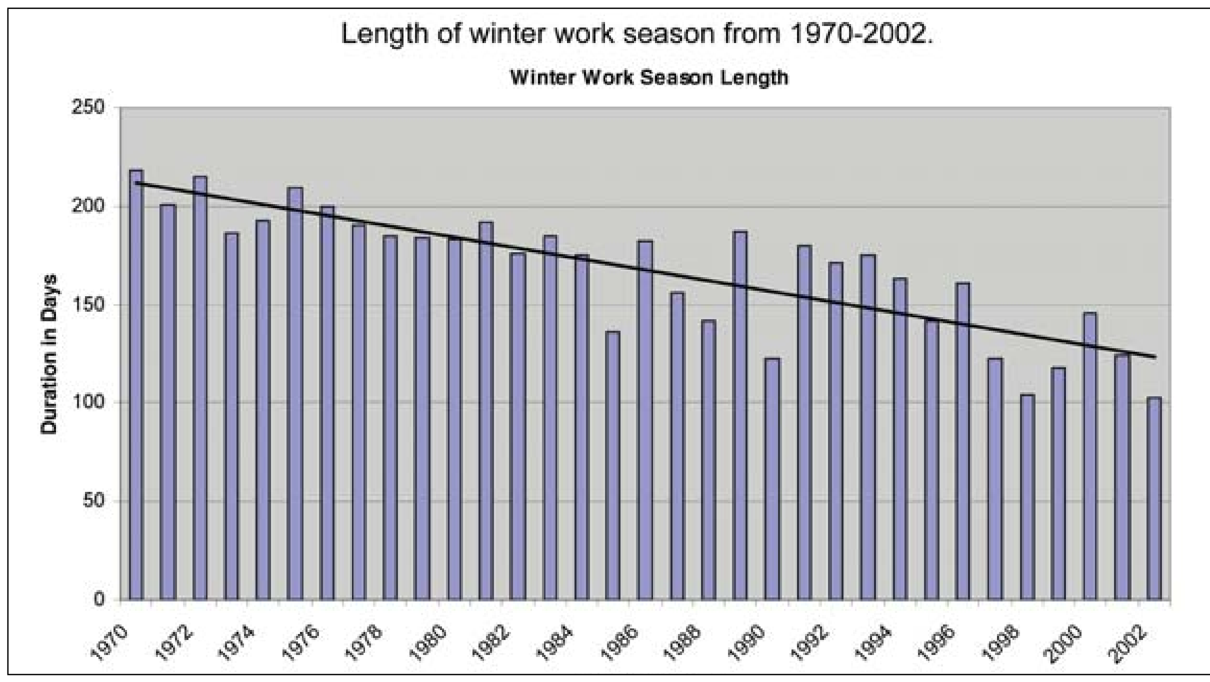
PGS

● NORTH SLOPE

Results are in: East coastal area open

Alaska drafts new criteria for opening North Slope tundra for winter work based on 2003-'04 study; more snow needed in Foothills

By KRISTEN NELSON
Petroleum News Editor-in-Chief



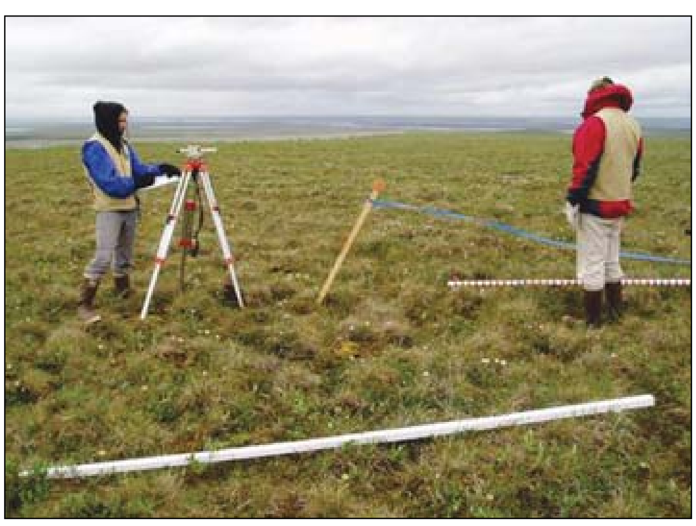
ALASKA DNR

The Alaska Department of Natural Resources has released results of its study of equipment impacts on tundra at varying depths of snow and ground hardness, and has changed its criteria for when the North Slope will be opened for winter travel, setting ground-hardness measurement standards for the coastal area and for the foothills and increasing the amount of snow required for opening the foothills.


TOM IRWIN

Commissioner of Natural Resources Tom Irwin said "this is a real scientific approach and that's the way we ought to be doing business." Irwin, speaking at a Dec. 10 press briefing on the study results, said as a result of the study the east coastal area of the North Slope was being opened for oil and gas exploration. "This opening is the earliest since 1995 and it's frankly two weeks earlier than last year for this area," he said.

When the tundra is opened is a cost issue for the industry, and impacts the amount of exploration work that can be done, Irwin said, noting that if you can drill three exploration wells from one ice road "the cost of that road is divided over three wells. If your time is so limited you build a road and can only drill one well," that well has to bear the entire cost of the ice road.


ALASKA DNR

Summer measurements in the field at the Foothills study site.

The cost relates to how early the state opens the tundra to travel so that seismic work can begin and ice roads and ice pads can be built for exploration.

Irwin said the state doesn't expect to see more money spent on exploration.

"Actually what I think we'll see is the same amount of money will be spent, but you'll get more footage of exploration drilling instead of dollars spent on access."

Irwin said he wanted to make sure that "everyone involved in Alaska" receives "the message that this is done correctly. We're not taking any shortcuts; we're not sacrificing the environment at all."

Testing on coastal plain and in foothills

The state tested the effects of equipment on the tundra at plots south of Deadhorse on the coastal plain and at plots in the foothills. Different types of equipment used on the tundra were driven over the plots at intervals from late October to late January, and the results were measured at the test plots over the summer. Data was then run through a model developed for the program, and it is those results that have just become available.

Bob Loeffler, director of the Department of Natural Resources' Division of Mining, Land and Water, said the oil exploration season on the North Slope "has been shortened by half" since the 1970s, shrinking from 208 days in the early 1970s to just more than 100 days. The goal of the study, he said, was to see if there was a way to increase winter on-tundra work time, "without consequences to the environment. I am very pleased that I think that we've found a way to do that," Loeffler said.


JUDY PATRICK

HARRY BADER

The study that the division did, he said, involved driving a range of equipment over plots "from essentially Halloween, when we knew the ground to be soft, to the … latter part of January, when we knew the ground to be very hard."

The expectation, he said, was that impacts would be much greater in the fall than in the winter. What the division found, Loeffler said, "was far less impact than we suspected at any of the treatment dates." There were essentially no ruts, even from the October tests, he said, a result the division is attributing to snow cover in October.

State partnered with DOE, Yale

The study was a collaborative effort, said Harry Bader, northern region land manager for the Division of Mining, Land and Water, who headed up the study. The U.S. Department of Energy provided a quarter of a million dollars toward the project, he said, and the Yale University School of Forestry "gave unstinting time in terms of their faculty and their research facilities in New Haven, Connecticut."

see **OPEN** page A13

BLM has opened NPR-A to tundra travel

The U.S. Department of the Interior's Bureau of Land Management opened the National Petroleum Reserve-Alaska for winter tundra travel at noon Dec. 11.

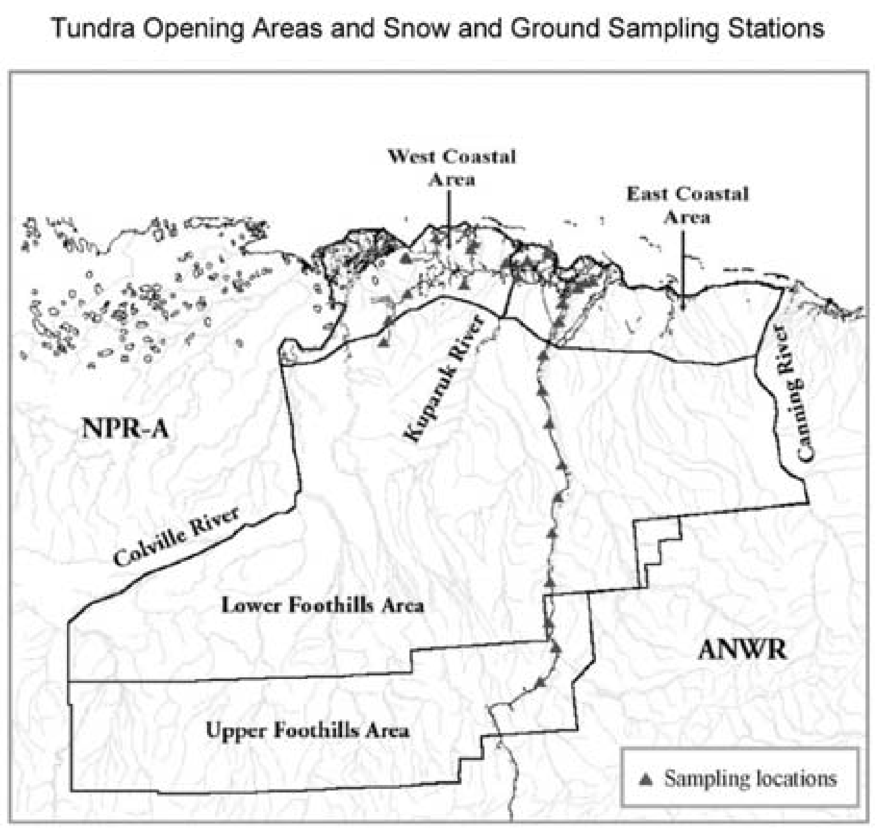
BLM Alaska Region spokeswoman Jody Weil told Petroleum News Dec. 14 that this is one day earlier than BLM opened NPR-A last winter. The opening was based on six inches of snow cover and a frost depth of 12 inches, she said.

The state of Alaska opened the eastern portion of its coastal plain for tundra travel Dec. 10, two weeks earlier than in 2004.

Weil said ConocoPhillips plans to build 55 miles of ice road to its Kokoda prospect some 30 miles south of Teshekpuk Lake, where it plans to drill two winter exploration wells.

BLM said in a statement that the opening signaled the agency's "determination that the tundra would not be damaged by the use of off-road vehicles or equipment used to construct temporary ice roads."

Data from automated weather stations in the NPR-A indicated sufficient frost depth the week of Dec. 6, the agency said, and its personnel then spent several days on the ground testing snow depth and tundra hardness before announcing the opening.



ALASKA DNR

continued from page A12

OPEN

The Alaska Support Industry Alliance and the Alaska Oil and Gas Association also contributed support, as did the University of Alaska Fairbanks. "Our study was carried out on the back of graduate students and interns," Bader said.

Bader said the division learned a number of things from the study, first "that snow depth, the density and the hardness of the snow — which we call snow slab — and ground hardness, all interact to create a resistance on the part of the tundra" to the types of activities associated with winter oil and gas exploration.

Among those variables, he said, snow is very important, and "not just snow, but the character of the snow."

The model the division used is driven more by "snow slab thickness, the hardness of the slab layer," than by "any other one variable," Bader said. "We also found that ground hardness, which is an important contributor to tundra resistance to damage, actually reaches a certain level after which it no longer contributes to greater resistance to damage."

> *The department also divided the North Slope into four geographic tundra opening areas (upper foothills, lower foothills, east coastal and west coastal).*

And, "in every case, as Bob (Loeffler) said, the damage was less than we anticipated. And in part that was because we had sufficient snow: snow protects," he said.

"So what are the implications of this? Simply we can increase the winter work season without increasing environmental damage."

New criteria

The new criteria, Bader said, require more snow cover (nine inches rather than six inches) in the foothills, a woody tussock tundra environment. The ground hardness for foothills opening has been defined as 25 drops of the drop hammer, "which is something that the North Slope team invented, which is a very effective tool for measuring hardness," he said.

> *"Actually what I think we'll see is the same amount of money will be spent, but you'll get more footage of exploration drilling instead of dollars spent on access."*
> —Commissioner Tom Irwin, Alaska Department of Natural Resources

On the coastal plain, which has a wet/moist sedge tundra environment, more resistant to damage, he said: "We're keeping the old six-inch snow standard and we're setting the effectiveness at 75 drops of the slide hammer."

The hammer drives a probe into the frozen earth, and the number of drops is a measure of ground harness.

Bader said the division is "going to continue to monitor, verify and improve."

Division staff will accompany seismic crews into the field this winter, he said, "to see if the level of environmental disturbance that we anticipate from our model, the study, actually materializes out on the tundra."

And the division will monitor the research plots "to see if there is any lag-time effect of a disturbance that we did not see after one season, to see if it materializes after two seasons."

Approach has been cautionary

Irwin said that based on the study results, the department is "still on the conservative side" of when to open the tundra. "We could be criticized for not opening soon enough in the past years," he said.

But Bader argued that in the past the department "has appropriately adopted a precautionary principle, and that is, we open the tundra in the most conservative fashion possible, because there wasn't sufficient information that was available to our staff. So our staff adopted precisely the correct policy, which is in the absence of information you always adopt the precautionary principle, and that is, you become conservative."

The department said in its project report (available online at http://www.dnr.state.ak.us/mlw/tundra/) that it began reforming the way it did tundra travel management in 2002, first by standardizing measurement techniques.

The department "created 30 permanent measurement stations in 2002," to serve as the locations for measuring snow depth and ground hardness. Ten of the measurement stations are along the Dalton Highway at about 10-mile intervals from Deadhorse to Slope Mountain and the other 20 are distributed within the North Slope oil field complex spanning approximately 40 miles across the slope.

The department also divided the North Slope into four geographic tundra opening areas (upper foothills, lower foothills, east coastal and west coastal).

The slide hammer probe, used to measure ground hardness, was also redesigned to remove variability in measurement from operator to operator. "It is now a true 'drop' hammer with standard drop weight and drop distance, employing no assistance from the operator," the department said. This new drop hammer was tested in the field in January 2003 "and calibrated to assist with comparison to prior data sets." ●

State opens western North Slope Dec. 16

● NEWS FLASH

The Alaska Department of Natural Resources opened the western coastal area of the North Slope for winter cross country tundra vehicle travel effective 8 a.m. Dec. 16.

"This opening is over three weeks earlier than last year," said Bob Loeffler, director of the Division of Mining, Land and Water.

Loeffler attributed the earlier opening to results of the state's tundra travel modeling study. The eastern coastal area opened Dec. 10.

Sampling in the week of Dec. 13 showed the western coastal area had both sufficient snow and ground hardness for opening.

Both the upper and lower foothills have sufficient ground hardness but do not have sufficient snow.

● NIKISKI

Agrium, Unocal settle litigation over gas supplies to Nikiski fertilizer plant

New gas contract runs through end of October, after which plant will close if no new supplies found

By KRISTEN NELSON

Petroleum News Editor-in-Chief


COURTESY OF AGRIUM
Agrium's Nikiski fertilizer plant

The Agrium-Unocal dispute over gas supplies to the Nikiski fertilizer plant has been settled.

Under a new gas sales agreement, Unocal will provide a total of 34 billion cubic feet to the plant through the end of October.

At that time, Agrium said in a Dec. 14 statement, the facility will close unless it can find alternate economic gas supplies.

Unocal said in its Dec. 14 statement that it has reached a final settlement with Agrium of all claims arising from litigation regarding natural gas sales to Agrium's Nikiski fertilizer plant and the original sale of that plant to Agrium by Unocal, and under the settlement, all litigation between the companies will be dismissed with prejudice.

As part of the settlement, Unocal and Agrium have entered into a new gas sales agreement, effective Dec. 1, with defined monthly gas delivery obligations that terminate Oct. 31, 2005.

Under the settlement agreement, Unocal said it will pay Agrium $25 million for early termination of the existing gas sales agreement, which originally ran until June 2009, full release of Unocal from all environmental claims, and resolution of all other issues, including certain contingent payment due Unocal under the 2000 purchase and sales agreement for the fertilizer plant. The settlement payment is in addition to remaining liquidated damages due under the existing sales agreement, and Unocal said it expects to take a $15 million after-tax special-item charge to earnings in the fourth quarter 2004 as a result of the settlement.

Unocal: settlement provides clarity

"This settlement provides clarity and certainty to the two parties," Kevin Tabler, land and government relations manager for Unocal Alaska, told Petroleum News. "We are glad to see these issues resolved so that we can get back to the business of exploring for and producing oil and gas," Tabler said.

Agrium said the settlement "establishes a definitive gas supply obligation from Unocal to the Kenai facility" until Oct. 31, 2005, and said Unocal is obligated to supply a total of 34 billion cubic feet through Oct. 31, "on the same price basis as the current gas supply agreement." Agrium said the new gas supply agreement will allow it to operate "at an average rate of 66 percent" through the end of October. "This rate could be further augmented with third party gas purchases during 2005," Agrium said.

Mike Wilson, president and CEO of Agrium, said in the company's statement: "The new gas supply agreement will enable us to continue to meet our ongoing customer requirements for nitrogen from Kenai for 2005, while we explore alternative gas supply agreements" beyond the end of October.

"While Agrium remains committed to working with local gas suppliers to develop alternatives, the facility will close in November of 2005 unless alternate economic gas supplies are obtained," he said.

Wilson told a Dec. 15 analysts' call that "it became clear to us that getting long-term gas from Unocal either through litigation or negotiation was not possible." The plant will be shut down Nov. 1, he said, if additional gas supplies cannot be found.

Agrium: not enough drilling

Richard Downey, investor/media relations with Agrium in Calgary, told Petroleum News Dec. 14 that Agrium believes "there's still a lot of gas in the region," but that "there just hasn't been enough drilling and enough finds" to replace the gas that has been produced. It "will take time and money to develop" additional Cook Inlet gas, he said.

Downey said Agrium hasn't totally given up hope, "but it does look likely the plant will have to be closed" due to the "very tight gas supply" in the Cook Inlet basin. He noted that the new gas supply contract doesn't specify a source for the gas Unocal will supply to the plant, just the volume, so the gas can come from whatever reserves Unocal has. This settles the litigation case in California, he said. Even if Agrium had gone ahead with that case, he said, "We wouldn't have necessarily gotten any more gas."

Ron Wilkinson, senior vice president, North America wholesale for Agrium, said on the conference call that Agrium has looked at moving the plant, but the company's "analysis shows that given the age of the plant and cost of dismantling and shipping to another location," the cost is very close to that of building a new plant, so it is unlikely that Agrium would move the plant.

Wilson said on the analysts' call that Agrium would decide closer to October how to close the plant, "take it down hard or take it down in a mothball state."

"Given what we know today, on the gas

see SETTLEMENT page A18

Governor offers help to keep plant open

Alaska Gov. Frank Murkowski said Dec. 14 that he is concerned about potential closure of the Agrium fertilizer plant and has offered state help in assessing natural gas supply options.

"We can't afford to have that plant shut down," the governor said in a statement. "It is a tough time of year for Agrium's employees to learn this news. We're committed to doing what we can to keep the plant operating — and we need the support of the community in those efforts."


JUDY PATRICK
Alaska Gov. Frank Murkowski

The governor initiated a teleconference with Kenai Peninsula community leaders after he learned from Agrium officials that an agreement reached between Unocal and Agrium in a long-standing dispute will provide a gas supply to the plant only through October 2005. The governor said Agrium indicated the plant could be in jeopardy of closing in November 2005 if the company cannot secure future gas supplies.

The governor has proposed forming a working group of state officials, Agrium representatives and community representatives to assess alternatives and try to find ways to keep the plant open. The group is expected to begin work in early January. Staff from the governor's office, the Alaska Department of Natural Resources, the Alaska Department of Community and Economic Development and the Alaska Industrial Development and Export Authority will participate from the state.

Alternatives the governor expects the group to address include additional natural gas exploration including on the Kenai National Wildlife Refuge and the possibility of replacing natural gas generation with coal generation from the Healy Clean Coal facility.

The governor said he is concerned about the impact the closure of the Agrium plant would have on the Kenai Peninsula, especially Kenai and Soldotna. Agrium has 230 direct employees and 50 contractors working at the Kenai Peninsula facility.

—PETROLEUM NEWS

MONGOLIA

Storm Cat to drill in Mongolia

Canada's Storm Cat Energy Corp. has a deal to drill at least three coalbed methane wells near Mongolia's capital, the Calgary-based company said Dec. 14, and may be doing some other exploration work as well on a tract that stretches over 5.5 million acres.

SCOTT ZIMMERMAN

The contract with the Petroleum Authority of Mongolia calls for Storm Cat to spend US$300,000 on exploration by the end of next year. The wells are expected to be no more than about 600 feet deep. If gas is found, there's a ready market in nearby Ulaanbaatar, capital of Mongolia and home to about half of its people.

The company already has a project in the South Gobi Desert in Mongolia.

Storm Cat recently obtained leases in Alaska. Its president is Scott Zimmerman, formerly with Evergreen Resources Inc.

—ALLEN BAKER

AUSTRALIA

BHP pushes LNG deal

BHP Billiton plans to get moving on developing a major field offshore Australia and a big LNG plant in the northwest even though 50-50 partner ExxonMobil doesn't consider it a high priority. Phil Aiken, BHP's group president for energy, told analysts in early December the Scarborough project offshore western Australia is expected to provide liquefied natural gas for the company's proposed Cabrillo LNG terminal in California. A decision by regulators on the offshore terminal is expected by the middle of next year. The LNG plant would produce about 6 million tonnes annually from Scarborough, which lies about 175 miles off the Australian coast. It could also supply the building Chinese market.

Aiken didn't mince words about ExxonMobil's position, according to reports of the analyst meeting in the Australian press.

"They do not want to fast-track it. We do want to fast-track it and therefore we are going ahead," Aiken was quoted as saying. "If they eventually want to get out of Scarborough, I'm sure there are plenty of companies that would want to take their place."

ExxonMobil didn't respond to Aiken's comments.

BHP is still just working on a prefeasibility study for the LNG terminal, with construction to begin no earlier than 2006 if the company decides to go ahead. The plant would be at Pilbara, about 3 miles southwest of Onslow in northwestern Australia.

ExxonMobil is operator of Scarborough, which has proven and probable reserves of 8 trillion cubic feet of gas, with little in the way of associated liquids.

—ALLEN BAKER

● ALBERTA

Hungry China market grabs oil sands spotlight

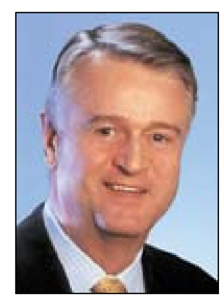
Enbridge hopes for formal contracts for synthetic crude with one or two Chinese refiners and Western Canadian producers by mid-2005

By GARY PARK

Petroleum News Calgary Correspondent

Formal contracts could be in place by mid-2005 to open up the voracious Chinese market to synthetic crude from the Alberta oil sands, officials on both sides of the Pacific have indicated this month.

Enbridge President and Chief Executive Officer Pat Daniel said memorandums of understanding could be signed early in 2005, followed by formal contracts involving Enbridge, Western Canadian producers and possibly two of China's four largest refiners.



Enbridge President and CEO Pat Daniel

For three years, Calgary-based Enbridge has been shopping its plans for the C$2.5 billion Gateway pipeline that would ship 400,000 barrels per day from the oil sands to a deepwater port at Prince Rupert or Kitimat.

Daniel said 75 to 80 percent of the volumes would be carried by tanker to Asia, with the balance going to southern California. An in-service date of 2009 is being targeted.

His disclosure gave added weight to remarks by Qiu Xianghua, vice president of Sinopec that the state petroleum and chemical company wants to invest in the oil sands.

Hopes for diversifying oil sands markets

With almost uncharacteristic speed, given the Chinese reputation for long and painstaking negotiations, these prospects have raised hopes that Alberta can achieve its goal of diversifying oil sands markets beyond North America.

Daniel told the Vancouver Board of Trade Dec. 10 that Asian interest in the oil sands has "been our most pleasant surprise … to date."

> *… the oil sands are "remarkable resources and we are currently investigating them. China needs oil resources and has a big market. Canada needs markets."*
>
> **—Qiu Xianghua, vice president of Sinopec**

He said China, Japan and South Korea have all indicated a desire to participate in the Gateway pipeline "particularly China, where their booming economy requires energy to fuel continued growth.

"Potential Asian and Pacific customers are looking very seriously at investment, not only in the pipeline but also in the upstream production of heavy oil to move into China," he said.

Although the focus is on opening doors to Asian markets, Enbridge is negotiating with prospective customers in California who could take 80,000-100,000 bpd from gateway to offset declining volumes from Alaska.

But Enbridge spokesman Jim Rennie told Petroleum News Dec. 13 that the Californians would prefer to see the Asian contracts resolved first.

He said the memorandums of understanding would firm up the base volumes needed to move ahead with Gateway and an open season would provide a chance to fill out the pipeline's capacity.

Xianghua said in Toronto Dec. 6 that the oil sands are "remarkable resources and we are currently investigating them. China needs oil resources and has a big market. Canada needs markets."

While suggesting investment would be "mutually beneficial and complementary to both countries," he did not say whether Sinopec favored an upstream stake, equity ownership of a pipeline or just a supply contract.

see CHINA page A16

● FAR EAST REPORT

Big China deal secures Australian LNG supply

Asian powerhouse continues drive to purchase energy from sources around the world

By ALLEN BAKER
Petroleum News Contributing Writer

A $19 billion LNG supply deal between a Chinese entity and Australia's Woodside Petroleum Ltd. and partners confirms China's intention to move ahead aggressively to cut pollution and increase energy options by adding liquefied natural gas to the mix.

The deal with Melbourne-based Woodside and its five partners in the North West Shelf project will provide 3.3 million tonnes of LNG annually to China's southern Guangdong province for 25 years. The Chinese entity, Guangdong Dapeng LNG Co. Ltd., is led by a subsidiary of state-owned China National Offshore Oil Corp., CNOOC, with a 33 percent stake.

> *As part of the arrangement, a new joint venture will be formed to provide the gas being shipped to China. That venture will have CNOOC as a 25 percent partner, with the six current North West Shelf partners taking 12.5 percent each.*

As part of the arrangement, a new joint venture will be formed to provide the gas being shipped to China. That venture will have CNOOC as a 25 percent partner, with the six current North West Shelf partners taking 12.5 percent each. The deal effectively calls for CNOOC to secure a 5.3 percent equity share in the field.

Yet another joint venture between Chinese and Australian interests will be in charge of the shipping from the Burrup Peninsula LNG plant in Australia to the new terminal being built in Guangdong.

The North West Shelf LNG facility currently has four trains with total capacity of 11.7 million tonnes annually. A fifth train with a capacity of a further 4.2 million tonnes a year is being considered. Shipments to China are expected to start in the second half of 2006.

Partners in the venture are operator Woodside, BHP Billiton, Shell, ChevronTexaco, BP and Japan Australia LNG, all with equal shares.

FAREAST report

ConocoPhillips go-head on Bohai

ConocoPhillips has committed $1.8 billion in capital spending for the second phase of its Bohai Bay field off China, the company said Dec. 13.

It's not clear how much of the multi-year budget will be spent next year, but it won't be more than a few hundred million dollars. The Houston-based company announced earlier that it will spend $7 billion on capital expenditures in 2005, with just under a billion allocated to E&P spending the Asia-Pacific region.

Phase One of the PL19-3 development in Bohai Bay is currently producing 20,000 barrels of oil daily with a 24-slot wellhead platform and a floating production, storage and offload facility. It began producing in December 2002.

The field is in Block 11/05 of Bohai Bay, an area of 1.6 million acres where ConocoPhillips has exploration rights under a 1994 contract and is the operator with a 49 percent working interest; China National Offshore Oil Corp. has the rest.

Woodside deal for China National Offshore?

China National Offshore Oil Corp. has been working in many areas outside China to secure more energy for the world's most populous country. That has led to speculation about a Chinese bid for Australia's Woodside. Or perhaps more likely, for the 34 percent stake in Woodside owned by Shell.

Shell tried to buy all of Woodside in 2000, but the Australian government blocked the deal. A Chinese bid for the full company could run into the same objection.

The speculation comes as Shell is reshaping its holdings, and as Woodside gets ready to accelerate work on yet another offshore gas field, called Browse.

Woodside is operator and 50 percent owner of the field, which is off western Australia and is said to contain more than 20 trillion cubic feet of gas. Partners in Browse are ChevronTexaco, BP, Shell, and BHP Billiton.

Active in Southeast Asia

With big deposits relatively close to home, China National Offshore Oil Corp. has been involved in a multitude of drilling projects, recently announcing a wildcat discovery in the West Madura area offshore Indonesia that flowed at a rate of more than 1,000 barrels of oil and condensate, plus 10 million cubic feet of gas daily. CNOOC has a 25 percent interest in the KE7-3 well.

In another recent development, CNOOC announced a 12-year deal worth nearly a billion dollars to provide 80 million cubic feet of gas daily for a power plant run by Indonesia's state electricity company, starting in 2006. The gas will come from CNOOC's offshore field in southeast Sumatra.

CNOOC has investments in more than a dozen countries, while China National Petroleum Corp., parent of PetroChina, has more than 40 projects outside China. The two companies, along with fellow state-controlled Sinopec, have invested billions in Latin America and Africa, as well as Asia.

The biggest of those was a recent $70 billion Sinopec deal with Iran in which Sinopec will buy 250 million tonnes of Iranian LNG over 30 years, plus 150,000 barrels of oil daily over 25 years. As part of the deal, Sinopec is expected to help develop the Yadavaran fields in Iran. Total spending by China for Iranian oil could reach $200 billion if other associated deals go through.

Stagnant domestic production

China has been trying to increase domestic production, but despite some successes offshore, there has been little progress. Total production is expected to average 3.52 million barrels daily in 2005, up only 1.7 percent from this year's 3.46 million barrels.

China's thirst for oil, meanwhile, reached 6.3 million barrels daily last year, as the country imported 2.6 million barrels each day, second behind only the United States in that department. China has been a net importer since 1993.

Meanwhile, China is preparing for the boom in the LNG trade, planning at least 10 LNG terminals along its coastline. Sakhalin, Qatar and others could be added to the LNG supplier list if China's demand skyrockets or price competition intensifies.●

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CHINA

'Anchor tenant' for Gateway most likely from China

Daniel said Gateway's "anchor tenant" would likely be from China, although Enbridge would build and maintain majority ownership of the 720-mile pipeline, while offering minority interests to Chinese refiners or Canadian producers.

Industry sources believe Husky Energy is a strong contender to participate in the pipeline, given its extensive interests in the oil sands and heavy oil region.

It expects to complete its 35,000 bpd Tucker project within two years and could start work on a 200,000 bpd Sunrise project in 2008. As well, it owns a heavy oil upgrader that will soon have capacity of 82,000 bpd.

Although Sinopec recently denied that it was negotiating a possible takeover of Husky, which is controlled 70.7 percent by Hong Kong tycoon Li Ka-shing, the state-owned firm's admission that it is eying a role in the oil sands has kept that speculation alive.

Daniel said last month that there is "urgency" to open up oil sands markets outside North America.

But until talks with producers, refiners and downstream markets are concluded, Enbridge is not setting a date for an open season for firm shipper contracts.

Enbridge has laid out case for new markets

However, the company has publicly laid out its own case for accessing new markets.

It has noted that the tanker route from Prince Rupert to Japan covers only 3,840 nautical miles compared with 6,340 miles from the Persian Gulf and 8,600 miles from Venezuela, the world's other major source of heavy oil.

Enbridge has also projected that long-term pipeline tolls from Alberta to Prince Rupert or Kitimat would be US$1.75 per barrel, with another US$1.30 per barrel for the tanker rate.

That would make it competitive with rival Terasen, which Enbridge estimates has an existing pipeline toll to Vancouver of US$1.75 and could race a tanker cost of US$3 per barrel from Vancouver to Asia.

Meanwhile, Terasen sent documents to current and prospective customers asking for a show of interest in the proposed expansion of the TransMountain Pipeline System from Alberta to Vancouver.

Based on the responses, an open season is likely by mid-2005 for plans to raise Terasen's shipping capacity to the British Columbia coast to as much as 850,000 bpd.

An initial Anchor Loop would cost C$570 million and raise volumes by 300,000 bpd by 2008. TransMountain is currently operating at capacity of 225,000 bpd.

If expansions are approved beyond the Anchor Loop phase, there are two options costing C$1.7 billion and C$2 billion. ●

Companies involved in North America's oil and gas industry

All of the companies listed above advertise on a regular basis with Petroleum News

Petroleum news

Business Spotlight

By PAULA EASLEY

FORREST CRANE

Thomas M. Labno Sr., sales manager

Air Liquide America LP

Air Liquide has been Alaska's only producer of oxygen, nitrogen and acetylene for more than 60 years. Bulk shipments such as argon, helium and carbon dioxide are repackaged and blended into marketable containers for food service and welding shielding gas. Carbon dioxide is transformed into dry ice for airport cloud precipitation applications and refrigeration. The staff has some 160 years' experience to assist clients in industrial gas and welding applications.

Tom Labno worked in industrial gas production in the Air Force at Elmendorf and various fighter bases in Alaska for nine years. In 1959 he joined the private sector in the same field, which he still enjoys. He's been happily married to Nan for 20 years and appreciates her unyielding support of his fishing passion.

FORREST CRANE

Emily Cross, marketing coordinator

VECO Alaska Inc.

VECO's worldwide operations perform engineering, procurement, construction, operations and maintenance work. Principal business sectors are oil and gas, pipelines and terminals, refineries and power generation. Its active marketing department is responsible for managing proposals, advertising, trade shows, job fairs and responding to sponsorship requests.

Emily Cross joined VECO after working for Alyeska Pipeline Service Co. She finds her job challenging and generally exciting — which keeps her highly motivated. A recent off-duty challenge has been learning to downhill ski with daughters Keirin (9) and Kalina (4). Keirin's goal is to beat mom to the bottom of the hill this winter. Their Yorkshire terrier Mister is outnumbered 3-to-1 by the Cross girls.

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SETTLEMENT

(supply), we would be closing that plant," Wilson said. "As you get closer to the October timeframe, if we have new information we will consider mothballing it."

Operation will mirror last winter

Lisa Parker, Agrium's Nikiski spokeswoman, told Petroleum News: "This wasn't an easy decision for Agrium. The employees here are top notch." Parker said the Nikiski fertilizer plant has two ammonia trains and two urea trains, and when operating at capacity, she said, the plant uses 53 billion cubic feet a year.

The plan at this point is similar to the way we operated last year, Parker said: through the winter months one ammonia train and one urea train will be operated. Then in the April-May timeframe the plant will ramp up, and run both sets of trains through September, "and then scale back down to one again."

Cook Inlet gas supplies are very tight, and with the winter need for heat and light, that's when the utility demand is highest, she said.

Gas options that Agrium sees

Chris Tworek, Agrium's vice president supply management, said on the Dec. 15 analysts' call that between now and the end of October, the period of the new gas supply contract with Unocal, Agrium thinks there is "a very good probability that, much like over the last couple of years … we'll be able to attract additional spot gas and run the plant at higher rates than the 66 percent that we're going to get from the Unocal gas."

But after Oct. 31, he said, "we do not believe there is any one supplier in the Cook Inlet that can supply us the gas that we need and so we are going to have to talk to several suppliers." He said Agrium thinks that clearing up the situation with Unocal will make talking to other suppliers "a lot easier. And we think there's still some probability that we could get enough gas after the 31st

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BONAVISTA

and 3,270 barrels per day of oil and gas liquids.

Although the seller was not identified, Virginia-based Dominion Resources has been liquidating assets in the area.

A Dominion spokesman said the company will wait until it has divested all of its holdings before disclosing the buyers.

Bonavista President and Chief Executive Officer Keith MacPhail said Dec. 13 the purchase enables the trust to "establish a new core region" in British Columbia.

Once the transaction is completed, natural gas will make up 58 percent of Bonavista's total production of about 53,000 barrels of oil equivalent per day, with light and medium crude at 29 percent and heavy oil at 13 percent.

In addition, the trust will have access to a net 140,000 undeveloped acres, with 75 identified new drilling locations.

MacPhail said the trust does not qualify as a British Columbia "guru" in the natural gas sector, but has "sufficient technical knowledge to work these assets."

He said Bonavista, in trying to create a "sustainable trust," will have proven and probable reserves of 165 million barrels of oil equivalent and a proved developing producing reserve life index of 6.4 years.

TD Securities has estimated that for all of Canada's energy trusts to just hold the line on production in 2005 they will have to acquire about 125,000 bpd of production, which — based on the Bonavista purchase — would cost about C$5 billion.

—GARY PARK

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ARMSTRONG

fall, and if one of those prospects proves up, "we will start production drilling."

The plan of operations calls for the following:

- Construction of a gravel pad "at or adjacent to the ice pad location to support production activities;"
- Construction of a 35-foot wide permanent gravel access road adjacent to this winter's exploration ice road;
- Conversion of exploration wells to either production or disposal wells;
- Construction of onsite production equipment at the gravel pad during the fall of 2005; and
- Placement of a buried pipeline inside the access road from the Two Bits production pad to existing infrastructure at or near the KRU 2M pad.

Armstrong said additional wells or drilling operations may be required from the gravel pad, which will be 500 feet by 500 feet.

West Sak 18, a Kuparuk unit gravel pad no longer being used, was listed as a possible alternate site to support production operations.

The gravel access road would run from KRU 2M pad, which is connected to the existing North Slope road system, and head north towards West Sak 18 pad — a distance of roughly 3.5 miles — and then run another mile northwest towards the proposed pad location.

Cracking the 50 million barrel paradigm

Finding oil at Two Bits wouldn't just be a win for Armstrong, Gustafson said. "If Two Bits works, there's not enough drill rigs (on the North Slope)," he told Petroleum News in an earlier interview.

Success at Two Bits, he said, would be better for the industry than discovery of a huge new field, because it would mean companies can make money from developing smaller fields than the 50-million barrel size that is the standard now.

The lure of cracking the 50-million barrel paradigm was what brought Armstrong Oil and Gas to Alaska where it founded Armstrong Alaska, Bill Armstrong, president of both companies, told the Resource Development Council of Alaska in November 2002. At that time the company was preparing, with operating partner Pioneer Natural Resources, to drill its first North Slope wells on a prospect that Armstrong developed.

The following year Armstrong brought Kerr-McGee to Alaska. In the last two winters Armstrong participated in five exploration wells with its partners, announcing discoveries at both the Oooguruk and Nikaitchuq units — both of which are being considered for development by operators Pioneer and Kerr-McGee, respectively.

Pioneer and Kerr-McGee are both large independent oil and gas companies. ●

Editor's note: See related stories on Armstrong's North Slope plans in the May 13, July 18, Oct. 31 and Nov. 7, 2004, editions of Petroleum News. These are just a few of the articles about Armstrong that have appeared in Petroleum News in the last two years. See Petroleum News' home page archives at www.PetroleumNews.com.

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TRUSTS

The most dramatic change in the management of trusts has been the swing from acquisitions to exploration.

Through the 1990s, as the trust sector was embarking on its growth phase, unit holders grew accustomed to receiving 95 to 100 percent of a trust's cash flow.

Those payouts have now dipped below an average 70 percent, although some trusts are clinging to the traditional cash distribution ratio.

In a recent report, trust specialists Brian Ector and Grant Hofer of Scotia Capital said sustainability for trusts "means mitigating declines on a reserves-per-unit and production-per-unit basis.

"Sustainability means a shift toward lower payout ratios to fund capital development programs and ultimately being less reliant on the equity market."

Finally, they warned: "Sustainability means being well positioned to withstand a downturn in commodity prices."

Colborne: trusts headed for consolidation round

Paul Colborne, president and chief executive officer of StarPoint Energy, believes that regardless of how much money is put into exploration and the direction of commodity prices, the 35 trusts established over the last decade are headed for a significant round of consolidation.

It will be survival of the strongest, he told a Conference Board of Canada exploration management forum in Calgary earlier this month.

Trusts with higher cost structures, steeper reserve decline rates, over-leveraged balance sheets and inadequate hedging programs are doomed, he suggested.

Colborne has been through all phases of the trust evolution, selling a conventional E&P company to a trust for C$500 million and being involved in the creation of junior exploration companies (known as explorecos) that have been spun-off from larger takeover/acquisition deals.

He has created an estimated C$1.1 billion for investors in his junior companies over the past decade, lending weight to his claim that "we deliver on our goals."

Theal: survival may hinge on lower distribution

Chris Theal, head of institutional research at Tristone Capital, told the Conference Board forum that survival for trusts may hinge on them distributing only 50 to 60 percent of their cash flow to unit holders, down from the 80 percent that is common today.

He also noted that junior E&P companies now typically last less than two years, with 34 of the 50 juniors that entered 2004 now swallowed up in various deals.

The most conservative category of trust reserves is described as PDP — proved, developed producing — which demand a high level of confidence that they actually exist in the quantities estimated.

Of the 20 trusts tracked by Scotia Capital, the average PDP reserve life index is 5.7 years, led by Enerplus Resources Fund at 7.7 years and ARC Energy Trust at 7.5 years.

Ector and Hofer say their analysis shows that "reserves per unit have declined sharply over the past few years," with their group of 20 trusts posting an average annual decline of 17 percent from 2001 through 2003.

Production per unit declined an average 11 percent a year, the analysts reported.

They said the challenge for trust management is to "mitigate these declines in order to generate incremental value for unit holders." ●

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INSIDER

73,000 million cubic feet per day, compared with 30 million from Shell's discovery.

It also adds momentum to First Calgary's corporate strategic review that is widely expected to end in a takeover of the Calgary-based company, which now has a market value of C$3.3 billion based on a string of successes in Algeria.

The Financial Times newspaper in London floated the latest rumor Dec. 6 when it reported that Statoil, Norway's largest oil company, was stalking First Calgary as its primary quarry to expand its reach into North Africa and the Middle East.

First Calgary has indicated that a sale is necessary to develop its Algerian proven, probable and possible reserves that now tally about 7 trillion cubic feet. A reserves update is expected later this month.

Its Algerian discoveries have tested at cumulative flow rates of almost 600 million cubic feet per day of gas and 40,000 barrels per day of oil — the sort of numbers Shell Canada or any other Canadian major would happily settle for.

Sempra back in Alaska North Slope gas pipeline race with LNG proposal

Sempra Energy is back in the race for Alaska North Slope natural gas.

Last year the San Diego-based parent of San Diego Gas and Electric and Southern California Gas Co. was talking to the Alaska Natural Gas Development Authority about Alaska liquefied natural gas for an LNG receiving facility Sempra has in the works in Baja California. Sempra subsequently found other sources of LNG that could deliver sooner.

Sempra is now working with the Alaska Gas Pipeline Authority and is purported to be talking about a lot more than buying LNG.

Sempra spokeswoman Jennifer Andrews could only confirm Dec. 16 that Sempra Energy has signed a development agreement with the Alaska Gas Pipeline Authority to assist in studying an Alaska gas pipeline project. She said the company expects to have an announcement about the agreement before the end of the year.

The project on the table is supposed to be huge: a 48-inch gas pipeline that would carry 4.2 billion cubic feet a day from the North Slope, a liquefaction facility at Valdez with LNG going to the West Coast and a spur line to Cook Inlet.

Sempra is said to have told state of Alaska officials in mid-December that the company has obtained project permits formerly held by Yukon Pacific Corp., and to be proposing to buy natural gas from the producers on the North Slope.

Dave MacDowell, BP Exploration (Alaska)'s gas project spokesman, told Petroleum News Dec. 16: "I'm not familiar with the Sempra proposal; we remain focused on the project we feel offers the most promise for Alaska's North Slope gas, and that is a pipeline project to serve the North American market."

ConocoPhillips Alaska spokeswoman Dawn Patience said, "We have not seen any proposal from Sempra. However alternatives such as gas to liquids and liquefied natural gas have been reviewed a number of times and found to not be competitive with a pipeline to the Lower 48.

"Developing Alaska's natural gas through a pipeline from the Alaska North Slope to the Lower 48 continues to be a top priority for ConocoPhillips. We are encouraged by the progress being made in our negotiations under the Stranded Gas Development Act with the state. We hope the Alaska Legislature will help us move forward with the project by supporting the fiscal contract presented to it by the administration and the sponsor group." ●

Currently the tariff for oil being purchased for in-state use is about $1.96 per barrel as compared to $3.01 per barrel for oil headed outside the state.

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ANADARKO

down the 800-mile pipeline to markets outside Alaska. Two years ago the Regulatory Commission of Alaska ruled on a similar complaint from shippers, including Anadarko, and drastically lowered the tariff for TAPS oil being used in-state. RCA also ordered the pipeline's owners to cough up substantial refunds.

Currently the tariff for oil being purchased for in-state use is about $1.96 per barrel as compared to $3.01 per barrel for oil headed outside the state. The largest hike being proposed from TAPS owners is a 28 percent hike requested by BP that would take the out-of-state rate from $3.01 to $3.86 per barrel.

(See related stories on page A8 of this issue.)

—KAY CASHMAN

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RTP

uids used to produce fuels and chemicals, also can instantly change low-quality heavy oil into more valuable light oil, thereby making untold billions of barrels of stranded heavy oil deposits around the world economic to develop.

It's estimated that less than 1 percent of total heavy oil deposits worldwide has been extracted or is under active development.

"The lag in the development of heavy oil is related to technical and economic challenges of producing, transporting and processing raw heavy crude oil," Ivanhoe Chairman David Martin said in a conference call with analysts. "We can take these stranded resources that are worth little or nothing and increase their value dramatically with this technology."

Ensyn co-founder and chief executive Robert Graham, who will serve on Ivanhoe's board of directors if the merger is approved by Ensyn shareholders and government regulators, said the RTP process is simple yet effective.

"We eject whatever feed material that needs to be upgraded into a tornado of hot sand," Graham said. "In less than one second, the feed is vaporized, converted, cooled and then recovered as an upgraded product."

Plants largely built with off-the-shelf components

RTP plants, constructed largely of off-the-shelf components, easily could be placed in oil fields to upgrade heavy oil, Ivanhoe's Martin said. He said surplus energy created by the process could be used to produce steam to inject into reservoirs, a common industry practice to make the thick oil less viscous and easier to recover.

"The upgraded oil has a much lower viscosity, so it flows in the pipeline," Martin said. "And the upgraded product fetches a higher price at market, as it does not require pre-processing before refining."

In fact, prior to the merger agreement, Ensyn's goal was to develop an "efficient, relatively small scale heavy oil upgrading process" for the field, Graham said. "We believe this goal characterizes the Holy Grail of heavy oil development," he added.

Ivanhoe, which says it has kept a close watch on Ensyn and its proprietary RTP process since 2000, took a 10 percent stake in Ensyn in late 2003 and an additional 5 percent interest in the private company earlier this year. The transactions gave Ivanhoe the right to RTP in certain oil producing countries, including China, Mongolia, Oman, most of South America and war-torn Iraq.

In October, Ivanhoe and Iraq's Ministry of Oil signed a memorandum of understanding for Ivanhoe to study and evaluate the shallow, heavy oil Qaiyarah in northern Iraq. If the evaluation studies indicate development of the field is economically viable, Ivanhoe will present a development plan and offer a commercial proposal to implement an enhanced oil recovery program for Qaiyarah.

Ivanhoe can now move to largest heavy oil areas

However, Ivanhoe's 15 percent stake in Ensyn did not give the company access to the three of the largest heavy oil plums, Canada, Venezuela and the United States.

"This investment in Ensyn will now allow us to quickly move into markets where we do not have exclusive development rights but where we have significant interest in the technology," said Leon Daniel, Ivanhoe's president and chief executive officer.

Under terms of the merger agreement, Ivanhoe would acquire all of the outstanding shares of the privately held Ensyn Group, the parent company of Ensyn Petroleum, and Ensyn would become a wholly owned subsidiary of Ivanhoe. Ivanhoe also would pay $10 million in cash and issue Ivanhoe common shares valued at $75 million, with a minimum of 30 million common shares to be issued.

As part of the deal, Ensyn Group would spin off its wood or biomass processing business, Ensyn Renewables, to its shareholders prior to the closing of the transaction with Ivanhoe. Ensyn Renewables has operated commercial facilities since 1989 and has six commercial plants in operation, with a seventh under construction.

California plant under negotiation

Ivanhoe said it would pursue Ensyn initiatives, including a non-binding agreement with Aera Energy, a California limited liability company owned by affiliates of Shell and ExxonMobil, to advance negotiations for a 10,000-barrel per day RTP plant in California. Aera is California's leading oil producer with about 250,000 barrels per day of production.

Ivanhoe also would inherit Ensyn's 1,000-barrel per day RTP commercial demonstration plant, located in the Belridge heavy oil field near Bakersfield, Calif. Ensyn said it plans to use the facility to process local heavy oil, as well as to test a range of heavy crudes from around the world. Production was launched in mid-December.

Ivanhoe's Daniel said it is the company's intention to use the RTP technology primarily as a tool to build its own oil reserves and production. But he said Ivanhoe also is prepared to consider "alternative business models."

"Ivanhoe and Ensyn have jointly held private technology briefings arranged by host government representatives in a number of oil producing countries around the world," he said. "The benefits of RTP technology have been quickly recognized and we have had an excellent reception."●

Petroleum DIRECTORY

Providing information about companies that serve North America's oil and gas industry

B section
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UpFront

A North Slope worker prepares a fuel delivery in this image captured by industry photographer Judy Patrick

JUDY PATRICK PHOTO

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Petroleum news
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A heavyweight in the air business

Air Liquide manufactures and delivers a colorful array of gases

By SARAH HURST
Petroleum Directory Contributing Writer

FORREST CRANE

Air Liquide’s network in Alaska allows it to quickly meet clients’ needs. Its stock levels provide for an over 94-percent fill rate on equipment orders, and an even higher level on gas orders.

The story of Air Liquide began in 1902 when French scientist Georges Claude invented the liquefaction of air. He created the first neon lamp at around the same time. Air Liquide is now the world leader in industrial and medical gases and related services. A multinational corporation, it touched down in Alaska in 1968, when it bought out the old Anchorage Oxygen Co. Air Liquide has grown to four Alaska locations — Anchorage, Fairbanks, Kenai and Homer — and two plants throughout the state, providing employment for 65 Alaskans. It also has 12 distributors in other parts of the state.

“We have been manufacturing nitrogen, oxygen and other gases and packaging them into cylinders since the beginning,” said Brian Benson, one of Air Liquide’s sales and services representatives in Anchorage. “At one time, we manufactured carbon dioxide at this site until it became non-economic, but we still import bulk carbon dioxide and manufacture dry ice on site. We now have an upgraded, FDA-approved, 35-ton-per-day air plant to supply the state with oxygen, nitrogen. Acetylene is manufactured and cylinders serviced in Palmer. We are a certified ‘Made in Alaska’ vendor.”

Acetylene is the hardest product to manufacture because it is a flammable gas and the safety precautions are critical. The product that Air Liquide sells most of, however, is that rather essential item, oxygen.

Over 95 percent of products manufactured in Alaska

Air Liquide’s network in Alaska allows it to quickly meet clients’ needs. Its stock levels provide for an over 94-percent fill rate on equipment orders, and an even higher level on gas orders. “Clients don’t have to deal with Seattle for competitive pricing on equipment, and we have it in stock,” said Benson. “We manufacture over 95 percent of our products here in the state — profits and taxes paid here, payrolls for Alaskans. We work hard for our customers, and our success is a measure of that work.”

FORREST CRANE

Air Liquide has an upgraded, FDA-approved, 35-ton-per-day air plant to supply the state with oxygen and nitrogen.

Most of the stock in Air Liquide is owned by French investors, but it is also owned by employees and individuals worldwide, including Americans. The Alaska company, like the others in the United States, is responsible for its own profit and loss. “Our president and CEO for North America, Pierre Dufour, is a French-Canadian, a real friend of northern development; he has visited the fabshops in Anchorage and been extremely supportive of our Alaskan division development.”

Air Liquide’s general manager in Alaska is Bob Cook, who came to the state as a small child, graduated from Lathrop High School in Fairbanks, went to college in Arizona and joined the company in 1975. He went from being an inside salesman to general manager in 1981. Cook has stayed with Air Liquide for most of his career because he likes the way the Alaska operations have always been independent of the larger company, and because there are always new challenges.

“We cover a massive amount of industries and I have a great staff that works for me,” said Cook. “Every year we’ve had increases in revenues and we’ve more than doubled the number of employees in the state.” One of Cook’s biggest achievements has been to continue to get capital investment for the Alaska operations, which has allowed the company to gain efficiencies and keep abreast of the market growth. An example would be the replacement of their air separation plant, which doubled the size of the production facilities, he said.

Benson started out in the construction industry when he was a teenager, and joined Air Liquide as a driver over 20 years ago. “The organization believes in personal development and promotion from within,” he said. In 1989 he moved from inside salesman to manager of the carbon dioxide division. Today, in addition to managing carbon dioxide sales in Alaska, he also manages on-site gas generator developments, food process gases, welding equipment and industrial gas sales.

Welding technology key element of company’s business

Welding technology is a key element of Air Liquide’s business: it’s the largest supplier of welding gas in Alaska. “Welding technology has gained momentum since the Egyptians learned to forge rough iron together two millennia ago,” said Benson. “The connection with the manufacture of gases probably started when acetylene was discovered in 1836. We manufacture special gases to weld the high tech, high strength metals which metallurgists come up with from time to time. We as an industry have been forced to develop gas chemistry to modify and increase weld strength in these metals. Welding speed, deposition rates and productivity are increased by using the right gas for the right job. It is one of the ways we can bond steel with the ductility and strength needed for modules and pipelines used in the miserably cold regions of the Arctic.”

Besides the cylinders of individual gases, Air Liquide manufactures cylinders of mixed gas in Alaska. By changing the percentage volumes of different gases in the cylinder, different and more efficient welding gases can be produced. The company also uses a patented filling procedure which produces more homogenous mixtures that do not stratify in the cylinder. “We supply virtually everyone in the state who uses gas of any kind, but out of respect to our customers, their business is entirely confidential,” said Benson.

Company has own fleet

To transport its potentially hazardous products, Air Liquide has its own fleet of 16 rolling stock, consisting of tractor trailers, bulk trailers and box trucks, as well as a dedicated bulk carbon dioxide truck and pickups for “hotshot” deliveries. “Distribution can be problematic due to the driving conditions in the state, but not unsafe,” said Benson. “We are regulated and controlled by the Department of Transportation’s Code of Federal Regulations Title 49, and keep our equipment at better than minimum conditions. By working with our DOT, we keep our rolling stock safe and have a good relationship. We also work closely with the local fire and police departments, and the Chemical Manufacturers’ Association’s ‘Responsible Care’ program to maintain a safe and secure environment for our employees and neighbors. Nothing is more important than safety and security these days, and it is and has been a condition of employment since I started here.”

Centenary celebrated in 2002

In 2002 Air Liquide celebrated its centenary with open houses in Alaska. There were live demonstrations of the newest welding technologies, cutting and welding contests, plant tours and oxygen safety demonstrations put on by the company’s emergency response team. Air Liquide has no engineers on staff in Alaska: the company’s labs are in Countryside, Ill., where it designs gas mixtures and equipment for industry. It has patented innovations for hardware in the electronic, water treatment, on-site gas generation and food industries, as well as welding. Thanks to that work, Air Liquide has introduced specialty welding mixes, food packaging gases, cryogenic food freezing and microbulk gas supply to Alaska.

FORREST CRANE

Sales manager Tom Labno, left, talks with general manager Bob Cook, who graduated from Lathrop High School in Fairbanks, went to college in Arizona and joined the company in 1975.

For the future, the sky’s the limit. “We are trying to maintain a dynamic, customer-oriented service organization, and we continue to invest in production capacity and employee development to provide our clientele with superior service,” said Benson. “The business requires continuous improvement to maintain our lead as the state’s leading welding distributor and we will keep introducing new products, services and training to our customers in the Alaska region.” ●

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COMPANY NEWS

WorkSafe exec earns national certification

WorkSafe Inc. program manager Robin Harrington has passed the Substance Abuse Program Administrators Certification (C-SAPA) exam. The national certification stands as a benchmark for professional substance abuse program administrators, WorkSafe said in a Dec. 13 press release.

"Harrington's C-SAPA certification is the highest level of training qualification that can be achieved in the drug testing industry," the company said.

ROBIN HARRINGTON

Criteria for the certification include passing the certification exam, completion of three years of experience in the substance abuse field and completion of a minimum of 40 hour approved training in the substance abuse field within the last five years.

"Knowledge of the transportation industry and its modal regulations and in addition to high ethical and practice standards are also required," WorkSafe said.

Harrington provides training, education and consulting to employers throughout Alaska to help WorkSafe's clients create a drug-free workplace and comply with state and federal regulations. WorkSafe said it has more staff with C-SAPA certifications than any Alaska firm specializing in employment drug and alcohol program management.

WorkSafe is the largest workplace drug and alcohol testing company in Alaska and represents more than 1,400 companies nationwide. WorkSafe also provides training, education and consulting to employers Alaska. The company has been in operation since 1989 and is a subsidiary of NANA Development Corp.

Schlumberger system picked for federal Outer Continental Shelf project

The federal government has chosen a seabed modeling system from Schlumberger Information Solutions for its Outer Continental Shelf Connect project.

The Offshore Minerals Management division of the Minerals Management Service will use the SIS Seabed exploration and production data model and database as part of that project, the company said Nov. 23.

The deal was announced by John L. Price, project manager for OCS Connect, at the annual meeting of the Petrotechnical Open Standards Consortium.

The Seabed model combines data from multiple sources to provide a consistent management tool for federal regulators with high security. OCS Connect is a federal project aiming to improve operations of the offshore management system with updated tools.

M-I SWACO opens cuttings re-injection training center

M-I Swaco said Dec. 8 that it has opened the industry's "only all-inclusive Cuttings Re-Injection Training Center in Aberdeen. A similar facility is scheduled to open at the company's Houston world headquarters in early 2005.

The center is equipped to offer both theoretical and practical hands-on training in all aspects of the CRI process.

The 276-square-meter facility includes training rooms, two CRI training simulators, one CRI full-scale slurrification system, one Cleancut cuttings collection and transport system, a vacuum cuttings collection system and a 518 Centrifuge.

Available to M-I Swaco and customer employees, the training at the center is competency-based and will follow ISO 9001 and ISO 10015 requirements.

"Cuttings re-injection has become a widely popular drilling waste disposal option, especially in areas such as the North Sea, where it has been employed for over a decade. With this process, drilled solids are injected into deep subsurface fractures, allowing operators to move closer to their zero discharge objectives," said Dr. R.C. Minton, vice president of Drilling Waste Management Business Development for M-I Swaco.

M-I Swaco, based in Houston, is a leading supplier of drilling, reservoir drill-in, completion and production fluids products and systems, solids control and waste management services and equipment to the worldwide petroleum industry.

RAE Systems closes on new corporate headquarters

RAE Systems Inc., a leading global developer and manufacturer of rapidly-deployable, multi-sensor chemical and radiation detection monitors and networks for homeland security and industrial applications, said in early December that it has completed the purchase of property in San Jose, Calif. for a new corporate headquarters.

Currently based in Sunnyvale, Calif., RAE Systems purchased the land and building from CarrAmerica Realty Operating Partnership for $5 million cash.

The 67,000-square-foot building sits on 4.6 acres and will house the company's administrative, sales and marketing, technical support, and research and development functions.

Approximately 150 employees will work at the new site, RAE Systems expects to occupy "near the end of the first quarter of 2005."

"RAE Systems has achieved many milestones over the past 14 years in our home in Sunnyvale, but we've reached a point in our company's development where we need more space to accommodate our growth," said Chief Executive Officer Robert I. Chen. "Our new facility in San Jose is located just a few miles from our current site, so the relocation will be a minimal distraction as we continue to focus on cutting-edge wireless sensing solutions for our customers around the world."

COURTESY OF COLVILLE

A sign on the Prudhoe Bay General Store. Colville Inc. recently purchased the store, which features items like cold medications, toothpaste, tobacco, magazines and other sundries.

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Kenworth Alaska is a full service truck dealership in two locations – Anchorage and Fairbanks. New and used truck sales, parts and service.

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1625 Old Steese Hwy.
Fairbanks, AK 99701
Contact: Steven Angel, fleet sales mgr.

COURTESY NANA/COLT

Tom Stapleford, NANA/Colt's manager of industrial projects

Phone: (907) 459-4044
Fax: (907) 450-4007
Email: fleetsales@seekins.com
Web site: www.seekins.com
Ford Lincoln Mercury dealer located in Fairbanks Alaska providing solutions to your transportation needs. Parts and service support in Fairbanks and Prudhoe Bay.

Vehicle Sales/Rental

Seekins Ford Lincoln Mercury
1625 Old Steese Hwy.
Fairbanks, AK 99701
Contact: Steven Angel, fleet sales mgr.
Phone: (907) 459-4044
Fax: (907) 450-4007
Email: fleetsales@seekins.com
Web site: www.seekins.com
Ford Lincoln Mercury dealer located in Fairbanks Alaska providing solutions to your transportation needs. Parts and service support in Fairbanks and Prudhoe Bay.

Welding

Ranes & Shine Welding
6111 Quinhagak St.
Anchorage, AK 99507
Contact: Tom Ranes, owner
Contact: Mike Prince, shop fore.
Phone: (907) 868-5079
Fax: (907) 868-5087
Email: tomranes@hotmail.com
Web site: ranesandshine.com
We are a custom welding and fabrication shop with a 20' brake, 13 1/2' shear, computerized plasma table and mobile welding trucks.

Udelhoven Oilfield System Services
Anchorage office:
184 E. 53rd Ave.
Anchorage, AK 99518
Phone: (907) 344-1577
Fax: (907) 522-2541
Nikiski office:
P.O. Box 8349
Nikiski, AK 99635
Phone: (907) 776-5185
Fax: (907) 776-8105
Prudhoe office:
Pouch 340103
Prudhoe Bay, AK 99734
Phone: (907) 659-8093
Fax: (907) 659-8489
Serving Alaska for more than 25 years.

Welding Services
P.O. Box 7248
Nikiski, AK 99635
Mile 20.5 Kenai Spur Hwy.
North Kenai, AK
Contact: Keith T. Raham
Phone: (907) 776-8279
Fax: (907) 776-8279
Cell Phone: (907) 252-5466
General Contractor #27005. Oilfield and general welding fabrication and repair services including aluminum, stainless steel and carbon steel.

Weld Repairs/Manufacturing

Hanover Canada
500, 101-6 Ave. SW
Calgary, AB, T2P 3P4 Canada
Contact: Rod Saville, Country Mgr. Canada
Phone: (403) 261-6801
Fax: (403) 266-1066
Email: info@hanover-co.com
Web site: www.hanover-canada.com
Hanover Canada is the leading provider of natural gas compression services and equipment in Canada. We maintain an 85,000 horsepower rental compression fleet in Canada and over 3.6 million horsepower rental fleet worldwide. Hanover custom designs production equipment in accordance with customer's specifications using strict internal engineering standards. We have the capability to provide process, mechanical and instrument design engineering for any production equipment project worldwide.

Natco Canada
P.O. Box 850, Stn. T
Calgary, Alberta T2H2H3
Contact: Kevin Baird, bus. dev. mgr.
Phone: (403) 203-2103
Fax: (403) 236-0488
Email: kbaird@natco-ca.com
Web site: www.natco-ca.com
Natco Group engineers, designs and manufactures process, wellhead and water treatment equipment and systems used in the production of oil and gas worldwide.

Peak Oilfield Service
2525 C St., Ste. 201
Anchorage, AK 99503
Contact: Bill Stamps, business development/ex. affairs
Phone: (907) 263-7000
Fax: (907) 263-7070
Email: billstamps@peakalaska.com
Web site: www.peakalaska.com
Alaska based general contractors.

Ranes & Shine Welding
6111 Quinhagak St.
Anchorage, AK 99507
Contact: Tom Ranes, owner
Contact: Mike Prince, shop fore.
Phone: (907) 868-5079
Fax: (907) 868-5087
Email: tomranes@hotmail.com
Web site: ranesandshine.com
We are a custom welding and fabrication shop with a 20' brake, 13 1/2' shear, computerized plasma table and mobile welding trucks.

STEELFAB
2132 Railroad Ave.
Anchorage, AK 99501
Contact: Janet Faulkner, vice president
Phone: (907) 264-2819
Fax: (907) 276-3448
Email: jfaulkner@steelfabak.com
STEELFAB is the largest Alaskan-owned steel service center in the state. It provides pressure vessels, modules, special design items and raw steel products.

Unique Machine
5839 Old Seward Hwy
Anchorage, AK 99518
Contact: Pat Hanley, COO
Phone: (907) 563-3012
Fax: (907) 562-1376
Email: office@uniquemachineinc.com
Web site: www.uniquemachineinc.com
The design, development, manufacture and distribution of oilfield construction, mining, fishing and government parts to industry quality standards.

Wire Rope

Arctic Wire Rope & Supply
6407 Arctic Spur Rd.
Anchorage, AK 99518
Contact: Jill Reeves
Phone: (907) 562-0707
Fax: (907) 562-2426
Email: awrs@customcpu.com
Web site: www.arcticwirerope.com
Arctic Wire Rope & Supply is Alaska's largest and most complete rigging supply source. We specialize in custom sling fabrication (wire rope, web, chain, and polyester round.)

OIL COMPANIES

Operators

ConocoPhillips Alaska
700 G St.
P.O. Box 100360
Anchorage, AK 99510-0360
Contact: Jim Bowles, president & CEO
Phone: (907) 265-6134
Fax: (907) 265-1502

Marathon Oil
3201 C St., Ste 800
Anchorage, AK 99503
Contact: John A. Barnes, regional mgr.
Phone: (907) 561-5311
Fax: (907) 564-6489
Website: www.marathon.com

XTO Energy
810 Houston St.
Fort Worth, TX 76102
Contact: Vaughn O. Vennerberg, II
Phone: (817) 870-2800
Fax: (817) 870-0379
Other Office:
52260 Shell Rd.
Kenai, AK 99611
Contact: Doug Marshall, prod. supt.
XTO Energy, established in 1986, is engaged in the acquisition and development of quality, long-lived producing oil and gas properties and exploration for oil and gas.

company snapshots

JUDY PATRICK

A worker cuts drill pipe in this image captured by industry photographer Judy Patrick.

FORREST CRANE

Air Liquide has grown to four Alaska locations — Anchorage, Fairbanks, Kenai and Homer — and two plants throughout the state, providing employment for 65 Alaskans.

COURTESY COLVILLE

U.S. Post office in the Prudhoe Bay General Store. Colville Inc. recently announced the purchase of the store.

COURTESY KAKIVIK

A Kakivik Asset Management employee tests a line In Manchester, Wash.