

## **Mercer, Jennifer**

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**From:** Tony Reddin [ecopei.project@gmail.com]  
**Sent:** Sunday, March 27, 2011 12:51 AM  
**To:** Information  
**Subject:** comment on the draft Scoping Document for the Environmental Assessment

Comment on the draft Scoping Document for the Environmental Assessment of an exploration well at 'Old Harry' March 27, 2011.

81 Prince St.,  
Charlottetown, PEI

The Gulf of St. Lawrence that means so much to all Atlantic Canadians is at risk with the threat of fossil fuel development. Offshore Petroleum Boards have approved seismic blasting for oil and gas exploration, despite the objections of many Canadians, including aboriginal, fishing, and environmental organizations in the Gulf region.

This seismic blasting has disrupted fish migrations and potentially damage marine mammals like blue whales. Exploration is likely to lead to full scale drilling.

The Old Harry prospect is located in the middle of the Gulf of St. Lawrence's Laurentian channel. This channel is a fish pass for numerous marine species like the blue whale, whose Atlantic population is very low (and appears on the species at risk public registry), and the Atlantic cod, whose status in the Gulf of St. Lawrence remains worrisome.

Current government policy gives full control of offshore drilling activities to Petroleum Boards that are not managed by elected representatives, and that have the conflicting mandate to promote oil and gas exploration as well as protect the marine environments in the gulf.

I believe that protecting the Gulf of St. Lawrence is a wise investment in Canada's social, economic and ecological future, especially considering that the economies of Quebec and all the Atlantic Provinces rely on a healthy gulf to thrive.

The catastrophe in the Gulf of Mexico shows the risk of deep water oil development. Any similar oil spill in the Gulf of St. Lawrence would ruin fish stocks, beaches and coastal communities in the Gulf region.

We must have strong federal laws that are enforced to protect fish habitat and marine resources. As well, Canada should establish more Marine Protected Areas in sensitive zones of the Gulf of St. Lawrence.

And we must all take part in the immediate transition of our economy away from fossil fuels. That transition will eventually have to happen as fossil fuels are depleted. It will be much less painful now, while we have the resources needed to build the necessary renewable energy systems. We can avoid more catastrophes.

I strongly urge you to impose an immediate moratorium on offshore exploration and drilling for the entire Gulf of St. Lawrence, and manage the region in an integrated way. The provinces and the federal government must work together to protect critical marine environments, fisheries and wildlife, as well as the communities, that rely on this important area.

Thank you,

Tony Reddin,

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Below is more information on drilling :

- 1 The devastating consequences of marine spills on the environment and on communities
2. How drilling for oil can hurt marine habitats
3. Documentaries on line

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1. The devastating consequences of marine spills on the environment and on communities

<http://www.davidsuzuki.org/issues/oceans/science/marine-planning-and-conservation/the-devastating-consequences-of-marine-spills-on-the-environment-and-on-communit/>

It is quickly becoming clear that offshore hydrocarbon development is costly, polluting and dangerous, even before considering an oil spill. No matter how you look at it, the impacts are far-reaching and long-lasting.

Since the Gulf of Saint-Lawrence is a small, semi-closed inland sea with complex sea currents (approximately 6.5 times smaller than the Gulf of Mexico), the impacts of an oil spill could have serious consequences. According to the first Strategic Environmental Assessment report (PDF) by the Quebec government, "it is generally accepted that oil spills can cause immediate and catastrophic damage to coastal communities, both in terms of losses in biomass and biodiversity, despite the resilience of several species [...]".

Five provinces border the Gulf of St. Lawrence, and communities rely on it for socio-economic activities. Overall, a spill in this area would have a catastrophic effect on the Magdalen Island population. In the Magdalen Islands alone (located near "Old Harry"), fishing activities directly and indirectly impact 75 per cent of the local population and generate annual revenues of nearly \$78 million. The tourism industry that is essential to all maritime economies would also be greatly affected by an oil spill.

Beyond the socio-economic aspects, the Gulf of Saint-Lawrence is a unique and fragile ecosystem essential to the reproduction, growth and migration of hundreds of marine species. Several of these species are endangered, such as the codfish, the blue whale and the leatherback turtle. Considering that even under the best circumstances, only 15 per cent of oil spills can be cleaned, it's clear that the risks associated with oil development far outweigh the benefits. Even the smallest quantities of oil and sludge can harm marine life across an extensive area, and a shoreline can remain polluted for decades after a major oil spill (the effects of the Exxon Valdez spill from 20 years ago are still being felt today).

It is worth noting that risks associated with offshore incidents are consistently under-assessed by drilling companies, as demonstrated by the numerous incidents in various offshore drilling regions.

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2. How drilling for oil can hurt marine habitats

<http://www.davidsuzuki.org/issues/oceans/science/marine-planning-and-conservation/how-tankers-and-drills-threaten-canadian-waters/>

Damage to the marine environment is inevitable with oil and gas exploration:

\* Companies conduct seismic surveys before drilling. Bursts of high-pressure air or sound waves are directed at the seabed, creating loud undersea noises that can disrupt the migratory paths and feeding patterns of whales, seals and other marine mammals. These sound waves can also harm fish that have swim bladders, destroy fish eggs and larvae, and temporarily cause fish and other sea creatures to leave the area.

\* Oil drilling and production platforms release pollution into the surrounding waters almost daily. A single production platform can discharge over 90,000 metric tonnes of toxic waste into the ocean in its lifetime. Since 1997, the Newfoundland and Labrador Offshore Petroleum Board has recorded 337 oil spills from three rigs operating there, which have dumped an estimated 430,000 litres (or 2,700 barrels) of synthetic drilling fluids and other hydrocarbons into the ocean.)

\* Only about 15 per cent of spilled oil can be recovered, and that's under the best conditions. When the wind blows above 20 to 25 knots, oil spill clean-up is completely ineffective. Based on the average wind speed for a place like the Queen Charlotte Basin on the West Coast, clean-up would be virtually impossible during winter.

\* Even small amounts of oil and other drilling fluids can harm sea life over a large area. After a major oil spill, the shorelines can remain polluted for decades. Even now, more than 20 years after the Exxon Valdez lost its toxic cargo in Alaska, raw crude oil is still being found on what now appear to be pristine recovered beaches.

\* B.C.'s coast is unique because the proposed oil and gas extraction is near-shore, not offshore. An oil spill would be devastating, as the wind and current patterns would ensure that contaminants hit the coast and areas of high economic and ecological importance.

Canada's East Coast is already dealing with the negative effects of offshore oil drilling. Lack of transparency and under-reporting from industry are already putting this region at risk.

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<http://www.davidsuzuki.org/issues/oceans/science/marine-planning-and-conservation/why-we-must-oppose-exploration-and-drilling-in-the-saint-lawrence/>

The Gulf of St. Lawrence and the St. Lawrence River are vital to Canada's coastal communities. The economic and socio-cultural activities within the regions surrounding the St. Lawrence, such as fishing and tourism, represent nearly two-thirds of Canada's GDP related to all maritime activities, according to an analysis from the DFO.....

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### 3. Documentaries on line:

[www.cbc.ca/documentaries/doczone/2010/blowout/](http://www.cbc.ca/documentaries/doczone/2010/blowout/)

An oil spill in the Gulf of St. Lawrence could threaten five provinces-

#### VIDEO SIMULATION OF OIL SPILL IN EACH SEASON:

| Summer <<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7P4PBglqNo8>> | Fall  
<<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DUU0U2kw-CY>> | Winter  
<<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qTf5jFerU-Y>> | Spring  
<<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q9ChyN2B0FM>>