
KEITH SULLIVAN
President

DAVID DECKER
Secretary-Treasurer

Tuesday, October 31, 2017

Darren Hicks
Environmental Analyst
Canada-Newfoundland and Labrador Offshore Petroleum Board
140 Water Street, 5th Floor, TD Place
St. John's, NL A1C 6H6

Re: WesternGeco Canada Eastern Newfoundland Offshore Seismic Program, 2015-2024 - Amendment

Dear Mr. Hicks,

Please accept the Fish, Food and Allied Workers' Union (FFAW/Unifor) comments on the Amendment to the Environmental Assessment of WesternGeco's Eastern Newfoundland Offshore Seismic Program, 2015-2024.

The following comments are focused on a few aspects of the document that are mainly points of clarification:

Section 2.2.5 (page 7) – It is important for the proponent to understand that the VMS data, available through One Ocean, captures domestic fishing vessel movement. It should not be relied upon heavily for information pertaining to the location of fixed gear (e.g. fleets of snow crab pots). The VMS information available to users through One Ocean also does not display information regarding the location of foreign fishing vessels.

Section 2.2.5 (page 7) – The Fisheries Liaison Officer's primary responsibility on the seismic vessel is to communicate with fishing interests on the water. FLOs are experienced in initiating and maintaining communication with fish harvesters at-sea to gain insight on fishing activity and share details of the survey program. This at-sea communication enables the FLO to collaborate with the onboard Client Representative and senior vessel crew to ensure effective planning and mitigate potential conflict on the water. On-water communication with non-fishing entities (i.e. shipping industry) should not be the responsibility of the FLO.

Section 2.2.5 (page 8) – As VMS data provides information on fishing vessel movements it is unclear how the use of VMS data would be a mitigation for interference with shipping. The Automatic Identification System (AIS) would provide information on ships in the area.

Section 2.2.5 (page 9) – Depending on the nature and location of the activity the use of a FLO on both vessels for the Sound Velocity Profiling may be warranted.

Section 3.0 (pages 10-13) – The dynamic nature of the fishing industry in the region does not appear to have been factored into the assessment of the Fisheries VEC in this document. While the overall study area for this EA is quite large there are key fisheries that could be impacted depending on the timing, and specific location, of proposed exploratory work. The document notes “with mitigation measures in place, residual effects...are predicted to range from *negligible to medium* in magnitude for a duration of *<1 month to 1–12 months* over an area of *<1 km² to 1001–10,000 km²*”. For an individual snow crab harvester that fishes for four months in the area of interest for seismic activity this is a large predicted range of uncertainty.

Overall, our concern is not with respect to the amendment’s additional components and vessel activity but rather the timing, location and cumulative activity of the work proposed in any given year.

With respect to simultaneous surveys (Section 3.3.2), the document discusses the presence of additional vessels, gear and other project activities (e.g. lights, waste) but does not give due consideration to added effects of additional sound sources other than to indicate that “the potential residual effects on fisheries related to sound from three simultaneous 3-D seismic surveys, would occur over a larger area (i.e., maximum geographic extent of *1001–10,000 km²* vs. *101–1000 km²*). **Depending on the timing, location and number of seismic vessels conducting work in an area this could have a significant impact on fishing success for the various fleets.**

Furthermore, there are also multiple companies proposing work within the same timeframe and spatial area as WesternGeco. The document does not adequately address cumulative effects of seismic activity over time. There is too much uncertainty to predict that the “cumulative effects of seismic sound on... fisheries” for several “seismic vessels (nominally 30km) operating concurrently in and near the Project Area” are “not significant.” **This prediction is very concerning to our membership.**

Our ocean environment is undergoing a regime shift. As this shift continues we will be harvesting different species which will likely result in changes to fishing activity and fishing grounds. The levels of confidence related to the predicted effects on the Fisheries VEC for this project, which is large in both spatial and

temporal scope, is perplexing in a changing environment. **It is therefore critical that effective and regular communication ensue with the fishing industry throughout the EA lifespan so that the seismic company is kept apprised of ongoing developments with fisheries in the vast project area.**

FFAW/Unifor would like to thank you for providing an opportunity to comment on this EA Amendment. If you have any questions or comments please feel free to contact the undersigned.

Kind regards,

Robyn Lee
Petroleum Industry Liaison
