

1.0 Introduction

The Canada-Newfoundland and Labrador Offshore Petroleum Board (C-NLOPB) issued a Call for Bids in May 2007 that included a parcel of land offshore Western Newfoundland. The C-NLOPB is amending the 2005 Western Newfoundland and Labrador Offshore Area Strategic Environmental Assessment (C-NLOPB 2005) to extend the geographic coverage of the 2005 Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) report to include additional lands southwest of the original 2005 SEA area. This addition to the Western SEA Area is referred to herein as the Amendment Area.

An SEA is defined as ‘The systematic and comprehensive process of evaluating the environmental effects of a policy, plan or program and its alternatives.’ (www.ceaa-acee.gc.ca). The SEA Amendment is in support of the federal government’s sustainable development initiatives and is defined in a 1999 Directive from Cabinet.

An SEA is essentially a planning document intended to assist the C-NLOPB in their decision process concerning which areas may or may not be suitable for offshore exploration, and/or which areas may require special mitigations if exploration activity is to proceed. This SEA Amendment provides support for the bid process on Parcel 1 (Call For Bids No. NL07-1, see www.cnlopb.nl.ca) located within the Amendment Area (Figure 1.1).

A major source of information for this amendment originates from fisheries statistics. Three Northwest Atlantic Fisheries Organization (NAFO) Unit Areas (4Ss, 4Tf, and 4Vn) occur within the Amendment Area (Figure 1.1). These Unit Areas are used throughout this SEA Amendment to reference locations within the Amendment Area.

1.1 Objectives/Purpose

This SEA Amendment is intended to aid the C-NLOPB in determining whether exploration rights should be offered in whole or in part for the area of interest, and may also identify general restrictive or mitigative measures that should be considered for application to exploration activities. This is pursuant to the *Canada-Newfoundland Atlantic Accord Implementation Act* and the *Canada-Newfoundland and Labrador Atlantic Accord Implementation Newfoundland and Labrador Act*. In the following sections, the SEA Amendment provides the following:

- Overview of the existing environment in the Amendment Area;
- Discuss potential environmental effects of oil and gas activities in the Amendment Area;
- Identify knowledge and data gaps in the Amendment Area;
- Highlight areas and issues of concern in the Amendment Area; and
- Recommend mitigations and planning relevant to potential oil and gas activities in the Amendment Area.

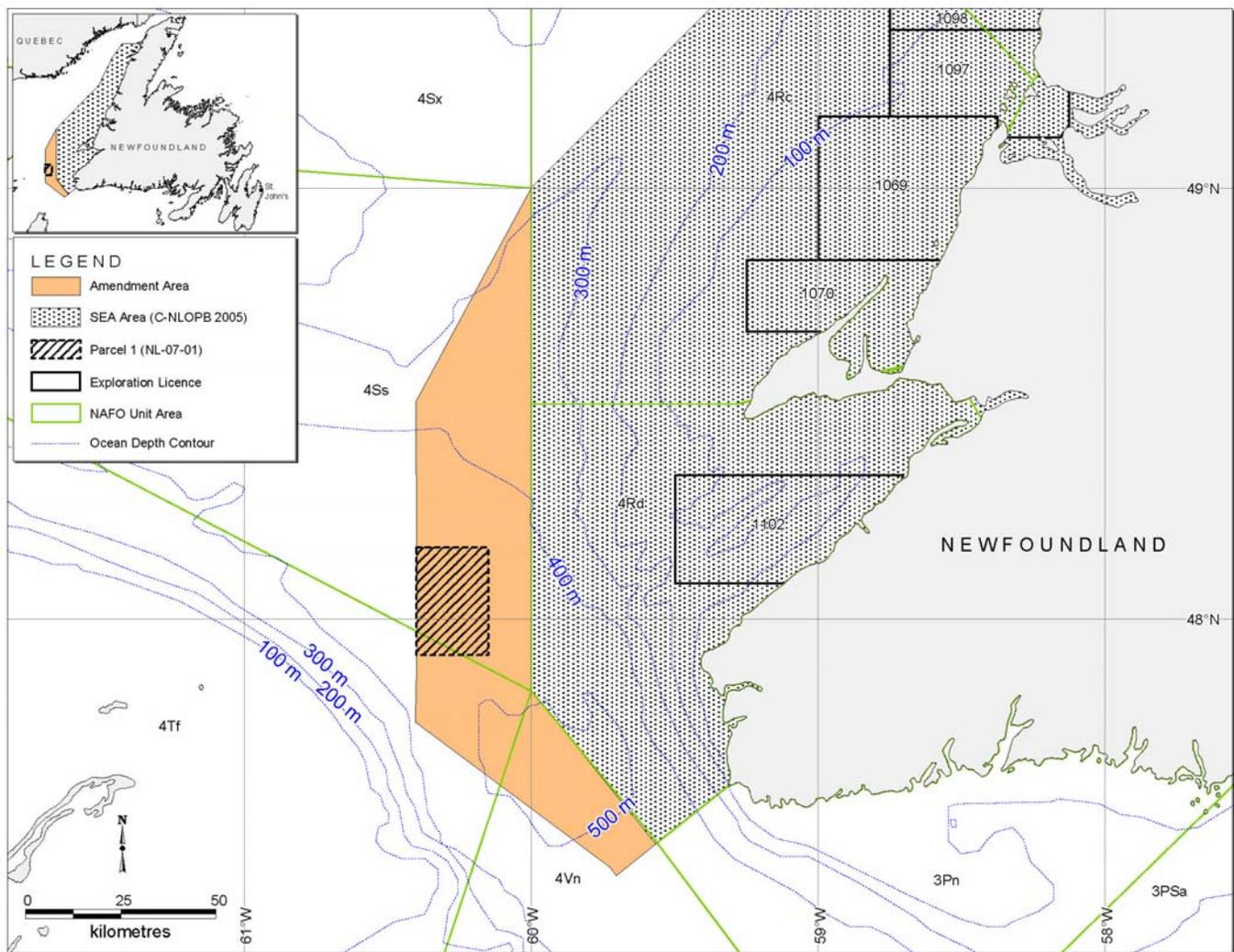


Figure 1.1. Locations of the Amendment Area, Parcel 1, and Some Existing Exploration Licences in the SEA Area.

1.2 Scoping

Scoping for the SEA Amendment was conducted in the following manner.

- The Western Newfoundland and Labrador Offshore Area SEA (C-NLOPB 2005) was reviewed; and
- Consultations were conducted with various stakeholder groups and regulators (see Section 3.3.2.1, Appendix 1).

1.3 History of Oil and Gas Activities in Western Newfoundland and Labrador Offshore Area

The SEA (Section 1.3 *in* C-NLOPB 2005) provides a history of oil and gas activities in the western Newfoundland and Labrador offshore area. This historical overview in the SEA is still current for the SEA Amendment.

In 2006 the Board issued three explorations licences in the area, as a result of the 2006 Call for Bids. In addition, it should be noted that environmental assessments of a marine seismic program proposed by Tekoil and Gas Corporation (JW 2006, 2007) and an onshore to offshore exploration drilling program in Port au Port Bay proposed by PDI Production Inc. (LGL 2007a) were recently submitted to the C-NLOPB. Project descriptions of proposed onshore to offshore drilling in the Bay of Islands region (Tekoil & Gas Corporation) and marine seismic in the Port au Port Peninsula region (PDI Production Inc.) have also recently been submitted to the C-NLOPB. A registration document for land-based seismic on the Port au Port Peninsula proposed by PDI Production Inc. was recently submitted to the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador (LGL 2007b).

1.4 Organization of the SEA Amendment

The SEA Amendment is organized according to the following major sections:

- Introduction
- Physical Environment
- Biological Environment
- Environmental Effects of Exploration and Production Activities
- Summary and Conclusions
- Literature Cited