

IAGC Comments on Settlement Filed in Gulf of Mexico Seismic Survey Litigation



Houston, TX USA, June 21, 2013 – A motion was filed yesterday in the U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Louisiana by all parties involved in the litigation concerning seismic surveying in the US Gulf of Mexico (GOM). The action seeks the Court's approval to settle the matter¹. The International Association of Geophysical Contractors (IAGC) offers the following comments on the proposed settlement:

"We are pleased that the parties to this litigation have come together and proposed a settlement to the Court" said Chip Gill, President of IAGC.

"NRDC and other environmental organizations have speculated that marine seismic surveys harm whales and dolphins, but the science and four decades of experience show that we do not" continued Gill. As NOAA Fisheries, the agency charged by Congress to administer the Marine Mammal Protection Act, and which is the US authority on the science behind these matters, states in a public filing last year regarding a permit for a seismic survey "To date, there is no evidence that serious injury, death or stranding by marine mammals can occur from exposure to airgun pulses, even in the case of large airgun arrays."²

In spite of this, industry employs a number of robust mitigation measures to further reduce the negligible risk of harm to marine mammals. "Some of the mitigation measures in the settlement agreement are voluntarily employed by industry around the world. Many of the others have been employed by industry in the GOM for the last several years."

Seismic surveys are a critical tool of modern oil and gas exploration, development and production. Their data allow the industry to image the subsurface and discern characteristics of the rock five or more miles beneath the earth. This subsurface imaging is a key tool in reducing or eliminating associated economic, safety and environmental risks.

¹ Link to the Motion for Approval of the Settlement Agreement (and supporting materials):

<http://www.iagc.org/files/4267/>

² NOAA Fisheries, May 11, 2012, Notice of Issuance of Incidental Take Authorization, 77 FR 27720 (May 11, 2012) at page 27723

<http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/pr/pdfs/fr/fr77-27720.pdf>

Since the proposed settlement was filed, some news stories on this settlement erroneously state that the oil and gas industry has agreed not to conduct seismic surveys in large areas of the Gulf of Mexico. Commenting on these, Gill stated "Under the settlement agreement, permitting of seismic surveys in most of the Eastern Gulf Planning Area of the Gulf of Mexico (EGOM) will continue. There are a few designated areas of the EGOM where for the next 2 ½ years permits will not be issued. These are all areas where no lease sales are scheduled and where the prospective areas have recently been surveyed using modern surveying technology."

"IAGC members look forward to working with the agencies to ensure that seismic operations in the Gulf of Mexico continue to be conducted in an operationally effective and environmentally responsible manner," said Gill.

IAGC intervened in the case on behalf of the federal government, along with the American Petroleum Institute, the Independent Petroleum Association of America, and the U.S. Oil & Gas Association.

IAGC is the international trade association representing the industry that provides geophysical services (geophysical data acquisition, seismic data ownership and licensing, geophysical data processing and interpretation, and associated service and product providers) to the oil and gas industry. For more information visit <http://www.iagc.org/>.

#

Media Contact:

Chip Gill – President, IAGC

+1 (713) 957-8080

chipgill@iagc.org