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News Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Seismic Surveys Successfully Coexist with Tourism and Fisheries Despite Erroneous Claims

Houston, TX— Environmental activist groups have increasingly used misinformation targeting geophysical surveys in an effort to halt oil and gas exploration and development. One such example of their recent propaganda attempts to mislead the Belizean community to believe that seismic surveys are harmful to marine life and threaten fishing and tourism. These allegations are simply false.

The fact is, there is no scientific support for their statements. Their assertions are speculative and anecdotal at best, pointing to what might or may occur, but has not occurred after more than 50 years of global seismic data acquisition. No animals are injured as a result of sound from seismic surveys. The growing body of data supports this. Purported risks suggested by these groups have failed to materialize; the impact of seismic surveys has been grossly misrepresented and it is irresponsible to mislead the public that such speculations are demonstrated facts, when they are not.

Unfortunately, severely lacking is honest dialogue about the seismic survey process and impacts to the local economy and the marine environment. Seismic surveys are referred to by oil and gas opponents as “testing” or “blasting” that endangers marine life. The reality is the surveys are not “blasts” of any kind and these same surveys have been conducted around the world for the past 50 years for purposes other than oil and gas exploration; and during this time, there has not been one report of surveys harming marine life or interfering with commercial and recreational fishing nor tourism activities.

Modern seismic surveys are much like ultrasound technology—a non-invasive mapping technique built upon the simple sound wave. To carry out seismic surveys, marine vessels use acoustic arrays, a set of compressed air chambers, to create seismic pulses. The acoustic array is towed behind a seismic survey vessel and releases pressured air into the water. The pulses are bounced off the layers of rock beneath the ocean floor. The returning sound waves are detected and recorded by hydrophones that are spaced out along a series of cables behind the vessel.

After the collected data is analyzed, processed, interpreted and integrated with other geoscientific information, the end product of all this work and technology is a graphic representation of the earth's subsurface geologic structure. Based largely on this information, the government is able to evaluate its offshore resources to make informed decisions regarding potential future exploration, and exploration companies evaluate where (or even if) to drill for oil and gas.

If drilling were to occur, seismic survey information is used to accurately plan locations for wells and their safe extraction and reducing the probability of drilling dry wells. Consumers experience the benefits in the form of reduced environmental impacts and lower costs of oil and gas products, compared to exploration and production that would occur without seismic data.

The reality is the seismic industry has a long track record of safe, responsible operations around the world. Unfortunately, the dialogue on this critical issue is too often marred by false and exaggerated claims from anti-oil and gas groups. In order to make sound decisions, it is important to have healthy conversations based on science and to provide tools that inform and educate, not resort to speculation. Health, safety, security and environment are paramount for the geophysical industry. The geophysical industry takes great care and consideration of potential impacts to the marine environment. Despite the lack of evidence that geophysical surveys pose a danger to marine life and because this is a priority, we implement mitigation measures to further reduce any potential impacts to marine mammals. Examples include the avoidance of important feeding and breeding areas, demarcation of exclusion zones around seismic operations, soft starts (gradual ramping up of a seismic sound source), and visual and acoustic monitoring.

The geophysical industry proudly enables the discovery of resources that ensure access to safe affordable energy around the globe and that provide more than 6,000 petroleum-based products, from hospital equipment and smartphones to the vehicles, kayaks, and bicycles these environmental activists use for their “keep it in the ground” protests.

The public has the right to take a position on important issues, however, those positions and decisions by the government should be based on accurate and truthful information. We encourage the people of Belize and the government decision makers to learn the facts about geophysical surveys and the many contributions the industry makes to improve their everyday lives.

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About the IAGC

The [IAGC](#) represents more than 125 member companies worldwide from all segments of the geophysical industry and is the only trade organization solely dedicated to representing the industry. It is the leader in geophysical technical and operations expertise and for more than 45 years, the IAGC has worked to optimize the business and regulatory climate and enhances public understanding to support a strong, viable geophysical industry essential to discovering and delivering the world's energy resources.

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