



**Comment on Call For Bids NS14-1  
based on Strategic Environmental Assessment for the  
Eastern Scotian Slope (Eastern Portion)  
and Laurentian Fan (Western Portion)**

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The Maritimes Energy Association (Maritimes Energy) is pleased to be given the opportunity to provide a written comment on the Call for Bids NS14-1 2014. It is a very important initiative by the Canada – Nova Scotia Offshore Petroleum Board (CNSPOB) to seek public comment to assist with decision-making in relation to offshore petroleum activities. The CNSOPB should be commended for recognizing the importance of public consultations in shaping environmental policy and management, and to also gain public support on offshore oil and gas initiatives.

The Maritimes Energy Association is a not-for profit organization representing companies that provide goods and services to the Eastern Canada energy industry. Since its advent in the 1980's (originally as OTANS) Maritimes Energy strives to play a role in the advancement of the energy industry by identifying, promoting and supporting opportunities for its member companies in the energy industry. The development of the oil and gas industry has contributed significantly to the economy and the lives of the people of Nova Scotia. The association acknowledges the need for proper environmental management through the CNSOPB in order to build on the success of the oil and gas industry. Maritimes Energy is keen to see the continued sustainable development of the offshore oil and gas industry, as exploration operations expand into new areas.

The Call for Bids NS14-1 comprises four (4) parcels located on the Scotian Shelf, successful bidder(s) will be awarded Exploration Licences to conduct oil and gas exploration activities. The Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) conducted by the CNSOPB focused on potential environmental impacts that may be caused by oil and gas activities in the Phase 2B study area, which represents the parcels up for bid and also discussed general mitigation measures. The SEA plays a critical role in assisting the CNSPOB in the selection process and also provides a basis for potential operators to develop their project-specific environmental impact assessments. The Maritimes Energy Association shares the following comments on the Call for Bids NS14-1 based on the existing and thorough Strategic Environmental Assessment.

### **Comments**

The SEA for offshore petroleum exploration activities for the Eastern Scotian Slope and Laurentian Fan (Phase 2B) is very comprehensive. It outlines the key relevant legislation and guidelines, and gives a full description of the physical environment of the study area, which includes the parcels in Call for Bids NS14-1. It includes the interaction of sea currents offshore the Scotian Shelf. The incorporation of the

direction the sea current flows helps predict where oil may flow if it gets into the environment. The SEA narrows its focus on Valued Environmental Components (VECs), consisting of species of special status, special areas and fisheries. These categories are properly defined and described with the aid of maps to illustrate the spatial relationships. This information is very important to operators as it influences how exploration activities are carried out and helps to shape their environmental impact statements and environmental assessments need for any word specific authorization application.

The SEA expresses very important ocean governance principles for effective management. Throughout the report the precautionary approach is evident, which is a very important management principle for the prevention of serious environmental impact. It is explicitly used for the establishment of a study area, which consists of a fifty-four (54) kilometre buffer zone that surrounds the project area. The size of the buffer area was determined from the worst-case scenario of an accidental spill modeled for the Deep Panuke Offshore Development. The establishment of the buffer zone aids in further research to determine how the environment could be impacted from potential exploration activities outside the project area.

It should be noted, the SEA that covers the parcels for Call for Bids NS14-1 has already undergone a public consultation phase before it was finalized. In an area that consists of marine protected areas, fishing grounds, migratory species, as well as species of special status, this inclusive approach to provide opportunity for consultation with multiple stakeholders is to be commended. This public consultation will continue should Exploration Licences be issued and operators apply for work authorization for specific exploration activities.

The use of Traditional Knowledge was also incorporated into the SEA as aboriginal organizations have been consulted to acquire information even though most of their fishing operations are not conducted close to the study area. There is currently a small ecotourism industry that is developing. Despite the current size of the ecotourism industry they should also be involved in the consultation process and can also be utilized to help with monitoring and enforcement of the study area.

The mitigation measures proposed are described as being general mitigation actions in the SEA. They provide potential operators the parameters of work and the minimum measures expected to be applied in operations to mitigate risk. Many of these measures are included in the standard regulatory requirements and guidelines such as the Statement of Canadian Practice with Respect to the Mitigation of Seismic Sound in the Marine Environment (SOCP), Offshore Waste Treatment Guidelines, Offshore

Chemical Selection Guidelines and the Compensation Guidelines Respecting Damage Relating to Offshore Petroleum Activity. We would like to take this opportunity to stress the need to continue to review and update such regulations and guidelines to reflect best practice and latest technology. It is important to conduct research and monitoring, and incorporate adaptive management in the management plans of offshore oil and gas operations.

Maritimes Energy supports the Call for Bids NS14-1, as it is one of the regulatory processes to ensure proper offshore oil and gas developments. Operators bidding in the Call for Bid NS14-1 are encouraged to make every effort to enhance their mitigation and preventative measures to reduce environmental impacts. The regulatory process also requires operators submit an environmental impact statement (EIS) for every offshore oil and gas initiative that must be approved by the CNSOPB. Research and monitoring plays a significant role in environmental impact mitigation. Successful bidders are encouraged to continue to keep their monitoring and inspection exercises at high standards and research new ways to improve their effectiveness.

The Strategic Environmental Assessment for the Eastern Scotian Slope and Laurentian Fan is very comprehensive. It sets the premise for the CNSOPB to undertake a successful selection process as well as for applicants to submit competitive bids understanding the site and work specific environmental impact assessments that are required. T

The Call for Bids NS14-1 sets the stage for the offshore oil and gas industry to build on its past successes. The Maritimes Energy Association supports the Call for Bids NS14-1 and the advancement of future oil and gas operations offshore Nova Scotia.

In closing, we congratulate the CNSOPB for its continued inclusive approach to public consultation, and thank the Board for the opportunity to support the Call for Bids NS14-1.