



Pre-staging for drilling in NPR-A



JUDY PATRICK

Total E&P USA launched its 2003-2004 winter program in the National Petroleum Reserve-Alaska in September. See photos on page A19 of this issue.

Yukon aboriginals want stake in Alaska Highway gas pipeline

Yukon aboriginals are eager to follow the lead of their Northwest Territories counterparts and pursue an equity stake in the proposed Alaska Highway pipeline.

Dave Porter, a spokesman for the Alaska Highway Aboriginal Pipeline Group, said in a conference call that the Yukon First Nations would "like to be in a position to take an equity stake in the project."

The group, formed in late September by First Nations in the Yukon and British Columbia, is a parallel organization to the

The Yukon group has signed a protocol with Arctic Slope Regional Corp., which "brings tremendous expertise and access to capital. The Alaskan Native economic clout is tremendous."

—Dave Porter, spokesman for Alaska Highway Aboriginal Pipeline Group, Yukon First Nations

see **ABORIGINALS** page A16

BREAKING NEWS

3 Half a bubble off: Alaska Superior Court rejects state's request for stay in trans-Alaska oil pipeline tariff case

5 Mixing gas in Mexico: Proponents of shipping Alaska LNG to the West Coast may have a way around the Jones Act

15 Costs escalate to \$86 million: Devon and Kerr-McGee decide to temporarily abandon deepwater gulf Yorktown well

OFFSHORE CALIFORNIA

Independent to drill offshore California

Plains receives hard-to-get permits to develop Rocky Point accumulation

PETROLEUM NEWS

In what would have to be considered a major victory, independent Plains Exploration & Production has managed to acquire the necessary government permits to drill for new oil on its own acreage offshore environmental-minded California.

Plains said that over the next three to four years the company intends to drill eight extended reach wells from existing Point Arguello unit platforms about 15,000 feet into the never-produced Rocky Point structure, estimated to hold 20 to 30 million barrels of reserves. Development will require \$120-\$140 million in investment, the company

see **ROCKY POINT** page A16



COURTESY PLAINS EXPLORATION

Extended reach drilling will be conducted from two of the three Arguello platforms, which includes the Hidalgo.

BAHAMAS

Oil and gas adviser to the world

Pedro van Meurs draws on international knowledge to help Alaska

By LARRY PERSILY

Petroleum News Juneau Correspondent

International oil and gas consultant Pedro van Meurs has been in Mexico while business people were kidnapped, in Bolivia as 25,000 protestors demonstrated in front of his office, driven around burning buses to get to his desk in Guatemala, and been in Africa during coups. But it was his work in the Dominican Republic that made him the most nervous.

Van Meurs, who has advised the state of Alaska on oil and gas tax and fiscal issues since 1996, used to do a fair amount of work for the United Nations. He was in the Dominican Republic in the 1980s, assigned to review the nation's energy policies and prices. "It was indeed an absolute disaster,"

see **ADVISER** page A17



PEDRO VAN MEURS

JUDY PATRICK

1 2 3 SERIES

Pedro van Meurs has advised Alaska on oil and gas tax policy since 1996, using his 30 years of international knowledge gained by helping dozens of nations plan tax policy for exploration and development of their resources. This three-part series starts with the story of how van Meurs got into the business. Parts 2 and 3 will cover his views on world oil and gas markets and Alaska.

NOVA SCOTIA

Lift for flagging offshore basin

EnCana, Shell team up to drill Nova Scotia deepwater prospect

By GARY PARK

Petroleum News Calgary Correspondent

Shell Canada has injected fresh hope into Nova Scotia's floundering offshore basin by agreeing to farm-in with EnCana to drill a deepwater prospect.

Without indicating whether there is new information to support the Weymouth well at a cost of about C\$80 million, Shell Canada Chief Executive

see **OFFSHORE** page A16



COURTESY ENCANNA

Earlier this year, EnCana said it would drill on the Weymouth license using the Norwegian-owned Eirik Raude rig, pictured above, the world's largest semi-submersible, but there is no confirmation which rig will be used or a start date for the EnCana-Shell well.

Alaska - Mackenzie Rig Report

Rig Owner/Rig Type Rig No. Rig Location/Activity Operator or Status

Alaska Rig Status

North Slope - Onshore

Doyon Drilling Dreco 1250 UE	14 (SCR/TD)	Milne Point, drilling S-pad MPS-01 sidetrack	BP
Sky Top Brewster NE-12	15 (SCR/TD)	Stacked, Endicott Island	Available
Dreco 1000 UE	16 (SCR)	Stacked, Deadhorse	Available
Dreco D2000 UEBD	19 (SCR/TD)	Alpine, drilling CD2-06	ConocoPhillips
OIME 2000	141 (SCR/TD)	Drilling PSI-07	BP
Nabors Alaska Drilling Trans-ocean rig	CDR-1 (CT)	Stacked, Prudhoe Bay	Available
Dreco 1000 UE	2-ES (SCR)	Prudhoe Bay, summer maintenance	BP
Mid-Continent U36A	3-S	Prudhoe Bay, 2T-12A	Available
Oilwell 700 E	4-ES (SCR)	Prudhoe Bay, H-18	BP
Dreco 1000 UE	7-ES (SCR/TD)	Stacked, Kuparuk	ConocoPhillips
Dreco 1000 UE	9-ES (SCR/TD)	Prudhoe Bay, W-209i	BP
Oilwell 2000 Hercules	14-E (SCR)	Stacked, Prudhoe Bay	Anadarko
Oilwell 2000 Hercules	16-E (SCR/TD)	Stacked, Camp Lonely	Available
Oilwell 2000	17-E (SCR/TD)	Stacked, Point McIntyre	Available
Emsco Electro-hoist -2	18-E (SCR)	Stacked, Deadhorse	Available
OIME 1000	19-E (SCR)	Stacked, Deadhorse	ConocoPhillips
Emsco Electro-hoist Varco TDS3	22-E (SCR/TD)	Stacked, Milne Point	Available
Emsco Electro-hoist Canrig 1050E	27-E (SCR/TD)	Stacked, Deadhorse	Available
Emsco Electro-hoist	28-E (SCR)	Stacked, Deadhorse	Available
OIME 2000	245-E	Stacked, Kuparuk	ConocoPhillips
Nordic Calista Services Superior 700 UE	1 (SCR/TD)	Drill site 7 well 14	BP
Superior 700 UE	2 (SCR)	Milne Point, L-15A	BP
Ideco 900	3 (SCR/TD)	Stacked, Kuparuk 1Q pad	Available

North Slope - Offshore

Nabors Alaska Drilling Oilwell 2000	33-E (SCR/TD)	NS29 RWO	BP
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Cook Inlet Basin - Onshore

Marathon Oil Co. (Inlet Drilling Alaska labor contractor) Taylor	Glacier 1	Cannery Loop, #1 RD	Marathon
Inlet Drilling Alaska/Cooper Construction Kremco 750	CC-1	Stacked, Kenai	Forest Oil
Nabors Alaska Drilling Rigmasters 850	129	Stacked	Unocal
National 110 UE	160 (SCR)	Stacked, Kenai	Available
Continental Emsco E3000	273	Stacked	ConocoPhillips
Aurora Well Service Franks 300 Srs. Explorer III	AWS 1	Recompleting, Mobil Moquawkie 1	Aurora Gas
Evergreen Resources Alaska Wilson Super 38	96-19	Stacked in yard	Evergreen Resources Alaska Corporation
Engersol Rand	1	Stacked in yard	Evergreen Resources Alaska Corporation

Cook Inlet Basin - Offshore

XTO Energy (Inlet Drilling Alaska labor contract) National 1320	A	Idle	Idle
National 110	C (TD)	C 13-13LN	XTO
Nabors Alaska Drilling IDECO 2100 E	429E (SCR)	Osprey, Redoubt Shoal RU #7	Forest Oil
Unocal (Nabors Alaska Drilling labor contractor) Not Available			
Kuukpik	5	Well B-3 workover, Tyonek platform	ConocoPhillips

Mackenzie Rig Status

Mackenzie Delta-Onshore

Akita Equatak Oilwell 500	62	Stacked, Tuktoyaktuk, NT	EnCana
Dreco 1250 UE	63 (SCR/TD)	Stacked, Swimming Point, NT	Chevron Canada
	64	Stacked, Inuvik, NT	Available

Central Mackenzie Valley

Akita/SAHTU Oilwell 500	51	Stacked, Norman Wells	Apache Canada
Nabors Canada	62	Stacked, Norman Wells	Available

The Alaska - Mackenzie Rig Report is sponsored by:



The Alaska - Mackenzie Rig Report as of October 16, 2003.
Active drilling companies only listed.

TD = rigs equipped with top drive units WO = workover operations
CT = coiled tubing operation SCR = electric rig

This rig report was prepared by Wadeen Hepworth



Cook Inlet Platform

Courtesy Offshore Divers

Baker Hughes North America rotary rig counts*

	October 10	October 3	Year Ago
US	1,109	1,091	849
Canada	418	396	208
Gulf	102	104	109

Highest/Lowest

US/Highest	4530	December 1981
US/Lowest	488	April 1999
Canada/Highest	558	January 2000
Canada/Lowest	29	April 1992

*Issued by Baker Hughes since 1944

Rig start-ups expected in next 6 months

Pelican Hill H35	Barged to the west side of Cook Inlet, getting ready for setup.
Akita Equatak 40	Drilling for Northrock Resources near Tulita, NT. December 2003 start-up.
51	Drilling for Apache Canada in the Colville lake area. December 2003 start-up.
55	Drilling for EnCana near Tulita, NT. January 2004 start-up.
62	Drilling for EnCana this winter in the Mackenzie Delta. January 2004 start-up.
63	Drilling for Chevron Canada this winter in the Mackenzie Delta. December 2003 start-up.

ANCHORAGE, ALASKA

Alaska Superior Court rejects state's request for stay in TAPS tariff case

Calling the state's argument "a half bubble off," the Alaska Superior Court has denied a motion by the state of Alaska to prevent the Regulatory Commission of Alaska from lowering intrastate tariffs for shipping North Slope crude through the trans-Alaska oil pipeline system. The order, issued by Judge John Suddock, effectively allows RCA to reduce TAPS tariffs by approximately \$1.50 per barrel for the years 2001 through 2003.

Williams Alaska and Tesoro Alaska, which both own refineries in Alaska and pay shipping charges for transporting oil through TAPS, had asked RCA to reduce tariffs set by a 1985 settlement between the state and the pipeline owners, claiming the tariffs were excessively high. The pipeline owners are a consortium of subsidiaries of major oil companies, including North Slope producers BP, ConocoPhillips and ExxonMobil.

On Nov. 27, RCA ruled in favor of Williams and Tesoro on the years in question — 1997 through 2000 — and ordered the TAPS owners to refund approximately \$9.9 billion in tariff overcharges. Much of that money will go back to the North Slope producers themselves as most of the oil shipped in the pipeline belonged to them, but some will also go back to the state for the shipment of its royalty oil. And other shippers who do not own a piece of TAPS, such as refiners Williams and Tesoro, will also get some of the money.

Order 151, the court said, was "a substantial defeat for the carriers and the state." The refunds "have been stayed by corporate guarantees" accepted by the court in lieu of bonds.

But further rate setting, the court said, has proceeded under RCA docket P-03-4 for years 2001 to 2003.

The state took "a back seat" in those proceedings, "stating orally and in writing that it was indifferent to the level of temporary rates" set by RCA in light of Order 151, so long as there were "provisions for refunds if the shippers were later determined to

see **REJECT** page A19

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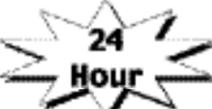
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• WASHINGTON, D.C.

Alaska waits for national energy policy bill

Negotiators in final push on gas line tax credits, other hard issues

By LARRY PERSILY

Petroleum News Juneau Correspondent

As congressional negotiators struggled through their final hours of work on the long-awaited national energy policy bill, it looked increasingly likely that Alaska might not get its two biggest wishes in the bill — federal tax credits to partially guarantee a minimum wellhead value for North Slope natural gas, and congressional approval for oil and gas drilling in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge.

Though no version of the draft bill had been released to the public in more than two weeks, Senate Energy and Natural Resources Chairman Pete Domenici's office confirmed Republican negotiators had tentatively decided not to include the gas pipeline price-support provision.

Alaska's congressional delegation and Gov. Frank Murkowski, however, had not given up and were continuing to lobby for the tax credit provision as Petroleum News went to press on the morning of Thursday, Oct. 16.

NPR-A royalty relief a plus

It was looking good, however, for royalty relief provisions for development in the National Petroleum Reserve-Alaska and similar provisions for production offshore in federal waters.

Federal tax credits of \$3 per barrel to promote production of heavy oil on the North Slope were iffy, as negotiators went into what could be their final day of closed-door work Oct. 16.

"At this point these issues are truly in the laps of the Gods," said John Katz, director of the state's Washington, D.C., office.

Negotiators are working under a tight deadline imposed by congressional leaders, Katz said. Senate Majority Leader Bill Frist, R-Tenn., and House Speaker Dennis Hastert, R-Ill., had told House-Senate energy bill conferees to finish their work by Oct. 17, Katz said. The GOP leaders want House and Senate votes on the bill before the end of the month.

Pressure to finish work

The White House also stepped up the pressure on the conference committee members to settle their differences

and move the bill. "The leadership is clearly saying it's time," Katz said. "The conferees, left to their own devices, might not have been able to produce a bill in this time-frame."

Though only a few items in number, the list of remaining issues is long on controversy.

Congressional approval to open the coastal plain of ANWR to oil and gas exploration and production is doubtful, Katz said. "ANWR is still alive, but clearly is on life support."

Domenici, R-N.M., has said he will drop the provision from the bill unless Alaska's senators can show him they have 60 votes to stop a threatened filibuster of the entire package. Supporters of ANWR do not have the 60 votes, Katz said.

Opening ANWR has been the state's key congressional issue for years, with the Legislature spending more than \$12 million on lobbying efforts since 1991 — more than \$7 million of that in the past three years.

Gas project tax credits in trouble

Federal tax incentives to encourage construction of a \$20 billion pipeline to feed North Slope gas to the North American distribution grid are among the most debated of the final issues facing congressional conferees. Much of the opposition to the price support provision is coming from Rep. Bill Thomas, R-Calif, chairman of the House Ways and Means Committee, with backing from the White House, Katz said.

Thomas is philosophically opposed to the provision that would use federal tax credits to protect North Slope producers whenever the wellhead value of their gas dropped below \$1.35 per thousand cubic feet.

ConocoPhillips and BP have said they need the price protection before they are willing to take the risk of building the project. ExxonMobil, the other major North Slope producer, opposes federal price supports.

"My company, ConocoPhillips, would benefit if a low-price tax credit mechanism were incorporated into law," stated Archie Dunham, chairman of ConocoPhillips. "However, the public will benefit even more generously as they will have access to an important new natural gas supply." Dunham made his comment in a report issued by the National Commission on Energy Policy.

Payback compromise not moving

Alaska Sen. Ted Stevens tried to push a payback provision in times of high prices to lessen opposition to the price-

support protection, but it did not seem to change many minds among opponents to the tax credits, Katz said. "It was a very worthy effort."

Senate Finance Chairman Charles Grassley, R-Iowa, was quoted in The Wall Street Journal as saying Alaska may not get all of the tax incentives it wants for the gas project.

There seems to be general agreement that the bill will include provisions granting tax-saving accelerated depreciation and federal loan guarantees for the gas pipeline, along with tax credits for the gas treatment plant on the North Slope and expedited review provisions to protect against permitting delays.

A provision granting a federal tax credit of \$3 per barrel for North Slope heavy oil production "is still in play," Katz said. "It isn't clear what the ultimate outcome will be."

The House Ways and Means and Senate Finance committees have been working on all of the energy bill's tax provisions, and much of the delay in getting a final draft bill is due to the high costs of all the tax credits crammed into the bill.

High costs attract criticism

Estimates of the total cost of energy tax credits in the bill run as high as \$20-plus billion, more than double what President George Bush has said he will accept. In addition to opposition from fiscal conservatives, the high cost of underwriting energy programs has drawn attacks from taxpayer groups.

"How can we afford these direct subsidies to these robust industries when we have record deficits?" asked Keith Ashdown of Taxpayers for Common Sense, telling The New York Times the Alaska gas pipeline tax credits are among the most offensive.

The tax credits and federal largesse extend across the country, including an \$800 million loan guarantee for a coal gasification plant in Minnesota and a proposed \$1 billion in federal support for a nuclear reactor in Idaho.

In addition to the Alaska issues, congressional negotiators are also battling over federal support for corn-based ethanol production, solutions to the nation's electrical supply and distribution problems, and provisions to protect producers of a gasoline additive from liability.

And Domenici is fighting with some of his GOP colleagues over a provision calling for an inventory of oil and gas resources in the Outer Continental Shelf. Coastal senators, including prominent members from North Carolina and Maine, strongly oppose the provision for fear it would be a first step in ending a coastal drilling ban. ●

BRITISH COLUMBIA/SASKATCHEWAN

B.C. returns from stratosphere

Having scaled some dizzying heights in September, British Columbia landed with a thud at its October auction of petroleum and natural gas rights, collecting a mere C\$18.5 million compared with the previous month's C\$466.3 million — a single sale record for Canada.

But Saskatchewan seized the spotlight this month, taking in C\$36.77 million, its largest returns in nine years, with a total of 522,000 acres changing hands.

The Swift Current area led the way, with sales of C\$21.7 million, followed by Kindersley-Kerrobart at C\$8 million, as operators continue their chase for natural gas in the heavy-oil prone province.

To date this year, Saskatchewan has generated C\$143 million in sales of exploration licenses and lease parcels, C\$57 million ahead of the same period last year.

The latest British Columbia sale involved 167,000 acres, with two of the leading bids made by broker Petroland Services on behalf of unnamed clients in the Jean Marie gas formation.

Year-to-date, British Columbia has seen its auctions climb to C\$619 million from C\$210 million for the same period last year.

—GARY PARK, Petroleum News Calgary correspondent

CLARIFICATION

A story in the Oct. 5 issue of Petroleum News failed to make clear that China National Offshore Oil Corp. is paying \$348 million for a 25 percent stake in Australia's North West Shelf gas project. The deal came after the North West Shelf participants agreed to supply 3.3 million tons per year over 25 years to the first phase of China's Guangdong liquefied natural gas project.

ALASKA/CANADA

Alaska Natives willing to talk with Yukon tribes about pipeline partnership

The consortium of Alaska Native corporations created in an attempt to gain an ownership stake in a gas pipeline from the North Slope would like to meet with Yukon First Nations' leaders to see what the two groups could accomplish together.

No meeting is scheduled but Ken Thompson, president of the Alaska consortium, said he expects the cross-border talks could start this fall. (See related story on page 1.)

Thompson has organized 11 of Alaska's 13 regional Native corporations into a company called Pacific Star Energy, which is seeking up to a 10 percent ownership stake in an Alaska natural gas project to move gas from the North Slope to market.

Pacific Star is eager to talk with its Yukon counterparts about establishing a similar consortium of First Nations to take a stake in the Canadian portion of line, Thompson said. Or, perhaps the two Native-led companies could join together and own a combined share of the entire line.

"There might be a way we could all participate in that whole stretch," he said, from the North Slope to the marketing hub in Alberta.

Thompson said he expects to bring the issue before his full board by the end of the year.

—LARRY PERSILY, Petroleum News Juneau correspondent



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• NORTH AMERICA

Mixing gas in Mexico way around Jones Act

Commingling Alaska, foreign gas might be a solution

By **LARRY PERSILY**

Petroleum News Juneau Correspondent

Proponents of shipping liquefied natural gas from Alaska to the West Coast may have found a way around the federal law requiring expensive U.S. ships with U.S. crews to move the LNG. It involves mixing Alaska gas with foreign LNG at a terminal in Mexico before shipping some — but not too much — of the gas into the United States.

If Alaska gas is mixed in with foreign LNG at the same terminal, and then a volume of gas at least equal to the Alaska LNG is used in Mexico, the argument could be made that no Alaska gas made it across the border into the United States, and therefore the federal shipping requirement for interstate transportation would not apply.

Issue discussed in Customs ruling

The scenario is explained in a 2002 Customs ruling on LNG shipments.

The 83-year-old federal law, called the Jones Act, requires that only U.S.-flagged vessels and crews may carry cargoes between domestic ports. It's a significant problem for efforts to sell Alaska LNG into the Southern California market because there are no U.S.-flagged LNG tankers and it could take at least four or five years to build a fleet of ships.

Domestic vessels are also more expensive to build and operate than tankers with foreign crews.

The Jones Act would be an issue even if Alaska LNG were landed in Mexico for eventual shipment to California. The law states, "No merchandise ... shall be transported by water, or by land and water ... between points in the United States ... either directly or via a foreign port ... in any other vessel than a vessel built in and documented under the laws of the United States."

Gas authority looking into issue

The Alaska Natural Gas Development Authority is researching the issue as it continues working toward promoting a state-owned and operated pipeline and liquefaction terminal to move natural gas from the North Slope to market.

One target for the authority's marketing

efforts has been Sempra Energy, the San Diego-based energy company looking at building an LNG receiving terminal on Mexico's Baja Peninsula to serve the Southern California market.

Harold Heinze, chief executive officer of the authority, has given his board members a copy of the 2002 letter from U.S. Customs to a Washington, D.C., law firm in which a Customs official explains how "commingling" Alaska and foreign LNG could work.

The Customs ruling was issued in response to an inquiry from an unnamed U.S. company. Such requests for rulings often hold the company name confidential, and neither Customs nor the law firm has revealed the identity of the company. The Customs agency is in charge of enforcing the Jones Act.

"We've looked around to see who requested this and we've come up blank," Heinze said. "It's a mystery to me."

Heinze received his copy of the September 2002 Customs ruling from a Texas law firm, where an attorney read a news story about the Alaska gas authority's work and forwarded a copy of the Jones Act ruling. The law firm did not return a call from Petroleum News.

Assumptions behind Customs ruling

The Customs ruling was based on the following hypothetical facts as set out by the company that requested the opinion:

- The company and another U.S.-based energy company would construct an LNG receiving terminal and regasification plant in Mexico.
- Foreign-flagged vessels would carry Alaska LNG to the plant, where it would be commingled with LNG from an overseas source.
- After regasification, some of the gas would be burned in Mexico and some shipped via pipeline to the United States. The U.S. customers would be buying their gas from the Mexico facility, not directly from an Alaska supplier.
- The terminal would receive an average of 300 million cubic feet of LNG per day, with Alaska LNG to meet about half the supply.
- A volume of gas at least equal to the



HAROLD HEINZE

FORREST CRANE

amount brought in from Alaska would be used in Mexico by either power producers or local gas distributors.

"All of the LNG brought to Mexico for processing will be necessarily commingled, as it is impractical to segregate the Alaska-source LNG from the foreign-source LNG at the terminal and during the regasification process," the Customs ruling stated.

"Customs will approve the company's proposed plan," the ruling said, on the condition the company must always maintain records to show that an amount of gas at least equal to the Alaska LNG is first sold in Mexico before any of the remaining commingled gas is shipped to the United States.

Benefits of avoiding Jones Act

The benefits of not needing to use U.S.-flagged vessels could be significant to the Alaska gas authority. Instead of needing to place orders immediately for a fleet of seven or eight U.S.-built LNG tankers — and finding money to pay for the tankers — the authority could use foreign ships to carry some of its gas to a receiving terminal in Mexico, Heinze said.

The authority likely would still need maybe three U.S.-built tankers because the volume of Alaska LNG would exceed the amount used in Mexico, he said. That additional volume of gas would need to go on

Jones Act ships.

Another possibility, he said, would be to find and buy or lease the last LNG tankers that were built in the United States more than 20 years ago and later were reflagged as foreign vessels. They could be used again for interstate trade if they were reflagged back to the U.S. merchant fleet.

Too much Alaska gas could be an issue

The volume of gas, however, could be a problem. The unnamed company in the Customs ruling referred to possibly bringing 140 million to 200 million cubic feet per day of Alaska LNG to the terminal in Mexico, but Heinze is talking with Sempra about moving as much as 1 billion cubic feet per day of Alaska LNG. That much gas would far exceed the amount used in the Baja and equals close to 20 percent of Mexico's entire gas consumption in 2002.

Large new power plants in Mexico could burn up a lot of gas supplying electricity for Southern California, but it would be difficult to use up the entire 1 bcf per day of Alaska LNG to totally escape the Jones Act — which would mean needing U.S. tankers to carry some of the gas.

The state gas authority would also need to use U.S. tankers if it were to deliver any LNG directly to a U.S. terminal. ●

UNITED STATES-MEXICO

Open season for Mexico-Arizona gasline; could go into service as early as 2007

Shipper interest is being solicited for a natural gas pipeline lateral from northwest Mexico to Phoenix, connecting proposed liquefied natural gas terminals with the Arizona market.

PG&E Gas Transmission Northwest and Sempra Energy International are staging the open season, which ends Nov. 10, to test interest in a 130-mile line that would feed into the existing North Baja Pipeline system.

The new lateral could go into service in 2007, but timing and capacity will hinge on shipper responses.

The current 220-mile North Baja pipeline was jointly developed by Sempra and PG&E, who respectively own the Mexican and U.S. segments.

From an interconnection with El Paso's gas lines near Ehrenburg, Ariz., it crosses southern California and northern Baja California, ending near Tijuana, Mexico. It has approval to carry 500 million cubic feet per day and currently delivers gas from the U.S. Rocky Mountain region.

If gas starts flowing from the planned Mexican regasification terminals, the primary direction of flow on the North Baja system would likely be reversed.

—GARY PARK, Petroleum News Calgary correspondent

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• TORONTO, ONTARIO

Petro-Canada chases profits on worldwide scale, says CEO

By GARY PARK

Petroleum News Calgary Correspondent

Troubled by rising exploration costs and shrinking discoveries in its Western Canadian natural gas activities, Petro-Canada plans to cast a wider net through its global holdings for profitable ventures.

Chief Executive Officer Ron Brenneman told analysts and investors in Toronto that his company is "starting to experience less than 100 percent reserve replacement" from the C\$450 million a year it is spending on gas operations in the maturing Western Canada Sedimentary Basin. He said about half the wells Petro-Canada drills find gas, but that record has been unchanged for four or five years.

"It's not because we're being less successful," he said. "It's because each discovery is successively smaller."

The integrated company is still among the leading producers in the Western Canada Sedimentary Basin at 680 million cubic feet per day in the second quarter, but that was off 7.6 percent from a year earlier at a time when the costs of drilling wells and servicing existing reservoirs is growing.

The signal from Brenneman that Petro-Canada plans to shift its focus away from Western Canada Sedimentary Basin gas reinforces the pattern others have experienced of smaller finds, faster depletion rates and predictions of flat production into the foreseeable future.

Bolstered by last year's C\$3.2 billion takeover of the widely diversified assets of Germany's Veba Oil & Gas which doubled Petro-Canada's production, the company now has the choice of pursuing opportunities in Venezuela's heavy oil, the Trinidad and Tobago liquefied natural gas project and production in the North Sea, North Africa and Middle East, along with its established holdings in Alberta's oil sands where it is close to deciding the fate of a C\$5.8 billion project, off Canada's East Coast and in the Far North.

Brenneman said the strategy will be to divert cash to areas where reserves are plentiful and returns are better.

"We're looking to our existing core areas and to new theatres as well," he said.

With its debt now at 0.8 times annual cash flow, Petro-Canada is "well-positioned to take advantage of new opportunities," preferably assets being sold by major oil companies rather than corporate acquisitions. ●

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LOUISIANA/TEXAS

Tidewater, Halliburton warn on earnings

New Orleans-based Tidewater, which serves the global offshore energy industry with some 570 vessels, warned Oct. 9 that earnings for the company's 2003 fiscal second quarter ending Sept. 30, will fall short of analysts' expectations, in part due to continued market weakness in the Gulf of Mexico drilling market.

Tidewater said it now expects to earn between 20 and 23 cents per share in the fiscal second quarter versus analysts' consensus of 31 cents per share. The company earned 32 cents per share in the previous quarter. The company plans to report its fiscal second-quarter earnings on Oct. 23.

Tidewater said market softness in the gulf will result in an operating loss, despite "significant cost cutting efforts" during the company's fiscal second quarter. The company said lower utilization for its supply and towing supply vessels in certain international markets, particularly in Nigeria, Venezuela and Brazil, also negatively affected vessel revenues and profits.

Meanwhile, big oilfield service company Halliburton, based in Houston, said that it expects to report Oct. 29 diluted earnings per share from continuing operations of at least 27 cents per share in the 2003 third quarter, down from its previous estimate of at least 32 cents per share.

The company attributed the revision to lower than expected operating results from joint ventures, and a significant increase in legal fees recorded during the third quarter.

HOUSTON, TEXAS

Pogo looking to acquire properties by year-end

Exploration and production independent Pogo Producing is hoping to make "one or two" small acquisitions by the end of the year, Paul Van Wagenen, Pogo's chief executive officer, said in an Oct. 14 conference call with analysts.

Pogo, the first U.S.-based independent to report 2003 third-quarter earnings, also is considering several larger acquisitions, Van Wagenen said. The company operates in the U.S., Thailand and Hungary.

Van Wagenen provided no specifics on any of Pogo's acquisition plans, but said the company would "continue to look very aggressively at acquisitions. We are seeing an increase in the quality and quantity of some possible acquisitions available over the last month or two."

On the earnings front, the Houston-based independent reported a 2003 third-quarter profit of \$67.6 million or \$1.07 per share, beating analysts' expectations by 12 cents per share. In the year ago quarter, when commodity prices were much lower, Pogo had net income of \$31.6 million or 52 cents per share. Revenues were \$277.9 million

see **POGO** page A7

• ALBERTA, B.C.

Premiers seeking U.S. energy investment

By GARY PARK

Petroleum News Calgary Correspondent

Old rivals turned into allies, as Alberta and British Columbia linked up for a road show to California and Texas Oct 13-16 to promote their energy and high-tech industries.

The two premiers — Alberta's Ralph Klein and British Columbia's Gordon Campbell — launched the process earlier this month through a Protocol of Cooperation at a meeting of senior cabinet ministers.

The two provinces account for 20 percent of Canada's total exports to the two states and 71 percent of Canada's energy industry.

Klein said the trip gave him and Campbell an "opportunity to promote our two provinces as secure sources of energy for North America," while selling other investment opportunities.

They met with key business groups in Silicon Valley and Houston, where Klein made clear that Alberta and British Columbia support both the Alaska Highway and Mackenzie Valley gas pipelines.

"We'd like both to come onstream," he said. "We're not concerned which one goes first, but it looks like the Mackenzie project

will lead the way."

For British Columbia one of the priorities is raising the profile of its northeastern natural gas play and coalbed methane reserves, while Alberta takes every chance it gets to pitch U.S. investors on its multi-billion dollar oil sands prospects.

Campbell said the U.S. mission is designed to draw the attention of Americans to "vast energy stores (in Alberta and British Columbia) which can meet the needs of markets south of the border."

For British Columbia, energy is the major hope for heading off recession in the province, where Gross Domestic Product growth was flat in the second quarter and expected to shrink in the third quarter.

Following the worst forest fires on record, the British Columbia forest products industry was brought to a standstill in many regions and was faced with an overall decline of 20-30 percent in the third quarter, preventing the province from achieving its predicted 2 percent growth in GDP for 2003.

Campbell, using the 2010 Winter Olympics as a springboard, will extend his efforts to stimulate investment in British Columbia with missions to New York, Oct. 20-21; Washington, D.C., Oct 21-23; China Nov. 3-8; and India Nov. 8-12. ●



RALPH KLEIN



GORDON CAMPBELL

CANADA

Husky's new corporate jets?

With their Husky Energy taking flight, Hong Kong's Li family have their sights set on even greater heights as the scion of billionaire Li Ka-shing bids for control of Air Canada. Victor Li, who is being groomed to take the helm of his father's global business empire and is himself known as "Superman" in Asian circles, is one of two bidders trying to acquire C\$700 million of new equity in Air Canada to help Canada's troubled flagship carrier emerge from bankruptcy protection.

Li, 39, became co-chairman of Husky three years ago when the integrated oil company went public after being privately held by firms controlled by the Li family.

But the family still kept a 71.5 percent interest — 36.5 percent through its own holding company in Luxembourg and 35 percent through Hutchison Whampoa.

Li has been viewed as one of the most influential decision-makers at Husky, which has turned cumulative losses of C\$932 million in the 1991-1995 period to a bulging C\$804 million profit in 2002.

That performance helped turn Husky from target to predator in August when it purchased the Western Canadian holdings of Marathon Oil for US\$588 million and offloaded about 25 percent to EOG Resources for US\$320 million.

In July, Husky announced a special dividend of C\$1 a share, which netted the Li family C\$152.5 million and Hutchison Whampoa C\$146.5 million.

That came just weeks after Li Ka-shing transferred his family's 36.5 percent interest to the tax haven of Luxembourg.

Tax lawyers and analysts suggest that some or all of the Husky dividend could be channeled into the Air Canada deal. Whatever the outcome, Victor Li is not unaccustomed to the turbulent downside of huge personal wealth. He was kidnapped by Chinese gangsters in 1996 and released after a US\$125 million ransom was paid.

—GARY PARK, Petroleum News Calgary correspondent



continued from page A6

POGO

compared to \$207.8 million.

Pogo also reported an 18 percent increase in liquids production, from 55,242 barrels per day in last year's third quarter to 65,288 barrels per day in this year's third quarter.

Natural gas production was 284.5 million cubic feet per day in the 2003 third quarter versus 284.2 million cubic feet per day for the same period last year. Compared to the 2003 second quarter, however, Pogo's net income fell 15.1 percent. Liquids production fell 5.5 percent, while gas output declined 5.7 percent.

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• NORTH AMERICA

U.S., Canada gas production could drop in '03

Lehman survey indicates industrial, utility consumers may have to reduce consumption

PETROLEUM NEWS

Investment bank Lehman Brothers, in a wide ranging survey of North American producers, has confirmed what analysts have suspected: natural gas production is on the decline with little hope for a significant rebound anytime soon.

In its survey of 49 producers representing 70 percent of North American gas production, Lehman found that combined U.S.-Canada volumes in the 2003 third quarter fell 1.5-to 2 percent from the previous quarter and 2.5-to 3 percent from the year-ago quarter.

In the United States alone, Lehman estimated 2003 third-quarter gas production decreased 2-to 2.5 percent from the previous quarter and 3-to 3.5 percent from a year ago. In Canada, Lehman estimated third-quarter volumes were flat sequentially and down 2.5-to 3 percent from a year ago.

Compared to last year, full-year 2003 gas production is expected to fall 1-to 3 percent in the U.S. and 2-to 4 percent in Canada, according to Lehman.

"We believe a 2-to 3 percent North American gas production volume decline in 2003 will force industrial and perhaps utility consumers to reduce gas consumption in 2003," Lehman analyst Tom Driscoll said in a report to investors.

The Lehman survey included majors, integrated energy companies and exploration and production independents. Of the 49 companies surveyed, 65.4 percent were expected to post lower natural gas production in the 2003 third quarter than in the second quarter, while 67.4 percent expected lower volumes in the third quarter compared to a year earlier.

Among the biggest production losers year-over-year: ATP Oil & Gas, down 43 percent; Amerada Hess, down 39 percent; Nuevo Energy, down 28 percent; El Paso, down 17 percent; Swift Energy, down 16 percent; Williams and Kerr-McGee, down 14 percent; National Fuel Gas and Spinnaker Exploration, down 13 percent; Unocal, Shell and Canadian Natural Resources, down 12 percent; ChevronTexaco and Noble Energy, down 11 percent; and BP, ConocoPhillips and Stone Energy, down 10 percent.

And despite the sharp volume decreases among some companies, there are a few big winners. For example, Pioneer Natural Resources is expected to weigh in with

third-quarter production 109 percent above the same period last year, while Apache was looking at a 56 percent increase. Other gainers included Westport Resources, up 45 percent; Chesapeake Energy and EnCana, up 31 percent; XTO Energy, up 21 percent; Burlington Resources, up 13 percent; and Comstock Resources, up 10 percent.

Analysts pointed out that at least some of the steep year-over-year production declines, as well as sharp increases, can be attributed to property divestitures and acquisitions. Nevertheless, it's clear from Lehman's survey that many North American gas producers are having a tough time growing production through the drillbit.

"The U.S. is maturing and on a rapid decline," one analyst noted. "Fundamentally, we're seeing a decline and increased competition for the good prospects."

In addition to a general lack of good prospects, companies are facing raising operational costs, particularly in the Gulf of Mexico, according to Ziff Energy Group. From 1999 to 2002, natural gas fields on the Gulf's continental shelf showed unit operating increases of about 20 percent, Ziff said, adding that oil fields showed increases twice as high, about 40 percent per barrel of equivalent. ●

FORT WORTH, TEXAS

XTO Energy acquires \$100 million in natural gas properties, 83 bcf in reserves

Exploration and production independent XTO Energy said Oct. 15 that it acquired \$100 million worth of natural gas properties that will boost the company's position in Texas, Arkansas, New Mexico and Colorado. The Fort Worth, Texas-based producer said the properties contain estimated proved reserves of 83 billion cubic feet of gas, 60 percent of which are proved developed. The properties also will contribute a total of about 12.7 million cubic feet per day of production during the fourth quarter, XTO said.

In East Texas, XTO purchased 42 billion cubic feet of equivalent reserves in Freestone and Limestone counties and production of 4 million cubic feet per day net to XTO. The 11,000 gross acres acquired also includes a processing plant with 35 million cubic feet of daily capacity, the company said.

In Arkansas' Arkoma Basin, the company said it bought 19 billion cubic feet of equivalent reserves in Franklin, Logan, Pope and Sebastian counties, with daily production of 4.3 million cubic feet net to XTO.

In the San Juan Basin of New Mexico and Colorado, XTO said it added another 22 billion cubic feet of gas equivalent with 4.4 million cubic feet of production per day net to XTO.

The properties also will contribute a total of about 12.7 million cubic feet per day of production during the fourth quarter, XTO said.

• MAT-SU BOROUGH, ALASKA

Evergreen works on explaining coalbed methane to Alaskans

By KRISTEN NELSON

Petroleum News Editor-in-Chief

The state of Alaska has put a hold on issuing shallow gas leases while it develops guidelines for evaluating applications for coalbed methane projects.

That's a good thing, says John Tanigawa of Evergreen Resources, which has oil and gas leases and coalbed methane pilot wells north of Anchorage in the Houston-Wasilla-Palmer area of the Matanuska-Susitna Borough, and has applications for more acreage.

"I think the state was very wise to make the decision — we're talking about holding off on approving the leases that are unleased right now, that are in the application stage," Tanigawa told the Alaska Support Industry Alliance Oct. 15.

Why does he think this is a good thing?

There are people in the Matanuska-Susitna area "who really have a lot of questions about what coalbed methane is," he said, "and I think this is a time that we can educate the community, to show them what it is and, more important, show them what it isn't."

There are concerns every time

Tanigawa said that every time Evergreen — a major coalbed methane producer in the Raton basin in Colorado — goes into a new area, "we always see opposition." There are myths about coalbed methane, he said, and the company has to show people the reality.

People "see that it's good development," he said, "that people's water wells are not affected," and that compressors are not installed "next to people's houses and they need to wear earmuffs to have dinner at night."

Then there is the myth that "Evergreen will come in and drill in my backyard."

"Which is just absolutely ridiculous," Tanigawa said, but "it goes very far in terms of getting people upset, because in Alaska, and any place, this is your castle, it's your home. And Evergreen spends a lot of time and energy to make sure we honor that."

The company gets surface use agreements from landowners, he said, works with them on access issues and also pays a one-time surface use fee.

And coalbed methane work means dollars and jobs to the community, as well as taxes. Evergreen's Colorado operation is worth half a billion a year, Tanigawa said, and the company spent some \$7 million for the Alaska exploration project from July 2002 to July 2003.

"The longer that this conversation is in the public, the more they hear about it, the more they support it. It's happened to us in every place that we've worked so far," he said.

Tanigawa said he frequently gives tours of the company's operations, which provide people an opportunity to see what a well looks like.

"You have all these people that come out to our wells and see what they are, and say, 'is this it? Is this what everybody's mad about?' And that's the typical response." ●

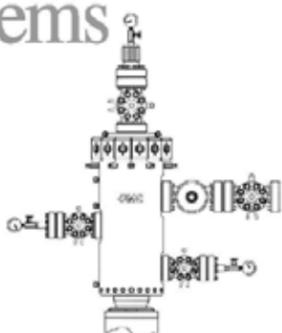
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HOUSTON, TEXAS

Foreign gas key to U.S. supply: Executives, investors don't see Alaska as big player

Although they think a squeeze on domestic natural gas supplies is the toughest challenge facing the U.S. energy industry, only 3 percent of 400 oil and gas executives and investors polled by RBC Capital Markets think that Alaska will be a major part of the solution.

The results show strong doubt among the decision-makers that gas from Alaska will reach the Lower 48 "anytime soon," according to RBC analyst Joe Allman.

Overall, 52 percent of the respondents believed the gas outlook for the United States is as bad, or worse, than the oil crisis of the early 1970s, but 48 percent were confident the challenge was manageable.

However, 92 percent said the United States will increasingly rely on foreign sources of gas within five years and 54 percent believe it will become as dependent on foreign gas as foreign oil.

Gas prices expected to hit \$5.03 per mcf by year's end

Of the other findings:

- Gas prices will hit \$5.03 per thousand cubic feet by year's end and advance to \$5.16 at the end of 2004 and \$5.32 at the end of 2005. The RBC's 2002 annual survey forecast prices of \$3.89 an mcf at the end of 2002, 70 cents below the actual level.

- Almost two-thirds of executives and investors identified Canada as the leading external source of gas in the future, followed by the Middle East at 19 percent, Russia 15 percent and 15 percent South Asia.

Allman said RBC does not expect Canada to grow much above its current exports of 10 billion cubic feet per day or about 15 percent of U.S. demand, predicting just a 0.5 percent rise by 2010.

He said the respondents' interest in the Middle East, Russia and South Asia reflects the rapid emergence of liquefied natural gas as a supply source.

RBC is counting on LNG imports to expand from 1.7 billion cubic feet per day at the end of June to 7 bcf per day by 2010.

- The poll yielded a prediction for crude oil prices of \$28.24 per barrel by the end of 2003, easing back to \$27.83 over the next year.

—GARY PARK, Petroleum News Calgary correspondent

Joe Allman, an E&P analyst at RBC, said the results suggest that few are counting on Congress and the Bush administration to ultimately allow exploration of ANWR and that gas supplies from Alaska will not reach the Lower 48 "anytime soon."

ANCHORAGE, ALASKA

State, borough, will work on Alaska coalbed guidelines

Government project team, public process will be used to evaluate what is needed

By KRISTEN NELSON

Petroleum News Editor-in-Chief

Coalbed methane development is new to Alaska, and the state is taking steps to provide surety to both residents and to Evergreen Resources, which is testing coals north of Anchorage for development, that authority is in place to ensure the development is "done right."

Those were the words Alaska Department of Natural Resources Commissioner Tom Irwin used in a statement issued following a public meeting in Wasilla Oct. 13. There has been considerable concern in the Matanuska-Susitna Borough area north of Anchorage because of the large amount of acreage either leased or in the lease application stage for shallow gas drilling.

Pat Galvin of the department's Division of Oil and Gas, who will head up an agency team to look at existing authority and appropriate guidelines for coalbed methane development, told Petroleum News Oct. 14 that the state wants to make sure that before developments go forward, "that we have looked at what needs to be in place in order to make sure that it's done right."

Galvin was one of a group of state officials who recently toured Lower 48 coalbed methane operations.

They found two patterns, he said: one where development was done without good oversight and more recent development where both regulators and the industry have done a better job.

In some of the early coalbed methane developments, he said, a large number of companies came in and developed areas "where the state and local authorities hadn't really come to grips with how this development should move forward." That was what the officials saw in the Powder River basin in Wyoming, he said.

Evergreen Resources' operations in the Raton basin in Colorado, he said, are a later generation of development.



Tom Irwin, commissioner, Alaska Department of Natural Resources

PATRICIA JONES

The "later generation of coalbed methane" was done in a "very responsible way," Galvin said, and was "sensitive to the local population in minimizing its impact." That is what the state wants to see in Alaska, he said.

"They're the operations that we did see that we really were impressed by. Evergreen operates — that we saw — out of Trinidad, Colorado, in the Raton basin, and those operations, to us, were very impressive."

The "later generation of coalbed methane" was done in a "very responsible way," Galvin said, and was "sensitive to the local population in minimizing its impact."

That is what the state wants to see in Alaska, he said.

But as companies come into the state to develop coalbed methane, "we can't just rely on the companies' good practices. We need to have some standards in place to ensure that these companies are going to do things in a way that is appropriate."

And on the other side of the coin, Evergreen — and other companies which come to Alaska to do coalbed methane development — need to know what the guidelines will be.

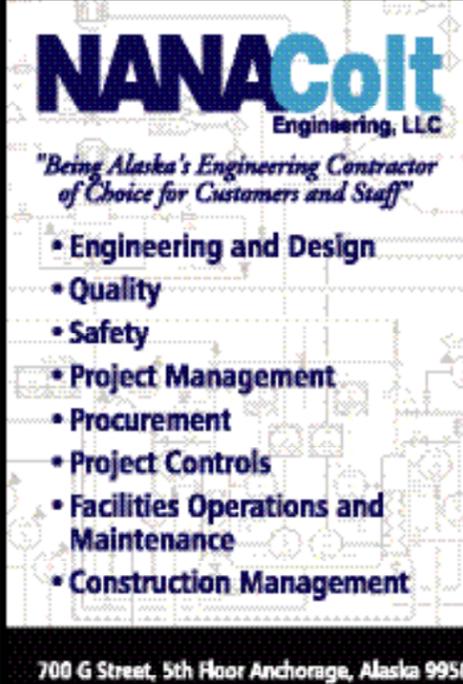
Evergreen needs to know what the regulatory framework will be as it makes "decisions on whether to move forward with a full-scale development ... They need to have some certainty as well," Galvin said.

The state wants to take advantage of this period before there are any full-scale development proposals to put controls in place, so that both residents and companies have that surety, he said.

Project team

Galvin will head up a project team of state agencies and the Matanuska-Susitna Borough. The project team will "write specific guidelines to be followed by DNR when exercising its discretionary authority over coalbed methane development on state leases," Commissioner Irwin said in the department's Oct. 13 statement. The team will include representatives from Natural Resources,

see **GUIDELINES** page A10



- Engineering and Design
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● WORLDWIDE

Report predicts gas-to-liquids growth

Marathon ready to start Oklahoma demonstration plant next month

By LARRY PERSILY

Petroleum News Juneau Correspondent

While BP's gas-to-liquids demonstration plant at Nikiski continues to turn out about 180 barrels per day of clean fuel, a recent study by an international energy consulting firm says growing GTL production worldwide could supply 5 percent of diesel demand by 2010 in North America, Europe and the Pacific Rim.

In keeping with that increased focus on GTL as a growing supply of clean fuel, a new demonstration plant was dedicated earlier this month near Tulsa, Okla.

The 70-barrel-per-day plant is scheduled to start operations in early November. The facility is a joint venture of Tulsa-based Syntroleum Corp. and Houston-based Marathon Oil Co., with \$11.5 million in financial aid from the U.S. Department of Energy.

The plant was designed and constructed under the department's Ultra-Clean Fuels program, which is aimed at developing new fuels to reduce emissions from cars and trucks. The virtually sulfur-free fuel from the Oklahoma plant will be used for a long-term test in fleet vehicles, including public buses in Washington, D.C., and National Park Service vehicles.



The 70-barrel-per-day plant is scheduled to start operations in early November. The facility is a joint venture of Tulsa-based Syntroleum Corp. and Houston-based Marathon Oil Co., with \$11.5 million in financial aid from the U.S. Department of Energy.

Two years from approval to start-up

Federal funding for the plant was approved in July 2001, with construction start-up in August 2002. The facility consists of three main components: An autothermal reformer to convert the natural gas feedstock into synthesis gas (hydrogen and carbon monoxide); a Fischer-Tropsch unit to convert the synthesis gas into synthetic crude oil; and a refining unit to upgrade the crude into diesel fuel.

"With commercial application of GTL technology, we can tap natural gas and coal reserves that are currently stranded and sitting idle and turn them into new sources of clean fuels," said Carl Michael Smith,

assistant secretary for the Office of Fossil Fuel at the Energy Department.

In addition to the BP's demonstration plant in Alaska and the soon-to-open test plant in Oklahoma, several full-scale GTL production facilities have been proposed worldwide that could significantly boost the 200,000 barrels per day of existing production, said consultants with Gaffney, Cline & Associates, with principal offices in the United Kingdom, Houston and Singapore.

Qatar GTL plant likely to be next

The 41-year-old consulting firm points to Sasol/Qatar Petroleum's proposed 34,000-barrel facility in Qatar as most like-

ly to be among the first new GTL plants to come online.

"A desire to minimize natural gas flaring around the world could present opportunities for GTL projects ... (and) the tightening of refined-product sulfur specifications in the world's major transportation fuel markets could also help the quest of GTL project developers," the company said in a summer report commissioned by the Japan National Oil Corp.

The consultants added, however, that they do not expect to see large-scale government subsidies for GTL fuels.

The market will drive GTL production, they said. "Sufficient market demand growth should exist to support diesel production from GTL facilities, new refineries and incremental additions to refineries, such that GTL diesel volumes should have little problem being placed into the market."

Capital cost a major issue

Cost will continue to be an issue, the report said. Producers, such as BP at its Alaska plant, are working to bring down the per-barrel cost of producing GTL fuels, and the report offered its own cost-based prediction. "Should the drive to reduce GTL project capital costs to \$20,000 per barrel per day or lower be realized, the development of the industry should expand greatly.

"Indeed, at such a point, the prospect of developing GTL projects to monetize smaller gas reserves may become more feasible." ●

continued from page A9

GUIDELINES

the Department of Environmental Conservation, the Alaska Oil and Gas Conservation Commission and the Matanuska-Susitna Borough.

The team will also report to Irwin on whether or not existing state and local laws and regulations governing coalbed methane development are adequate. That authority is spread out among the agencies, Galvin said, and the project team will look at both existing authority and what additional authority might be needed.

The goal right now is to develop guidelines to be used in permitting, "to frame the issues" and guide how deci-

sions are made under existing authority, but part of the guidelines development process will be to determine "whether or not regulations or other authorities are needed in order to properly control coalbed methane development."

Irwin said the department expects to hold a series of public workshops in November and December. Before public workshops are held, Galvin said, the project team will prepare draft guidelines, "as a starting point for discussions, (to) let people have something to respond to." The public workshops will be held to take recommendations, and then the guidelines in draft form will go out for public review.

Coring, pilots will move ahead

The department is putting a hold on

approving shallow gas leasing applications — at Healy and in the Holitna basin as well as in the Mat-Su — until the guidelines process is complete.

Jim Hansen, leasing manager at the Division of Oil and Gas, told Petroleum News Oct. 15 that the division still has a lot of administrative work to do on the applications, and will wait until the guidelines are complete. That way, he said, guidelines developed for the Mat-Su can be used as a template in other parts of the state.

Irwin said that two coalbed methane activities will be allowed to move forward while the department works on its guidelines.

One is the geologic testing that Evergreen has planned for this winter, including drilling core holes to take geo-

logic samples.

The other is two additional pilot projects — up to four wells each — that Evergreen has proposed.

The pilots, Irwin said, are nearly through the permitting process. The department is waiting for confirmation that surface use agreements have been signed by the surface owner, "and will only allow these pilot projects to proceed with signed surface owner agreements."

Irwin characterized these activities as "necessary for Evergreen and the state to obtain valuable data to evaluate the future of coalbed methane" in the Matanuska-Susitna area.

"There is no substitute for good data — environmental, social, geologic and economic," Irwin said. ●

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• SOUTHWEST ALASKA

Partners team up for gas development

Holitna Energy Corp. partners with village corporation to develop shallow gas in remote Kuskokwim River area

By PATRICIA JONES

Petroleum News Contributing Writer

Holitna Energy Corp. recently changed its company structure, formed a partnership with a village corporation and has slightly scaled back plans for winter exploration of shallow gas leases sought in remote southwest Alaska.

Holitna's President Phil St. George is also actively seeking \$1.2 million for gravity surveys and drilling on the four leases and plans to hold community meetings about his company's proposed project in nearby villages.

It's all part of the job for a long-time minerals geologist who's now heading up a shallow gas project that, if the resource pans out, could provide energy for a number of upper Kuskokwim River villages and a large-scale gold mine that may be developed 50 miles away.

On Oct. 10, St. George told Petroleum News about plans to partner with The Kuskokwim Corp., a business entity formed by the merger of 10 village corporations, which owns the surface rights to land adjacent to the shallow gas leases.

"It's exciting because we would not be able to develop this without them," St. George said. "Working with a Native corporation makes a lot of agencies and government people satisfied that the development will benefit the local people, which is why we're doing this whole thing."

Holitna Energy, which has recently switched to a limited liability corporation structure, will hold shallow gas leases for the 19,840 acres of state land east of the Holitna River and southeast of Kuskokwim River village of Sleetmute.

Outlined in a letter of agreement, a second LLC is being formed that will develop the gas resource and

"Placer Dome has to decide on a power system, so we need to move along as quickly as possible so they can incorporate power and gas from the (Holitna basin) field in developing the mine."

—Phil St. George, Holitna Energy

related infrastructure on those leases. TKC, the village corporation, will hold a 10 percent interest in that new company, soon to be named, St. George said.

"They will have an option to earn a greater percentage through putting capital into the partnership."

Winter exploration planned

Together, the two entities are actively seeking \$1.2 million to pay for the first stage of exploration in the Holitna basin, a teardrop-shaped formation that stretches for about 70 miles along the Farewell fault.

State geologists identified the potential gas-prone region, based on grassroots geological and geophysical work that includes analysis of low quality coals exposed in sections of the fault.

No detailed industry-funded exploration work has been completed in the area. St. George hopes to first complete a detailed gravity survey in the area to help identify potential drill targets. He has pulled back from earlier plans to conduct 3-D seismic tests in the area, based on recommendations from oil industry geophysicists.

"The gravity survey will provide enough detail about the structure, and it will be less expensive," he said. "We can also accomplish it earlier in the winter, to allow more time for planning the drilling work."

He hopes to complete both tasks this winter, with the drilling planned for March. His rapid timeframe is driven by a desire to prove up an energy resource in the

area, one that could be considered by developers of the massive Donlin Creek gold deposit.

Current geological estimates put that remote hardrock deposit at nearly 28 million ounces of gold, and operator Placer Dome is working on a feasibility study for the project, located some 50 miles from the Holitna Energy gas leases.

Finding power for the mine and mill complex will be one of the greatest logical challenges for the remote project. Developers are looking at a 30,000-ton per day mill, requiring about 70 megawatts of electricity.

"Placer Dome has to decide on a power system, so we need to move along as quickly as possible so they can incorporate power and gas from the (Holitna basin) field in developing the mine," St. George said.

He should know. In April, St. George stepped down from his job as project manager at Donlin Creek for the past two years, overseeing the exploration program for NovaGold Ventures, which also holds interest in the gold project.

Public meetings planned

Public comment closed in late July on Holitna Energy's shallow gas application. State regulators received a few comments, with general concerns about hunting and fishing activities, said Jim Hansen of the Division of Oil and Gas.

The state "strongly suggested" that Holitna Energy hold community meetings in the region, to further explain plans, he added.

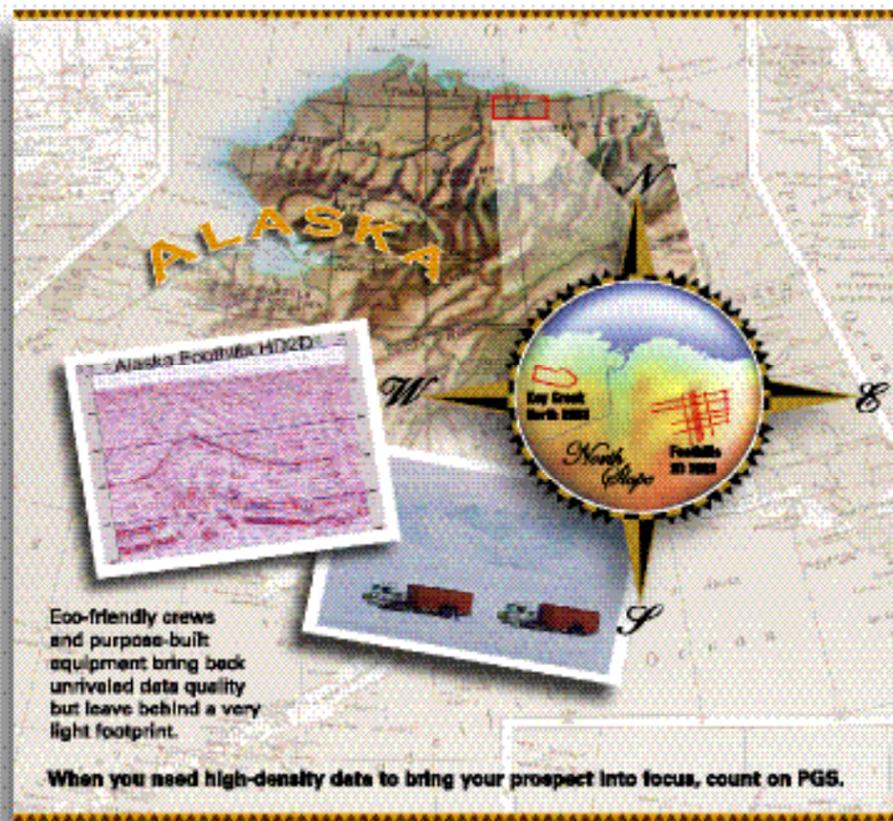
St. George said he's tried to schedule such meetings, but has been put off by locals who have been busy with moose hunting and wood gathering. He's hoping to hold meetings in December, and in the meantime, is putting together a project fact sheet that can be posted in each village. ●

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Need more time, better zinc prices

Teck Cominco requests extension on its shallow gas leases neighboring Red Dog mine, exploration deferred and not definite

By PATRICIA JONES

Petroleum News Contributing Writer

Teck Cominco Ltd., owner and operator of the Red Dog zinc and lead mine in Northwest Alaska, has requested a one-time, three-year extension for the four shallow gas leases the company currently holds near its remote mine.

The four leases expire at the end of October, according to Jim Hansen, lease sales manager at the Alaska Division of Oil and Gas. Hansen told Petroleum News on Oct. 9 that during the previous week, Teck Cominco representatives made a presentation and formal request for the one-time extension, allowable under the state's shallow gas leasing program.

"They want to drill more core and have more evaluation of the coals," Hansen said. "They're proceeding with their evaluation. ... I know the director was satisfied with what they have done so far and what they intend to do."

A verbal decision approving the extension was given to company representatives, Hansen said, and the written decision will be issued by the end of October.

The four leases cover 23,040 acres north and east of the Red Dog mine. Teck Cominco paid application fees of \$500 per lease and annual rent of 50 cents per acre for its shallow gas leases, the first the state of Alaska issued.

Alaska's shallow gas program has since changed, with application fees increasing to \$5,000 per lease and \$1 per acre. Teck Cominco opted to keep their leases under the old program, Hansen said.

Drilling was planned for 2003

Early in 2003, Teck Cominco announced plans to drill up to two wells this past summer. That program was not carried out, as the company had not

acquired all necessary permits in time to ship in equipment, said Red Dog General Manager Rob Scott.

"The plan is to get all our permits, so if we chose to do further exploration ... we are in a position to do the test work," he said.

The company will decide in the next few months if and when to proceed with the shallow gas exploration, Scott said.

"There isn't a definite plan as far as actual timing goes. The price of zinc is extremely low and the mine is hanging on, trying to struggle through, so we don't have a lot of extra money to spend on speculative gas that is not well defined," he said.

If developed, local gas supplies could replace some or all of the 18 million gallons of diesel used each year to power Red Dog.

The company is considering two phases of gas exploration. In the first, about \$2.8 million will be spent drilling two wells that will test permeability and flow rates of methane gas contained in the shale formations, Scott said. The second phase would involve wells drilled further away from the mine, to test the field's size.

The shallow gas resource was discovered during mineral exploration drilling at Red Dog, the world's largest producer of zinc. Since 1998, data has been collected from those mineral core holes, smaller in diameter than cores from conventional shallow gas drill rigs.

G.J. Koperma Jr. of Advance Resources International, a consultant who worked on the Red Dog gas project in past years, estimated the shale gas resource at 2 trillion cubic feet, based on past data collection including analysis of the subsurface core, gas content work and gravity anomalies. (See story in July 28, 2002, issue of Petroleum News.) ●

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CANADA

Canada's well completions, licenses in record books

Drilling is continuing at a breakneck pace in Western Canada, as cash-rich operators in the three provinces set their sights on a new record that looks like it would spill over to 2004.

Well completions for the first three quarters hit 15,877, beating the 2001 benchmark by 1,220 wells, with Alberta breaking with tradition by completing 6,919 holes in the July-September period, compared with 5,500 in the normal first-quarter peak.

Saskatchewan logged 3,179 wells to the end of September, up 25 percent from last year.

The hottest play was in southeastern Alberta, where 5,551 wells were completed in the first nine months, followed by 1,339 wells on the eastern edge of the Alberta Foothills.

For all of Canada, regulators issued 18,994 new well permits over the three quarters, easily surpassing the previous record of 14,781 in 1997 and 54 percent ahead of last year's pace.

The breakdown includes 4,342 exploratory wells, up 42 percent from last year, and 13,272 development wells, a gain of 51 percent.

The Alberta regulator has authorized 14,458 licenses, 5,600 more than in 2002 and only the fourth year that the tally has topped the 10,000 mark.

Saskatchewan's total stands at a new nine-month record of 3,666 and British Columbia is also in record territory at 663 permits.

EnCana easily shows the way among operators at 4,142, trailed by Canadian Natural Resources at 1,073, Husky Oil Operations at 907, EOG Resources Canada at 885 and Apache Canada at 832.

Entering October, 448 of Canada's 683 rigs were working, a 66 percent utilization rate, compared with 36 percent at the same time last year.

—GARY PARK, Petroleum News Calgary correspondent

RIFLE, COLO.

Western Colorado seeing boom in drilling permits

A "remarkable" number of natural gas wells are being proposed on Colorado Western Slope land, according to government officials.

Three energy companies — Williams Production, EnCana Oil and Gas and KLT — have applied for 261 drilling permits at 34 locations over the next two years on U.S. Bureau of Land Management property in Garfield County.

The companies have already asked for permission to drill 71 other wells from BLM land onto private land at Hunter Mesa and Grass Mesa, BLM associate field manager Steve Bennett said.

Bennett released the figures Oct. 9 at the Colorado Oil and Gas Conservation Commission's quarterly public forum. The BLM has already issued 384 permits this year, topping the previous record highs of 362 in 2002 and 353 in 2001.

"That's remarkable," commission vice chairman Brian Macke

see PERMITS page A14

NORTH AMERICA

Shoring up oil security

Enbridge works on strategy to tap Alberta oil sands for North America

By GARY PARK

Petroleum News Calgary Correspondent

The owner of the world's longest crude pipeline, Enbridge is on a fast track to extend its reach far into the United States as part of what one analyst has called a "Fortress North America" strategy.

Two announcements in the past month by the Calgary-based company "represent major steps in furthering continental security of energy supply," said Chief Executive Officer Patrick Daniel.

First, Enbridge paid \$122 million to BP for a 90 percent interest in the Cushing to Chicago pipeline system, which it will rename Spearhead and — pending regulatory approval and a tolling deal with producers — reverse the 650-mile system to a north-to-south flow by 2004.



Enbridge Chief Executive Officer Patrick Daniel

Then, on Oct. 6, it floated a proposal, again dependent on extensive support and approval, for a \$550 million-\$650 million new link covering 630 miles from its existing terminal at Superior, Wis., south to the Wood River hub in southern Illinois.

The Southern Access project is initially targeted to carry 250,000 barrels per day through a 24- or 30-inch diameter pipeline and, if it achieves its expected 2007 in-service date, might also offer access to Canton, Ohio, and Catlettsburg, W.V.

The two developments reinforce Enbridge's own ambitions to extend its network to the Gulf Coast refining center, despite market views that Alberta's synthetic crude may not get an enthusiastic reception from refiners, who are not equipped to handle heavy, high-sulfur grades.

Even so, Daniel confidently predicted in a statement that U.S. refineries and their customers in the U.S. Midwest and Midcontinent will benefit from improved access to secure, reliable and growing supplies of crude oil from the Alberta oil sands."

Canada could replace some other crudes

Karen Taylor, an analyst with BMO Nesbitt Burns, told The Globe and Mail that if Enbridge can improve the penetration rate and consumption of Canadian bitumen in the Lower 48 it could displace Venezuela and Latin American crudes in some markets.

She said the "Fortress North America" strategy has gained some popularity since Sept. 11, 2001, among those who favor continental energy self-sufficiency over continued reliance on imports.

Underpinning Enbridge's thinking is the expectation of "unprecedented" growth over the next 15 years of the oil sands, which account for 174.8 billion barrels of Canada's total crude reserves of 180 billion barrels.

Based on the potential production of synthetic crude and bitumen, Enbridge has estimated crude from the Western Canada Sedimentary Basin could grow from just over 2 million barrels per day last year to about 3.4 million bpd in 2017.

In an on-going Oil Sands Markets Study, launched in 2002, Enbridge said that with C\$50 billion in active or planned projects now advancing in the oil sands region, the "long lead time required for new pipeline and market development requires careful assessment."

The study, in addition to the traditional outlets in Ontario and the United States, is focused principally on the Rocky Mountain states and upper Midwest, plus potential new markets in the lower Midwest, Gulf Coast and Asia-Pacific rim.

"Based on total anticipated demand of 3.7 million bpd by 2010 in the traditional markets, it appears that new or expanded pipelines to new markets will be required, in addition to growth in existing markets," the study overview said.

Refinery interest?

Dealing with the doubts hanging over the interest of North American refineries in stepped up oil sands volumes, Enbridge said it is trying to determine "whether modifications to refinery operations such as coking, hydrotreating and sulfur removal capabilities would improve the fit between oil sands supply potential and the ability of these markets to absorb this increase in supply."

Enbridge said meetings with oil sands producers and refiners will continue through 2003 before a decision is made to proceed with a full project application.

With some of the eastern pieces falling into place, interest is turning to the Gateway concept — a possible C\$2.5 billion line from northern Alberta to either Kitimat or Prince Rupert on the British Columbia coast for tanker shipment to California and Asia.

Gateway could be designed to carry 400,000 bpd over 720 miles, coming on stream in 2009.

But Enbridge does not have that field to itself.

see ENBRIDGE page A14

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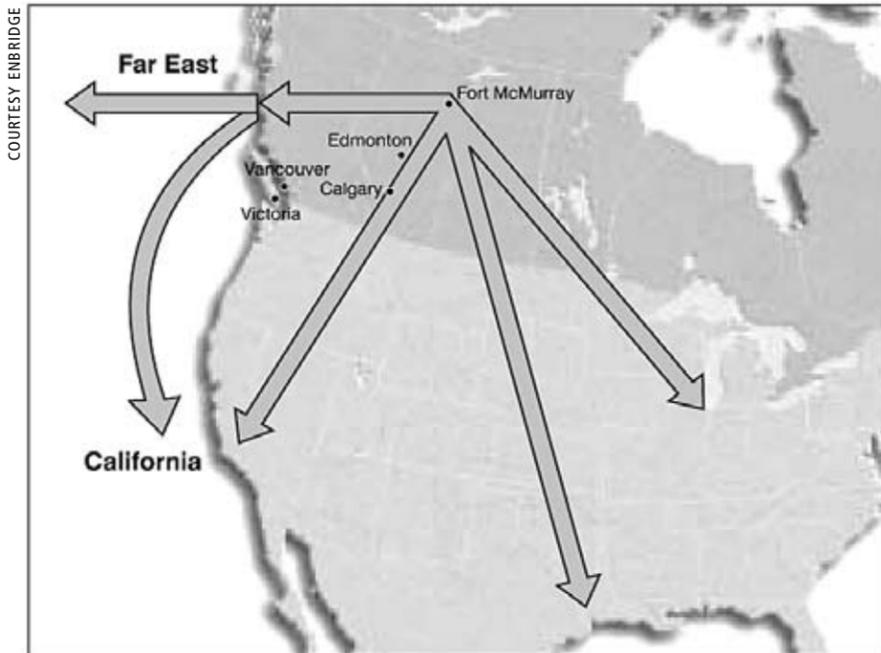


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The above map is from Enbridge's Oil Sands Markets Study Bulletin No. 2, 2003. When it is complete Enbridge says on its web page that "the study will identify the number and timing of pipeline expansions and extensions required to support and accommodate the increased supply of oil from Alberta's oil sands projects. It will also assess the need for, and the technical, economic and environmental feasibility of, new pipeline corridors for the southern United States, California and to the British Columbia coast for tidewater access to California and Asia-Pacific markets (as shown in the above map)."

continued from page A13

ENBRIDGE

Terasen Pipelines a competitor

Since earlier this year, Vancouver-based Terasen Pipelines, a unit of a company formerly known as BC Gas, has declared its interest in pumping C\$1.6 billion into twinning its Trans Mountain pipeline, with current capacity of 281,000 bpd, from Alberta to the British Columbia coast and the United States to carry 400,000 bpd of heated heavy crude.

As well, Terasen operates the 1,700-mile Express pipeline from Alberta to Wyoming, with connections to U.S. Rocky Mountain and Midwest refineries. Current Express capacity is 172,000 bpd, with future design capacity of 282,000 bpd.

Like Enbridge, Terasen is also eyeing

the tanker-shipment of oil sands production to California and Asia, but for now the two pipelines are in a tussle for supremacy, with the spoils going to the company that wins over customers.

Richard Bird, Enbridge group vice president transportation north, said in a conference call Oct. 6 that hard and fast commitments for Gateway will be needed by early 2005.

He said that although no shippers have signed up there is "strong shipper interest in the concept."

Terasen President Richard Ballantyne told the Financial Post Oct. 9 that it's not likely both projects could proceed simultaneously.

"The shippers will need to determine where they want their markets ... and indicate how the order of things will happen," he said. ●

continued from page A13

PERMITS

said. "That's a very high number of permits."

He chalked up the drilling activity increase to a doubling of natural gas prices since 2002. "Higher prices and strong projections are driving the activity," he said.

The BLM numbers don't include a projected 500 drilling permits the commission expects to issue in Garfield County by the end of the year.

Garfield County oil and gas auditor Doug Dennison suggested starting an ener-

gy advisory group of community staff, industry officials, regulatory agencies and the public. He said the group could help draft industry standards for energy companies, which he thinks will work better than telling the companies how to operate.

"I think that's something we'll pursue," Dennison said. Dennison also said energy companies paid approximately \$12.75 million in Garfield County property taxes for the most recent, 12-month reporting period. The county received about \$500,000 from federal severance taxes and minerals leases.

—THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

HOUSTON, TEXAS

El Paso gets cash infusion for drilling

Nabors Industries, Lehman Brothers ante up \$350M

PETROLEUM NEWS

El Paso, Nabors Industries and investment bank Lehman Brothers have worked out a three-way deal that will provide cash-strapped El Paso with an additional \$350 million to drill its prospects both offshore and onshore in the Gulf of Mexico.

El Paso said it will contribute another \$150 million to the partnership as part of its existing 2003 and 2004 capital budget, making the joint venture worth \$500 million, the companies said.

From this pot of cash, El Paso intends to step up its drilling program over the next year with 55 wells in North Louisiana, 20 wells offshore gulf, 35 wells in South Texas and 15 wells on the Gulf Coast. El Paso is under the gun because many of the leases are said to be close to expiring.

"These agreements allow us to accelerate the drilling of our inventory within our existing capital spending budget," said Rod Erskine, president of El Paso's production segment.

El Paso has been in cost-cutting mode, shaving about \$1 billion from its capital spending budget this year, with more cuts planned in 2004. The company's current budget is about \$1.3 billion.

Under terms of the deal announced Oct. 10, Lehman will provide 50 percent or \$250 million of total cash to finance two packages of wells. In exchange, Lehman will get a 50 percent net profits

interest on cash proceeds available after royalties and operating costs have been paid.

Nabors will provide 20 percent or \$100 million for a 20 percent net profits interest.

Once a specified payout is achieved, Lehman's and Nabors' net profits interest will convert to an overriding royalty interest in the wells for the remainder of the wells' productive lives, according to deal terms. The agreements give all parties a right to cease further investment with 30 days notice.

It is anticipated that 54 percent of the estimated \$500 million in total capital will be invested under agreements with El Paso Production Co. and El Paso Production GOM and the balance invested with El Paso Production Oil & Gas, L.P.

El Paso already is one of Nabors' largest contract drilling customers.

"Their (El Paso) prospects inventory is known to be of high-quality and they have an excellent track record of execution in the E&P business," said Gene Isenberg, Nabors' chairman and chief executive officer. "We welcome the opportunity to broaden our relationship."

Lehman has been an active participant in oil and gas transactions involving exploration and production independents. In 1999, the investment bank did two deals with Cross Timbers (now XTO Energy) totaling \$471.3 million. ●

HOUSTON, TEXAS

Rowan says jackup rigs to leave Gulf

Rowan, the first major contract driller to report 2003 third-quarter earnings, said as many as 25 jackup rigs, including a few of Rowan's, could be leaving the Gulf of Mexico because of increasing demand and attractive day rates abroad.

"There's a tremendous amount of bids around the world where (rig) utilization is already 85 percent," Bob Palmer, Rowan's chief executive officer, told analysts in an Oct. 15 conference call.

He said demand for the roughly 100 remaining jackups in the gulf would cause a further market tightening, resulting in yet higher utilization and day rates down the road.

However, Palmer was clearly disappointed with Rowan's financial performance in the 2003 third quarter, despite posting net income of \$11.6 million or 12 cents per share versus a loss of \$6.6 million or 7 cents a share in the previous quarter. He said Rowan had too much rig downtime, adding that the company's manufacturing and aviation divisions also did not perform as well as had been expected.

"We were disappointed," Palmer said. "Our longer-term outlook, however, remains highly favorable."

Nonetheless, Houston-based Rowan said 94 percent of its drilling rigs were utilized during the 2003 third quarter, compared to 88 percent in the prior quarter and 93 percent in last year's third quarter. Rates for offshore rigs averaged \$49,100 per day in this year's third quarter, up 25 percent from previous quarter and up 17 percent compared to the year-ago period, Rowan said. Rates for land rigs averaged \$11,000 per day, up 3 percent from the prior quarter and up 15 percent from a year ago.

Rowan's 2003 third-quarter revenues were \$193.9 million, compared to \$158.1 million in the second quarter and \$184.2 million in last year's third quarter.

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SANTA FE, N.M.

Wyoming creates site for oil and gas information

The New Mexico state Land Office and New Mexico Tech have created a Web site to give the public information about statewide oil and natural gas production, royalties and taxes.

"The Web site is part of an ongoing effort to establish a more customer-friendly, consumer-oriented agency," said state Land Commissioner Patrick Lyons. He said it provides his office with another way to market state trust lands and generate revenue.

The information compiled on the state's Oil and Natural Gas Administration and Revenue Database, housed in the Land Office, is now available on the Socorro-based college's Web site.

Inquiries into leasing, contact information for surface leases, lease rental amounts and the leasees of record can be obtained on the site, <http://octane.nmt.edu>. The Land Office said updates to the site will be made regularly.

—THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

NORTH AMERICA

North American rig count rises by 40 to 1,527

The North American rotary rig count continued its upward march during the week ending Oct. 10, rising by 40 to 1,527, according to rig monitor Baker Hughes.

In Canada, the weekly rig count increased by 22 to 418, up by 210 rigs compared to the same period last year. It was the second consecutive week of increases following nearly a month of declines in the Canadian rig count.

In Canada, the weekly rig count increased by 22 to 418, up by 210 rigs compared to the same period last year.

In the United States, the count rose by a net 18 rigs to 1,109, up by 260 rigs compared to the same weekly period last year. Land rigs alone increased by 25 to 988, while the inland waters-offshore count fell by seven.

Of the 1,109 active rigs in the United States during the week, 950 were drilling gas wells, 155 oil wells, and four were used for miscellaneous purposes. Of the total, 747 rigs were drilling vertical wells, 273 directional wells and 89 horizontal wells, according to Baker Hughes.

Among the leading producing states in the United States, Texas registered the largest gain in active rigs during the week, up by 15 to 468. New Mexico's rig count increased by six to 68. California was up by two to 27 rigs. And Alaska increased by one to 10 rigs. Louisiana's rig count fell by five to 159, while Wyoming's count fell by one to 70 rigs. Oklahoma was unchanged at 139 rigs.

• GULF OF MEXICO

Yorktown temporarily abandoned as drilling costs reach \$86 million

PETROLEUM NEWS

After a year of turmoil and mushrooming drilling expenses, operator Devon Energy and partner Kerr-McGee have decided to "temporarily abandon" their deepwater Yorktown exploration well in the deepwater Gulf of Mexico.

Yorktown costs have now escalated to \$86 million, ranking it among the most expensive wells ever drilled in the gulf. Costs would further increase should the partners decide to return to Mississippi Canyon Block 886 and complete the well.

Yorktown has been plagued with downhole problems and strong ocean currents that have disrupted operations and forced lengthy delays. The decision to halt operations altogether and leave the drill site was made because deterioration of the lower end of the bore hole prevented Devon from reaching its target at the 25,000-foot level, a company spokesman said.

Devon said it would evaluate the situation before deciding the next move, although Kerr-McGee said in a prepared statement that a revised drilling plan for Yorktown would be developed. However, operations are not expected to resume until 2004, Kerr-McGee added.

Both companies said they would not expense well costs on their

respective balance sheets until after it's decided what to do with Yorktown. Devon and Kerr-McGee are equal partners in the well, but their drilling agreement would require Devon to pick up about \$61 million of the \$86 million in expenses.

Neither partner has disclosed information on what the well may have found on the way down to its elusive 25,000 target depth. After heavy ocean currents subsided a few weeks ago, drilling resumed at around the 23,400-foot level.

As an operator, Devon has run into a string of bad luck, reporting a recent dry hole at its Tuscan prospect in the eastern gulf and an apparent non-commercial well at its Shiner Deep prospect in the western gulf.

However, operator and Devon partner ChevronTexaco had a bit more luck with the drillbit, reporting Oct. 9 an oil discovery at its Sturgis deepwater prospect in the prolific Atwater Foldbelt trend, which has given rise to such major discoveries as BP's Mad Dog and Atlantis. ChevronTexaco and Devon said the Sturgis No. 1 well, on Atwater Valley Block 183, uncovered more than 100 feet of net pay but shed no light on the extent of the discovery. A sidetrack also was drilled but more drilling will be required to better determine the size of the find, ChevronTexaco said. ●

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40 **NABORS ALASKA DRILLING, INC.**
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continued from page A1

ABORIGINALS

Aboriginal Pipeline Group, which was formed three years ago to represent the ownership position of Native communities in the planned Mackenzie Valley pipeline.

In June, the Aboriginal Pipeline Group signed an agreement with

TransCanada and the Mackenzie Delta Producers Group that opens the door to an aboriginal stake in the C\$4 billion project, although some First Nations leaders in the Northwest Territories favor a share of revenues.

Porter said his group will open an office in Whitehorse, the Yukon capital, this month.

While not sure at this point what percentage of the pipeline Yukon Natives

would seek he said there have been discussions with Natives in Alaska who are also eyeing an ownership position.

He said the Yukon group has signed a protocol with Arctic Slope Regional Corp., which "brings tremendous expertise and access to capital. The Alaskan Native economic clout is tremendous." (See related story on page 1.)

Other tentative discussions have been started with groups along the pipeline's

Canadian corridor that Porter hopes will result in an alliance of aboriginals along the entire length of the pipeline.

Meanwhile, Porter has his fingers crossed that the U.S. Congress will soon adopt an energy bill that includes financial incentives to kick start the planning and regulatory phase of the Alaska project.

—GARY PARK, Petroleum News
Calgary correspondent

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ROCKY POINT

said.

Point Arguello operator Plains initially applied for its Rocky Point permits more than three years ago against a backdrop of public opposition to offshore drilling in California that began to grow after a massive platform blowout that fouled Santa Barbara beaches more than 30 years ago. In 1989, exploration drilling was halted in California waters.

"The appeals have run their course and the permits are final," John Raymond, Plains' chief operating officer, said in an Oct. 9 conference call with analysts. "We are now in receipt of all permits and approvals. This was not a result easily attainable."

Raymond, the 32-year-old son of ExxonMobil chairman Lee Raymond,

said Plains has lined up a drilling rig and hopes to spud the first well in early 2004. "We will move forward as rapidly as possible," he added.

And none too soon for Plains and its partners, including ChevronTexaco, Devon Energy and Kerr-McGee. From its early 1990 peak of 300-million barrels of reserves and 92,000 barrels of production per day, Point Arguello reserves have declined to roughly 4.5 million barrels and production to 12,000 to 14,000 bpd.

The Rocky Point oil accumulation, in federal waters on the eastern half of Block P-0451, was actually discovered and delineated in the mid-1980s by former Point Arguello operator Chevron. Plains acquired a 52.6 percent interest in Point Arguello in July 1999.

Company expects to arrest production decline

Plains, depending on how quickly new

wells are brought on stream, said at a minimum it can arrest the production decline at Point Arguello and possibly double output over time. The company estimates that combined oil volumes from Point Arguello and Rocky Point would peak at 31,000 barrels per day in 2006 and then quickly decline.

"This doesn't extend the (unit's) life but increases the volume," Raymond said.

Plains said Rocky Point oil previously tested in exploratory wells was high quality light, low sulfur crude, and superior in quality to Point Arguello crude. Oil from Rocky Point would provide "extremely compelling returns," Raymond said.

Extended reach drilling will be conducted from two of the three Arguello platforms, Hermosa and Hidalgo. And all production from Rocky Point would be transported to shore through an existing pipeline and exported away from Plains' onshore Santa Barbara County metering

facility via the Plains All America Pipeline.

Except for the eight new wells, developing the eastern half of Block P-0451 will not require any new subsea infrastructure or new equipment at the onshore Gaviota facility. The oil and gas would be commingled with Point Arguello production and processed offshore at the existing platforms.

Because the Rocky Point drilling proposal stayed within bounds of the original Point Arguello Unit plan, the powerful California Coastal Commission concluded it would "not cause effects on California's coastal zone resources" and would require not require further review by the commission.

Plains' working interest in Rocky Point will depend on issues including well proposals, "but in no event will be less" than its current 52.6 percent stake, the company said. ●

continued from page A1

OFFSHORE

Officer Linda Cook said the results will be "an important indicator of future exploration potential in the deepwater play."

She also acknowledged that Nova Scotia, which has accumulated a growing pile of dry holes in recent years, "is in need of a commercial discovery to provide it renewed impetus."

Earlier this year, EnCana said it would drill on the Weymouth license using the Norwegian-owned Eirik Raude rig, the world's largest semi-submersible, but there is no confirmation which rig will be used or what start date is planned for the

EnCana-Shell well.

For Shell Canada it signals a rebound from a setback in May 2002 when it abandoned the C\$90-million, Onondaga B-84, a follow up to a 1969 significant discovery license.

That was rated as possibly the most expensive failure in Canadian exploration history when it failed to yield enough gas to justify commercial production.

However, Onondaga was not included on a list of exploration licenses and significant discovery licenses that Shell, ExxonMobil Canada and Imperial Oil put on the street last month to attract possible farm-in partners.

While some viewed the offering as the

most damaging sign yet that major players were bailing out of the region, Cook, echoing earlier comments by ExxonMobil, said that opening a data-room was simply an effort to spread the risk in order to accelerate drilling activity.

"We hope there will be additional discoveries and we look forward to testing them out," she told the Canadian Offshore Resources Exhibition conference in Halifax in her first public speech since occupying the CEO's office in July.

No Nova Scotia discoveries in 17 years

Given the anticipated doubling of world demand for natural gas over the next 25 years, she emphasized the importance of success in emerging basins such as Nova Scotia, where Shell Canada holds about 1.24 million acres in licenses, and Canada's Arctic, where it is one of four owners of anchor fields on the Mackenzie Delta.

But the absence of any Nova Scotia discoveries in 17 years, despite C\$592.5 million in work commitments in 1999, has fuelled speculation that the region is in trouble.

Cook said "we continue to view it as a high risk, but possibly high payoff opportunity. We remain cautiously optimistic about the technical potential of the offshore."

She said the Weymouth well, 150 miles southeast of Halifax and close to Sable Island, will be an "important indicator of future exploration potential" and Shell Canada's "first, next step" in deciding whether to retain two nearby deepwater licenses.

While there is no need or urgency for Shell Canada to pull out "any time soon," Cook said "we all need and want a discovery" because of the uncertainty about Nova Scotia's ultimate deepwater potential.

Otherwise, she said technological advances have opened the door to production in water depths greater than 6,500 feet, but warned that the industry needs government action to shrink a complex,

expensive regulatory regime.

EnCana still expects to develop Deep Panuke

The Weymouth announcement comes less than a month after EnCana Vice President Brian Ferguson told an energy conference in Toronto that the company still expects to develop its Deep Panuke prospect, despite putting the project on hold in February while it reassessed the economics.

With reserves of 935 billion cubic feet and a capital cost of C\$1.1 billion, Deep Panuke was viewed as too costly to ship the gas to U.S. Northeast markets through a C\$190 million expansion of the Maritimes & Northeast Pipeline from the Sable offshore project.

But Ferguson indicated that with Sable volumes in decline and the Atlantic Canada market opening up, there is now the prospect of reduced transportation costs and better netbacks.

EnCana has promised to deliver an updated report on timing and design for Deep Panuke to the Canada-Nova Scotia Offshore Petroleum Board before Christmas.

Interest stirring in Hebron-Ben Nevis

Elsewhere on Canada's East Coast, interest is again stirring in Newfoundland's Hebron-Ben Nevis project.

Speculation has been building for several weeks that operator ChevronTexaco, which has a 28 percent stake, along with ExxonMobil Canada 37.9 percent, Norsk Hydro Canada Oil & Gas 10.2 percent and Petro-Canada 23.9 percent have reopened discussions with the Newfoundland government to seek more favorable economic terms for the C\$3 billion project.

Hebron-Ben Nevis was put on hold in February 2002 when the partners said the costs of developing the 400 million-600 million barrel field made the venture uneconomic, partly because about 75 percent of the reserves are 18 to 21 degrees API, posing a major technical challenge in a harsh operating environment. ●



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COURTESY ALASKA PETOGRAPHY

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ADVISER

he said, with heavy government subsidies for gasoline, diesel and propane driving the country into serious budget deficits.

After two weeks he gave his report to a Dominican government minister. "My recommendation was very simple. You have to double prices if you really want to do something about the deficit."

He didn't know what the government had done about his recommendations when he returned to the country two weeks later. The airport was besieged by demonstrators and he asked the taxi driver why people were protesting. The answer caught his attention.

"Some stupid adviser to the U.N. came in and advised them to double the gas prices," the driver told his passenger.

Van Meurs, thinking quickly, told the cab driver he was in the country for scuba diving, thinking that a better answer than to announce he was the U.N. adviser — stupid or not.

There was a phone message waiting for him when he got to his hotel. It was from a U.N. official. "What did you do?" the official asked a surprised van Meurs when he returned the call. "The whole country is in ruins two weeks after you left."

The U.N. official told van Meurs not to say anything as the two men were scheduled to meet with the same Dominican minister who had acted on van Meur's recommendation to raise gasoline prices. Let me do the talking, the U.N. officer said. But when they met the Dominican official, the minister turned to van Meurs and said, "Now Pedro, we are going to work on the other prices," raising the cost of diesel.

When asked how the government could consider raising even more fuel prices while people were protesting, the minister answered, "Don't worry about it. It's not half as bad as we expected."

Van Meurs has never returned to the Dominican Republic.

Helping Alaska with gas negotiations

But he has returned to Alaska several times since signing on to advise the state back in 1996. His latest assignment is to assist the state in its preparations for negotiating a contract with North Slope producers for payments in lieu of state and local taxes if the companies decide to build a pipeline to carry Alaska natural gas to the North America distribution grid in Alberta.

When van Meurs comes to Alaska he brings along his knowledge of oil and gas tax structures worldwide. State officials have looked to his analysis and recommendations to help them draft tax laws intended to retain a fair share of revenue for the state while remaining competitive with other oil and gas opportunities that beckon the industry's investment dollars.

Van Meurs has worked in more than 70 countries, ranging from Saint-Pierre, a French territory of 7,000 residents just off the coast of Newfoundland, to China, with more than 1.3 billion residents. He has dealt with dictatorships, European social democracies and non-governmental clients such as the First Nations of the Mackenzie Delta.

He enjoys the diversity of his contracts and is proud of his ability to work with a wide variety of political situations, which he said have ranged "from communist countries to Republican senators like Frank Murkowski, the entire political spectrum."

Van Meurs works only for governments and groups like the First Nations, never for industry. It's best that way to avoid conflicts between competing companies, he said.

An unfinished train ride

He got his start with government and part-time consulting work in the

Oil and gas consultant goes solar

Pedro van Meurs makes his living advising nations on oil and gas tax policies, but his home in the Bahamas will someday be totally solar powered.

Contradictory? Not really, he said. Nor ironic. "I do it for the reliability."

Electrical power in the Bahamas is not as dependable as in North America, van Meurs said, notwithstanding the East Coast blackout in August. The lights seem to go out weekly. But with solar power, "I enjoy no power outages."

Van Meurs moved to Nassau in the Bahamas two years ago from Calgary, buying a home on a 1-acre lot. The home's name is East of Paradise. They use names instead of addresses in the neighborhood. He travels frequently to the Middle East, Mexico, Russia and everywhere in between, and said the Bahamas provides a centrally located, warm location with good flight connections.

Of course, the weather is better than his former home of 15 years in Calgary, where the winter cold often blows in at 40 below Fahrenheit and a May 2002 storm smacked the city with a foot of snow.

Warm weather aside, self-sufficiency is the key to van Meurs' life in the Bahamas. He has his own water well, and he is in the process of installing enough solar panels to supply the house with all the hot water and electricity it will need. He has two separate satellite systems for email and phone, necessitated by the same local utility problem as with electricity — cable and phone services go down frequently.

The reliability factor is what overcomes the reality factor that solar power and satellite phones are not economic, van Meurs said. "As a hard-nosed economist, on a normal economic basis they are too expensive to install."

There also is a philosophical reason to use solar power instead of burning oil or gas for utilities, he said. "I do believe that the wealthier people like myself should not make excessive use of limited resources."

—LARRY PERSILY, Petroleum News Juneau correspondent

Netherlands, then moved in 1974 to Canada to find a job. He had planned to connect with friends and then head out on a cross-country train ride to find work and plan his life. He never used the full ticket.

He got a job at his first stop. "I don't even remember what I did with it," he said of the unused portion of the ticket. "It could be I was so happy that I had a job that I forgot."

His life had changed and he didn't need to worry about getting a refund on the train ticket. But it wasn't always that way. Van Meurs was born in the Netherlands in 1942, while Europe still wondered if anyone would ever be able to stop the Nazis.

His parents were artists, his mother a painter and his father a painter and sculptor. "I grew up very, very poor. The war, of course, made us extra poor." He said he was 12 or 13 years old before eating his first meat. "I can still remember the day I got my first real shoes."

His 86-year-old mother, who still paints, lives in the house where he was born, which van Meurs describes as a typical 200-year-old house in the Netherlands. He visits her each year, and his home in the Bahamas is full of his parents' paintings and sculptures.

"I think my parents had really hoped I would grow up as a pianist, but I was really interested in geology."

That interest propelled him through college and his growing knowledge helped him finance his schooling while he worked part time for the Dutch government. First came a bachelor's degree, then a master's, and next a doctorate in economic geology, all the while specializing in petroleum geology. By then, it was 1974 and time to move on.

He had no job offers but that didn't stop him from flying to Montreal to connect with some Canadian friends. He used much of the \$500 he had in his pocket to buy a train ticket to Calgary, figuring he would get out at

every stop along the way to look for work. By now, he spoke Dutch, English, Spanish, French and German.

He wasn't much more than 120 miles down the line when he found work in Ottawa, working for what is now the Canadian Department of Natural Resources. He stayed there four years before leaving the post to set up his own consulting business.

"It was the challenge," he said of deciding to leave the comfort of a government paycheck. "Maybe because I grew up in such a poor family and always survived. Maybe I'm not as worried about personal (financial) security."

Big ideas when he was young

It's been almost 30 years since he became a consultant, managing to lose money in only one year. He started with contracts in Central America, Newfoundland and the Northwest Territories. "I was a young man, so I said I'm going to build this big international business."

Among his U.N. projects was a review of El Salvador's oil prospects. The poor nation thought — hoped — it had oil off the Pacific Coast. It was not to be. "El Salvador is a hopeless case," van Meurs said.

By 1980 he had grown to 30 employees. "That was the only year I lost money. I got on a treadmill. I was just trying to find work for people." He grew smarter and smaller, cut back on his staff and returned to profitability in 1981.

Truth is, Van Meurs & Associates is mostly just van Meurs himself these days, with a full-time office manager, a programmer and an occasional economist helping out.

Van Meurs lived in Ottawa until 1986, when he moved to Calgary. "Calgary is a much easier city to be part of the oil business

than Ottawa," he said of his decision to move west.

Van Meurs lives in the air

Actually, it would be more correct to say he maintained an office in Ottawa — he lived in airplanes and airports. And that hasn't changed over the years. He figures he flies an average of almost 25,000 miles per month.

"You lose the whole sense of belonging to a nation," said van Meurs, who is still a Dutch citizen. "There is not a sense of ever belonging to a particular culture."

"I wouldn't necessarily swear allegiance to the Dutch queen if I had to."

He stayed in Calgary until 2001, when he went east and south and moved to the Bahamas, which he described as "the only warm place with excellent air connections." Those connections and flight times are important to someone who spends so much time in the air. Van Meurs organizes his life to minimize his time aboard planes, pointing out that airports and airplanes are the only things in life that make him unhappy.

He is also quick to point out that while there are no personal or corporate income taxes in the Bahamas, there are high duties on bringing goods into the country and a hefty property transfer tax. The duty on cars is 80 percent of their value. So while people may think he moved there for life in a tax haven, he counters that he calculated his real and hypothetical tax bills this year and discovered he has already paid more in taxes in the Bahamas than he would have paid back in Canada.

"In the end, wealthy people pay more than poor people, and that's the way it should be."

Not much time for life at home

There is a price for his success, and that is van Meurs' limited time at home. He figures he spends about 30 days a year at his house in the Bahamas, never more than a few days at a time. A side benefit is that his son from Victoria and his daughter from Toronto love coming to visit him in the islands.

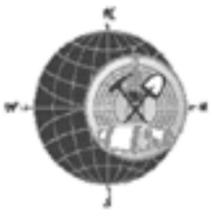
Someday, life will change, he said. "Not that I think I will ever retire, but I do believe I am going to reduce my time from 330 days to 300, or even 50."

One thing that van Meurs does look forward to is losing a few more pounds. A couple of years ago he noticed he was out of breath after getting from one end to the other at airport terminals. Then a heart specialist in Mexico told the 5-foot-10, 260-pound van Meurs he needed to lose weight. He started eating less and lost 50 pounds in two years, with 10 pounds still to go.

During that time, he stayed with his same belt, just pulling it tighter and letting the loose end stick out along the waistband as a reminder of weight loss. He calls it his "trophy belt."

He figures to hang up the belt when he loses the last 10 pounds, planning to put it on a hook in the bathroom as a reminder. ●

Next week: World oil and gas prices and market conditions.



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Business Spotlight

By PAULA EASLEY



Mike Stophlet, president and CEO

ASRC Energy Services

ASRC Energy Services' roots date to a 1930s partnership that evolved into Houston Contracting Co., and was later acquired by Arctic Slope Regional Corp. In April the company adopted its current name and reorganized to better provide engineering and construction services to government and energy industry clients.

Geologist Mike Stophlet joined ASRC's predecessor Natchiq as executive vice president in 1999 after heading Schlumberger's Alaska operation for three years and fulfilling a Scotland assignment. Mike enjoys coaching basketball and serving on Covenant House's board. He and wife Cindy are devoted to the athletic pursuits of four energetic teenagers. "Those who say they can and those who say they can't are both right," is a favorite quote.



Jinny Zutz, business development coordinator

ESS Support Services Worldwide

ESS Support Services Worldwide is a division of the Compass Group, the world's largest foodservice company. The Alaska office in Anchorage provides contract food services and turnkey modular support facilities needed to house and maintain client operations in remote sites. In partnership with Arctic Slope Regional Corp., it has also provided job opportunities to ASRC shareholders.

Jinny Zutz joined ESS this year after serving 19 years with Tesoro Petroleum in human resources, administrative and community relations positions until its recent downsizing. Learning an entirely different operation has proved an exciting challenge. Jinny has lived in Alaska 28 years and is married with three daughters, Erica, Delaney and Kayla. Keeping up with all their activities is her moonlighting job —thankfully one she enjoys.

FORREST CRANE

FORREST CRANE

Total E&P USA launches winter program in NPR-A



Total E&P USA launched its 2003-2004 winter program in the National Petroleum Reserve-Alaska in September by pre-staging ice road building equipment to the Inigok airstrip and drill pad in NPR-A. Companies working with Total in this effort were Lynden Air Cargo, Peak Oilfield Service, CATCO, Fairweather, Alaska Telecom, Kuukpik Arctic Catering, Northern Air Fuel, Frontier Flying Service and PGS Onshore, Jack Bergeron told Petroleum News in October. Bergeron is Total's Alaska manager and is based in Anchorage.



Photos for Total by Judy Patrick

continued from page A3

REJECT

have underpaid in light of a final rate set by the RCA and upheld in the courts," the court said. Provisions were made for Tesoro and Williams to escrow the funds to cover such an eventuality.

But the state recently petitioned the court for a stay of Order 151, which the court said "appears to mean an injunction against utilization by the RCA of that order's underlying methodology for rate computation." The state wanted the court to order RCA to go back to using the higher, pre-existing rates.

The state's motion, prepared by the state attorney general's office, said it will suffer irreparable harm without a stay. It said it will incur litigation expense in docket P-03-4 as that proceeding goes to hearing in December. The state also said it foresees circumstances under which its royalties could decrease, if the carriers successfully petition the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission for an offsetting increase in the interstate TAPS tariff to recoup any decrease in the intrastate tariff.

The court said it has the right to issue a stay of Order 151 if it can show it is "guided by the public interest."

The court said avoidance of litigation

The court said it has the right to issue a stay of Order 151 if it can show it is "guided by the public interest."

fess is "not a persuasive" argument and the possibility of offsetting action by FERC is "speculative."

The court said the state argued that it had contracted away its ability to resist an offsetting action by FERC in the 1985 settlement with the pipeline owners.

The court responded by saying "This was a freely dickered business decision" and that the state's professed harm is "highly speculative."

The state has "aligned itself with one commercial interest group, the carriers (pipeline owners), and against another, the shippers, in an attempt to maximize royalties to the state. That may be an intelligent litigation position, but it is not a restatement of the public interest. That interest is to collect a royalty based on a fair and just transportation rate structure," the court said, agreeing with RCA and the shippers in saying "the procedural posture of the state's motion is half a bubble off."

The court set a Nov. 7 date for briefs by appellants.

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Providing information about companies that serve Alaska and Canada's oil and gas industry

UpFront

Photographer Judy Patrick captured this Arctic sunset at Nabors Alaska Drilling rig 4ES at H pad in Prudhoe Bay.

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Great Northern Engineering broadens client base for success

The Palmer-based company provides engineering services for the petroleum industry, fueling systems and commercial buildings

By **ALAN BAILEY**

Petroleum Directory Contributing Writer

Business diversification, depth of experience and a people-oriented attitude have all helped Great Northern Engineering LLC thrive and expand since General Manager John Riggs founded the company in 1982.

Initially located in Anchorage, the company moved to Palmer in 1984.

"We were 13 employees in Anchorage in 1984 and 11 of us lived in the (Mat-Su) Valley and were commuting to work every day," Riggs said. "We decided we could make it work by just having the company in the Valley."

The company has since grown to about 45 employees, with satellite offices in Anchorage, Kenai and Deadhorse.

Oil industry services

Throughout its 21-year history Great Northern Engineering has serviced the Alaska oil industry. The company's engineers design and manage the development and upgrade of pumping systems, piping systems and other oil field facilities.

"We provide on-call engineering services for just about any maintenance engineering project," Riggs said. "So if they have a problem or they're expanding a facility they come to us and ask us to provide engineering."

The amount of oil field work has fluctuated over the years but since the late 1980s Great Northern Engineering has secured some long-term contracts. The company has stationed a team of about 15 people on-site on the North Slope.

The company also supports the Cook Inlet oil industry.

"We've worked for Unocal out on the platforms in the Cook Inlet — the Swanson River field, the west Cook Inlet," Riggs said.

Aircraft refueling systems

Although Great Northern Engineering started out working mainly for the oil industry, it immediately became apparent that the company would need to diversify to withstand the fluctuations in oil field activity. With the company's wealth of experience in oil distribution technology, the design of aircraft fueling systems seemed a natural business development.

"That's been one of our fortes through the years," Riggs said. "We've worked for the (airline) consortium at Anchorage International Airport since 1982 and we do all of the engineering for all of the jet fueling ... at Anchorage International."

The scale of the fueling operation at Ted Stevens Anchorage International Airport has provided Great Northern Engineering with a unique opportunity to move to the forefront of fueling systems design.

"Anchorage International is the largest (aircraft) fueling facility in the world," Riggs said. "... when the (airlines) refuel their airplanes they hook up to a hydrant system that uses underground piping. They pump an average of about 2.2 million gallons (per day) and have peaked up to three million gallons per day."

Innovative design

As the airport has expanded over the years, the company has undertaken a series of projects. And when the airport decided to upgrade the fueling system in the mid-1990s, Great Northern Engineering designed a state-of-the-art, computer-controlled facility.

"(The airport) put in a new system in 1996 that we designed — it's world class," Riggs said. "We've had air-



Sliding pipelines under the main runway at Ted Stevens Anchorage International Airport as part of a major upgrade to the fueling system at the airport

line companies from all over the world come and look at it."

A pump house containing eight 300-horsepower pumps delivers 2,000 gallons per minute of fuel to the network of underground piping and hydrants. As the number of aircraft being refueled varies, sensors in the system transmit data back to a computer system that controls the number of pumps that are operating.

As well as designing a system that can handle varying refueling loads, the Great Northern Engineering team had to work out how to get fuel lines under one of the runways without tearing up the runway. The team came up with the idea of drilling under the runway, inserting a casing into the drill hole and then sliding piping through the casing on a skid system.

"We traversed 1,200 feet through a casing," Riggs said. "We had to put six or seven pipelines through so we put them into a unique rack and pulled the rack through."

Commercial work

In addition to designing fuel systems, Great Northern Engineering has diversified into structural, mechanical and electrical engineering for commercial and institutional buildings such as office buildings, hotels and hospitals.

"(The challenge is) figuring out what the scope of work is — what the client wants, what the architect has planned and building a mechanical system that functions within those design criteria," Riggs said.

Great Northern Engineering's experience in designing fuel systems and commercial buildings has led to a series of projects in rural Alaska. Work in rural Alaska has included the design of maintenance facilities for several state airports. The company

has also been upgrading village fuel storage facilities.

"We're currently working for several school districts ... upgrading bulk fuel facilities," Riggs said. "We're taking out the old tanks, putting in new foundations and putting in better pipelines for offloading and distribution."

The VECO maintenance facility

Great Northern Engineering's experience in the design of commercial buildings proved invaluable in a recent project for VECO.

"They hired us to design and construction manage a five and a half million dollar vehicle maintenance facility on

the North Slope," Riggs said. "We had a six-month window — we started (the design) on the first of July (2002) and they had to be up and running before the 15th of January 2003." The project was completed on time and within budget.

Having designed structures on the slope for many years, Great Northern Engineering's staff brought just the right expertise to this project.

"There's lots of little technologies you need to know for the mechanical systems," Riggs said. "There's so much fine snow, for example, ... it comes through the cracks and it comes through the ventilation ducts, so there's technology that helps you make these things function."

The VECO project illustrates the speed with which Great Northern Engineering can move forward on a project — the company takes particular pride in being able to respond rapidly and efficiently to client needs.

"We're fairly responsive because of our size ... because of our oil industry experience too," Riggs said. "It's a 'get it done' attitude which shortens the design window and allows construction to start sooner."

Other specialty services

In addition to its engineering design and management business, Great Northern Engineering has developed some specialty services. Corrosion engineering, for example, forms a natural part of mechanical engineering.

"We've done quite a bit of corrosion engineering for over 20 years," Riggs said. "We go out and do field studies to find out ... the driving forces that cause the corrosion and then use the engineering technology to mitigate that."

In another specialty service the company performs rotating equipment vibration analysis on machinery such as hydroelectric and diesel generators.

People oriented

Great Northern Engineering particularly values its skilled staff — Riggs and his colleagues believe that people and the community underpin business success.

"One of the reasons for being in Palmer was to be closer to family," Riggs said. "Part of our philosophy here is the importance of our family activities."

In fact the company donates time and resources to local youth programs and other community activities.

"We sponsor lots of kids' programs — football, baseball and soft ball," Riggs said. "We think that's a very important part of our lifestyle."

And with a flourishing business, Riggs feels optimistic about the future.

"Alaska's growing faster now than it ever has," Riggs said. "It's still a challenge ... but we do see opportunities."

Editor's note: Alan Bailey owns Badger Productions in Anchorage, Alaska.

GREAT NORTHERN ENGINEERING



Great Northern Engineering participated in the design of this 40 megawatt gas turbine generator at Nikiski for supplying electricity to the Kenai Peninsula power grid. Exhaust gas from the turbine generates steam for use in nearby industrial chemical plants.

GREAT NORTHERN ENGINEERING

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By **SUSAN BRAUND**

Petroleum Directory Contributing Writer

Eastern yogis spend literally decades studying the breath and many of their supra-human feats are achieved through breath control. For most of us mortals, though, the simple in-out oxygen and carbon dioxide exchange is an everyday automatic process — until unusual conditions threaten to deprive us of this vital essence.

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Well Safe’s wide variety of classes and training seminars can help meet safety training requirements and assist companies with Occupation Safety and Health Administration, Minerals Management Service and U.S. Coast Guard regulation compliance, while helping to improve employee performance. Classes include: hazwop- per training, first aid, CPR, confined space entry, ergonom-



Well Safe’s Bob Pettit explains the breathing air cascade system to a customer. Cylinders are cascaded, or attached in a series, to each other and airlines are routed to manifolds or breathing air stations located around the rig where one or more individuals can hook up to the breathing air for long periods of time.

or a supplied air respirator is called for, and Alaska’s new presence in the safety arena, Well Safe Inc., or WSI, offers multiple options for respiratory assistance. Well Safe describes itself as a one-stop rental, sales and service shop for industry respiratory, gas detection and confined space equipment needs.

The company can provide any quantity of self contained breathing apparatus and any volume of safe breathing air, tube trailers up to 159,000 cubic feet, cascade racks or trailers in every size and configuration as well as low and high-pressure compressors, including the \$40,000 Bauer compressors with auto kill-fill switch. The company is sales distributor for the major brands of self contained breathing apparatus units, work-line units with escape capability, breathing air cascades, gas detection systems and other safety equipment.

“Any customers with the potential for oxygen deprivation can rely on Well Safe to supply, install, calibrate and maintain air support equipment,” says Well Safe Alaska District Manager Ken Carroll. “WSI carries the most complete line of supplied air respiratory protection equipment in the oilfield and petrochemical industry. Whether you need air supply for a few minutes of a few weeks, we can accommodate.”

Well Safe is big on service. “What we offer here within Alaska is not only face-to-face sales presenting multiple options and product lines, but we are also solid on the service end,” says Service Coordinator Bob Pettit, who has 40 years experience in fire safety, including 20 years of remote-site oil and gas safety work in Alaska. “Customers do not have to ship equipment out for repairs. Our factory-trained technicians ensure that every piece of equipment meets all manufacturing and regulatory specifications.”

All about safety

WSI is the industrial safety division of Well Safe Inc., a subsidiary of W-H Energy Services. Since 1984, WSI has grown nationally from a small hydrogen sulfide service company into a solid provider of safety and equipment



A 30-minute self-contained breathing apparatus. Well Safe sells, rents and services many types of self-contained breathing apparatuses and provides quantitative fit testing on the customer’s location at the Well Safe facility.

ics, fire safety, hazardous materials operations and awareness, and many others.

According to OSHA requirements, before workers can wear respirators, they must be deemed healthy enough and the face piece must fit properly. Well Safe offers location and on-site pulmonary function testing, quantitative face fit testing and respiratory training.

A company-designed tracking system allows for equipment and consumables to be issued and traced in the fast-paced turnaround environment. Bar code technology can track exactly where all equipment is at any time and daily reports pump out running totals on costs by rental equipment, consumables, and labor costs.

The people

If your in-house staff is stretched thin, either through non-routine work activity, turnarounds or workforce reductions, Well Safe can provide skilled technicians and consultants for safety, health and environmental support.

“The quality of our people is what sets us apart ... each person on our staff has received literally hundreds of hours of training,” says Carroll. “They all have a minimum of three years oil field-related experience, and many are retired from fire departments and rescue services. Their willingness and dedication to doing what it takes to get the job done properly and safely for customers makes the difference. Our emergency staff is on call 24/7 for a wide variety of fire and safety services.”

Match-a-medic

According to Brister, who has 22 years experience in emergency medical services including 10 years working at petrochemical sites in Alaska, the Middle East and Africa, WSI hires well-established medics with Alaska experience. “They’re not used to having a hospital four minutes away; they are definitely used to Alaska’s climate and conditions.” In the interest of cost efficiency, WSI medics are cross-trained to perform other duties outside of their medical responsibilities. “We match the medic to the job, depending on customer need,” says Brister. “Our cadre of medics, in addition to having the medical knowledge and skills needed to perform in an oilfield environment, have many other talents and skills. We hire flexible people who can expedite, monitor weather, perform clerical and computer services, training, and other needed services.”

Single safety source

“Consider the time, money and resources you can save when you single source your safety equipment and service needs through one contractor,” says Carroll. “We’re the one integrated stop for all of your safety needs!” ●

Editor’s note: Susan Braund owns Firestar Media Services in Anchorage, Alaska.



Medical Coordinator Bob Brister displays portable heart monitor/defibrillator. Well Safe sells, rents and services safety equipment and provides appropriate training.

Team PRA: a wealth of talent

Petrotechnical Resources of Alaska — oil and gas consultants

By **SUSAN BRAUND**

Petroleum Directory Contributing Writer

Call it knack or call it instinct, but either way, Petrotechnical Resources of Alaska partners Chris Livesey and Tom Walsh could manage a ball club and come out winners — they know how to build a solid team, recognize a player's strengths and adroitly stack the lineup to meet any challenge.

The PRA duo has a good player rotation with considerable depth to their bench — a dynamic consulting team of 60 geophysicists, geologists and petroleum engineers who can join the game and be effective at short notice.

Founded in 1997 by five petrotechnical consultants with extensive oil and gas experience, the company provides a full spectrum of geoscience and engineering consulting services to Alaska's oil and gas community. PRA consults to major oil companies, independents, state and federal agencies, Native corporations and potential investors, providing a service to clients and exciting work to employees and consultants. Under Livesey and Walsh's management, the young business has grown from a staff of five in 1997, to its present size of 60 professionals, and they expect this trend to continue.

Livesey has more than 13 years of experience as a professional geologist for a major oil company and as a consultant. Her background includes well planning, well recompletion, and basin analysis in the Lower 48 and Alaska. She now enjoys taking part in multidisciplinary teams responsible for the technical and financial success of oil and gas fields in Alaska, as well as managing PRA.

Walsh has more than 23 years of experience in the Alaska petroleum exploration and production industry, with a diversified background ranging from basin analysis and lease sale assessment to production well planning and reservoir production modeling. He has been involved in the exploration, appraisal, or development phase of many of the major fields in North Alaska. He enjoys applying his knowledge of Alaska oil and gas operations to helping new clients get a good start in their Alaska ventures, and he spends most of his time managing PRA and developing new business.

The players

"We have an extraordinary wealth of talent, a diverse group with strong oil and gas backgrounds, which can be a real benefit to new companies moving into Alaska," says Walsh.

"We provide our clients with experienced consultants to fill specific needs or with integrated working teams to manage exploration and development projects."

Livesey says the company has enough Alaska expertise to be able to form integrated teams, to mix and match consultants to fit particular niches. "The key to our success is the diversity of the PRA team, both where they have worked and their technical backgrounds," she says. "Our consultants have worked the central North Slope, NPR-A, ANWR, Cook Inlet, the Interior basins, and most of the outer continental shelf oil and gas provinces. Their technical skills are strong, and PRA provides them with the tools and data to complete the package. Our combined staff has the skills to run an oil company from exploration to production, which makes it easy to find an appropriate person for the job."

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Put me in, Coach

The company attracts a diverse group of experienced, known, quality people who are in demand, most with 20-30 years in the oil patch. "We do no active recruiting," says Livesey. "Our reputation attracts an independent type of technical professional who enjoys the diversity and the impact they can have, as opposed to working for a large company doing the same job over and over. Our multidisciplinary teams can have a great impact on projects."

"The environment is changing. A lot of independents are acquiring leases and becoming partners on the North



Geophysicists Paul Daggett and Tom Plawman look over visual displays of Bristol Bay integrated geological information. PRA has acquired all the available Bristol Bay subsurface data and GIS surface data for companies interested in the licensing process.

Slope and Cook Inlet. New players will need land access, data access and facilities access. PRA is a perfect fit for those guys," adds Livesey.

Game plan technologies

Well log digital data base — "New companies want to review properties. The state of Alaska well data is available from Alaska Oil and Gas Conservation Commission and we're in a good position to help disseminate that data," reports Walsh. "We have the entire catalog of digitally available well data for the state. We clean up the raw data, format and interpret it for our clients. So far we have 4,351 wells loaded. The formatted database dramatically supports our integrated consulting business, helps our clients and offers data to newcomers to Alaska."

GIS data integration map — Since the recent reopening of the Bristol Bay sedimentary basin to exploratory licensing, PRA

has acquired all the available subsurface data and GIS surface data for the area to support any company's interest in the exploratory licensing process.

"The GIS is a powerful integrative tool," says Walsh. "We're rapidly becoming the technical experts in the Bristol Bay area."

Seismic workstation — PRA has a state-of-the-art seismic workstation network, which again, helps smaller companies enjoy the same advantages in Alaska exploration previously available only to larger integrated oil companies. The company's consulting geophysicists know how to acquire seismic data in remote locations and severe climates. And they are experienced in dealing with problems unique to the Arctic such as permafrost statics.

The playbook

Confidentiality is a cornerstone of PRA ethics. "Our reputation in this industry is our most important asset," says Livesey. "Confidentiality is critical in a small community like Anchorage."

According to Walsh, one of the biggest tasks of management is making sure there's never a perception of any conflict. "Confidentiality is always at the forefront of every piece of work we are involved in, but we have enough depth of staff to be non-conflicted. You might find PRA people on both sides of the table, but each side

works completely independently, with their own data and ideas. Teams are isolated from each other."

Endurance

An example of PRA's start-to-finish integrated approach is their work on the Winstar project at Oliktok Point, which included exploration, prospect development, reservoir engineering, unit expansion, commercial analysis, and support during the drilling of a test well. This is a great example of the type of project PRA professionals enjoy most, and on which they can have the most impact. "The Winstar principals are great clients. They are knowledgeable, extremely business savvy, and appreciative of the support they get from their service providers," says Walsh. Like PRA, Winstar is an Alaska-grown business.

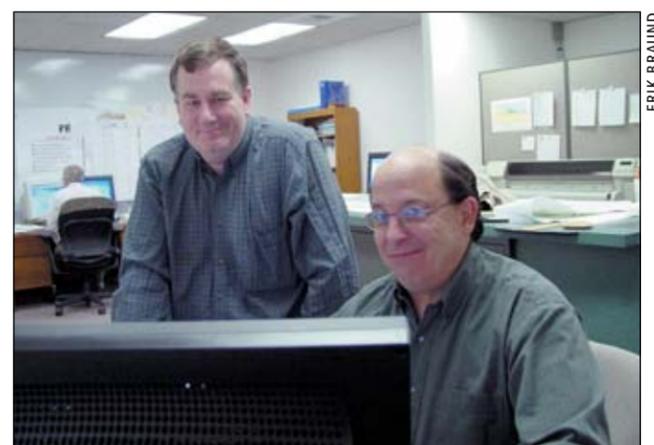
"When Winstar approached PRA, they had acquired several lease tracts and identified a possible drilling target. We provided technical support in developing the prospect, and the well was drilled last summer," reports Livesey. "There were very complex project facilities issues, and Winstar gained precedent-setting access to facilities, which will pave the way for other independents to come."

Got game

"The landscape is changing, with major players tapering back their exploration spending, but we are opti-



PRA owner-managers Chris Livesey and Tom Walsh.



Petrophysicist Gene Piekenbrock and computer geoscientist Cliff Posey review progress on the Alaska state-wide digital well database. PRA offers this well data to its clients for purchase or for use in consulting projects.

mistic about the exploration potential for some of the new players and their chances for success," reflects Walsh. "And PRA can offer them the benefits of local knowledge, expertise and technology." ●

Editor's note: Susan Braund owns Firestar Media Services in Anchorage, Alaska.

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Security Aviation awarded U.S. Air Force contract



Security Aviation has been awarded the U.S. Air Force seven-passenger transportation service contract for transporting military and civilian personnel to more than 20 sites throughout Alaska, Security Aviation said in late September. The five year contract went into effect Oct. 1, the Anchorage-based company said. Scott Air Force Base's 732 Air Mobility Squadron's contract administrator said the service supplements the U.S. Air Forces' transportation requirements to long range radar sites. "Security Aviation was awarded this contract because of our impeccable safety record and previous performance on military flights," Security President Stephen "Joe" Kapper said in a press release. The company, founded in 1985 by Mike O'Neill, operates five twin-engine aircraft, consisting of two piston engine, two pressurized turbo prop and one Citation II business jet. Security's customer base includes government agencies, oil and construction firms and Native corporations. It also provides medical transport. Pictured is a Security Aviation Conquest.

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Sincerely,

Kay Cashman, publisher

Petroleum News

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9. Full Names and Complete Mailing Addresses of Publisher, Editor, and Managing Editor (Do not leave blank)

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a. Total Number of Copies (Net press run)		2120	2050
b. Paid and/or Requested Circulation	(1) Paid/Requested Outside-County Mail Subscriptions Stated on Form 3541. (Include advertiser's proof and exchange copies)	657	651
	(2) Paid In-County Subscriptions Stated on Form 3541. (Include advertiser's proof and exchange copies)	690	671
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d. Free Distribution by Mail (Samples, complimentary, and other free)	(1) Outside-County as Stated on Form 3541	73	40
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17. Signature and Title of Editor, Publisher, Business Manager, or Owner

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Date
10/1/2003

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Website: www.seekins.com
Ford Lincoln Mercury dealer located in Fairbanks Alaska providing solutions to your transportation needs. Parts and service support in Fairbanks and Prudhoe Bay.

Vehicle Sales/Rental

Seekins Ford Lincoln Mercury
1625 Old Steese Hwy.
Fairbanks, AK 99701
Contact: Steven Angel, Fleet Sales Manager
Phone: (907) 459-4044
Fax: (907) 450-4007
Email: fleetsales@seekins.com
Website: www.seekins.com
Ford Lincoln Mercury dealer located in Fairbanks Alaska providing solutions to your transportation needs. Parts and service support in Fairbanks and Prudhoe Bay.

Tucker Sno-Cat

P.O. Box 1529
Medford, OR 97501
Contact: Dan Dressler or Gordon Duncan
Phone: (541) 779-3731
Fax: (541) 779-3735
Email: dan@sno-cat.com
Email: gordon@sno-cat.com
Website: www.sno-cat.com
Supplying Alaska for over 40 years with reliable oversnow transportation. Tundra approved, rubber tracked vehicles and trailers for 2-15 passengers and cargo.

Welding

Flowline Alaska

1881 Livengood
Fairbanks, AK 99701
Contact: Chris Johanssen
Phone: (907) 456-4911
Fax: (907) 456-1194
Flowline has three pipe insulation, fabrication, and coating facilities encompassing over 45,000 square feet of enclosed production area, on a 22 acre site in Fairbanks that offers substantial area for material handling and staging, and a dedicated rail spur.

Udelhoven Oilfield System Services

Anchorage office:
184 E. 53rd Ave.
Anchorage, AK 99518
Phone: (907) 344-1577
Fax: (907) 522-2541
Nikiski office:
P.O. Box 8349
Nikiski, AK 99635
Phone: (907) 776-5185
Fax: (907) 776-8105
Prudhoe office:
Pouch 340103
Prudhoe Bay, AK 99734
Phone: (907) 659-8093
Fax: (907) 659-8489
Serving Alaska for more than 25 years.

Weld Repairs/Manufacturing

GBR Equipment

6300 Petersburg St.
Anchorage, AK 99507
Contact: Bob Reynolds
Phone: (907) 563-3550
Fax: (907) 562-6468
Casing, mechanical and welding services, tire sales and repair, equipment and vehicle rental.

Natco Group

P.O. Box 850, Stn. T
Calgary, Alberta T2H2H3
Contact: Kevin Baird, Business Dev. Mgr.
Phone: (403) 203-2103
Fax: (403) 236-0488
Email: kevinb@natco.ab.ca
Website: www.natco.ab.ca
Natco Group engineers, designs and manufactures process, wellhead and water treatment equipment and systems used in the production of oil and gas worldwide.

Peak Oilfield Service

2525 C St., Ste. 201
Anchorage, AK 99503
Contact: Bill Stamps, Business

Development/Ex. Affairs
 Phone: (907) 263-7000
 Fax: (907) 263-7070
 Email: billstamps@peakalaska.com
 Web site: www.peakalaska.com
Alaska based general contractors.

STEELFAB

2132 Railroad Ave.
 Anchorage, AK 99501
 Contact: Janet Faulkner, Vice President
 Phone: (907) 264-2819
 Fax: (907) 276-3448
 Email: jfaulkner@steelbak.com
STEELFAB is the largest Alaskan-owned steel service center in the state. It provides pressure vessels, modules, special design items and raw steel products.

Unique Machine

5839 Old Seward Hwy
 Anchorage, AK 99518
 Contact: Pat Hanley, COO
 Phone: (907) 563-3012
 Fax: (907) 562-1376
 Email: office@uniquemachineinc.com
 Website: www.uniquemachineinc.com
The design, development, manufacture and distribution of oilfield construction, mining, fishing and government parts to industry quality standards.

Wire Rope

Arctic Wire Rope & Supply

6407 Arctic Spur Rd.
 Anchorage, AK 99518
 Contact: Jill Reeves
 Phone: (907) 562-0707
 Fax: (907) 562-2426
 Email: awrs@customcpu.com
 Web site: www.arcticwirerope.com
Arctic Wire Rope & Supply is Alaska's largest and most complete rigging supply source. We specialize in custom sling fabrication (wire rope, web, chain, and polyester round.)

OIL COMPANIES

Operators

ConocoPhillips Alaska

700 G St.
 P.O. Box 100360
 Anchorage, AK 99510-0360
 Contact: Kevin O. Meyers, president & CEO
 Phone: (907) 265-6134
 Fax: (907) 265-1502

Evergreen Resources Alaska

P.O. Box 871845
 1075 Check St., Ste. 202
 Wasilla, AK 99687
 Contact: John Tanigawa, Alaska project mgr.
 Phone: (907) 357-8130
 Cell: (907) 841-0000
 Fax: (907) 357-8340
 Email: JohnT@EvergreenGas.com
 Website: www.EvergreenGas.com
Evergreen Resources Alaska, a wholly owned subsidiary of Evergreen Resources Inc. (NYSE:EVG), is an independent energy company specializing in exploration and development of unconventional natural gas.

Forest Oil

310 K St., Ste. 700
 Anchorage, AK 99501
 Contact: Nancy Culverhouse
 Phone: (907) 258-8600
 Fax: (907) 258-8601
 Web site: www.forestoil.com
Forest Oil Corporation is a growing independent exploration and production company focusing on investment opportunities in Alaska, Canada, western U.S., Mexico and unique international prospects.

Marathon Oil

3201 C St., Ste 800

NAC adds large-door cargo aircraft



COURTESY NORTHERN AIR CARGO

Northern Air Cargo has acquired an ATR 42-300 aircraft, a twin-engine high-wing turboprop aircraft capable of operating economically in rural areas with 4,000-foot runways. The company said in early October that the converted passenger plane, with a cargo capacity of 11,500 pounds, features a large cargo door for effective handling of LD3 containers, 108-inch by 88-inch flat and bulk loads. "We are very excited about the flexibility of this aircraft. It's a perfect fit for our route system," said Bill Fowler, president of Northern Air Cargo Inc. "Its unique design and operating characteristics allow us to increase frequency of service to our mainline communities." Northern Air Cargo serves 18 Alaska communities with scheduled all-cargo service from Anchorage and Fairbanks.

Anchorage, AK 99503
 Contact: John A. Barnes, regional mgr.
 Phone: (907) 561-5311
 Fax: (907) 564-6489
 Website: www.marathon.com

Unocal Alaska

909 W. 9th Ave.
 Anchorage, AK 99501
 Contact: Roxanne Sinz
 Phone: (907) 263-7623
 Fax: (907) 263-7693
 Email: rsinz@unocal.com
Over 100 years ago Unocal came to Alaska to sell petroleum in the territory. By 1939, the company had geological teams in Southcentral Alaska who helped discover the Swanson River oil field in 1957 and then the first gas field

a year later. Today Unocal is the largest operator in Cook Inlet, operating 10 of the 16 platforms, 6 of 11 producing gas fields and several onshore facilities.

XTO Energy

810 Houston St., Ste. 2000
 Fort Worth, TX 76102
 Contact: Vaughn O. Vennerberg, II
 Phone: (817) 870-2800
 Fax: (817) 870-0379
 Other Office: XTO Energy, 52260 Shell Road, Kenai, AK 99611, Doug Marshall, Production Superintendent
XTO Energy, established in 1986, is engaged in the acquisition and development of quality, long-lived producing oil and gas properties and exploration for oil and gas.



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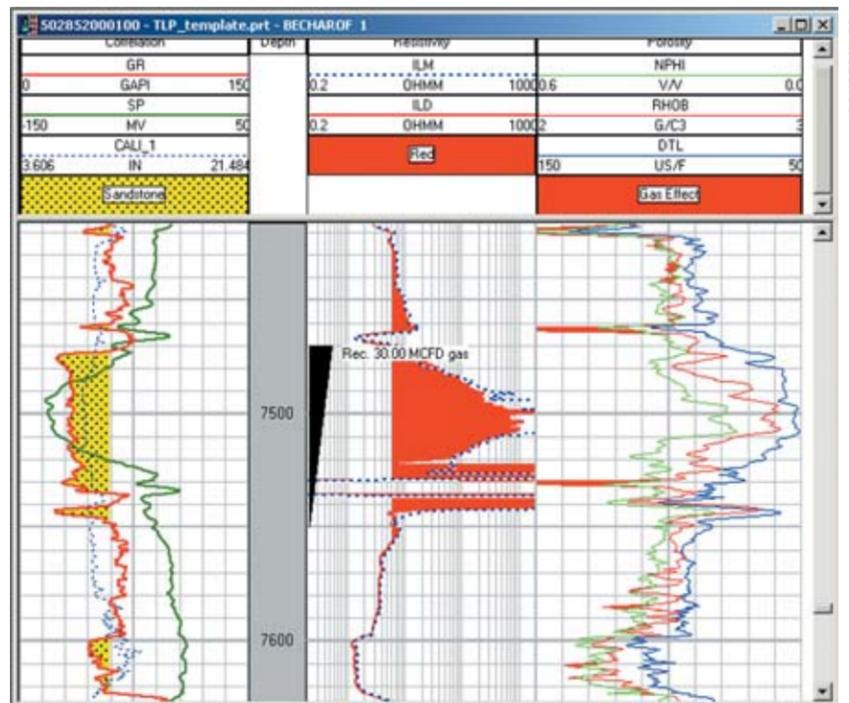
ERIK BRAUND

Well Safe Alaska Service Coordinator Bob Pettit, District Manager Ken Carroll and Medical Coordinator Bob Brister display a poisonous gas warning sign. In the background are two Bauer compressors, equipped with automatic kill-fill switches to maintain constant Grade D safe breathing air.

COURTESY PRA



Above, Chantal Walsh, petroleum engineer, and Bill Bredar, geologist/project manager confer on PRA project. At right, a well log digital data base — PRA has the entire catalog of digitally available well data for Alaska. The data is used for in-house projects and is available for sale through PRA.



COURTESY PRA



A Well Safe emergency self-contained breathing apparatus, suitable for immediate escape from hazardous conditions.