

February 12, 2020



**Re: Your request for access to information under Part II of the *Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act* (File # NR-37-2020)**

---

On February 4, 2020, the Department of Natural Resources received your request for access to the following records/information:

**December 2019 Information Note titled 2020 Exploration Drilling Forecast.**

I am pleased to inform you that a decision has been made by the Department of Natural Resources, confirmed by the Deputy Minister, to provide access to the requested record. The responsive record is attached.

As set out in section 42 of the Act you may ask the Information and Privacy Commissioner to review the department's decision to provide access to the requested information. A request to the Commissioner must be made in writing within 15 business days of the date of this letter or within a longer period that may be allowed by the Commissioner. Your request should identify your concerns with the department's response and why you are requesting a review.

The request for review may be addressed to the Information and Privacy Commissioner is as follows:

Office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner  
2 Canada Drive  
P.O. Box 13004, Stn. A  
St. John's, NL. A1B 3V8

Telephone: (709) 729-6309  
Toll-Free: 1-877-729-6309  
Facsimile: (709) 729-6500

Pursuant to section 52 of the Act, you may also appeal directly to the Supreme Court Trial Division within 15 business days after receiving the department's decision.

Please be advised that responsive records will be published following a 72 hour period after the response is sent electronically to you or five business days in the case where records are mailed to you. It is the goal to have the responsive records posted to the Completed Access to Information Requests website within one business day following the applicable period of time. Please note that requests for personal information will not be posted online.

For further details about how an access to information request is processed, please refer to the Access to Information Policy and Procedures Manual at <http://www.atipp.gov.nl.ca/info/index.html>.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at 709-729-0463 or [rhynes@gov.nl.ca](mailto:rhynes@gov.nl.ca).

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Rod Hynes".

Rod Hynes  
ATIPP Coordinator

**Information Note**  
**Department of Natural Resources**

**Title:** 2020 Exploration Drilling Forecast

**Issue:** To inform on how many exploration wells could be drilled in 2020

**Background and Current Status:**

- As part of Advance 2030 that was announced in February 2018, the Province aims for 100 exploration wells to be drilled by 2030. In 2019, two exploration wells were spud: Tiger’s Eye D-17 in the Jeanne d’Arc region, and Harp L-42A in the Flemish Pass. In 2018, one exploration well was drilled: White Rose A-24 in the Jeanne d’Arc region. In 2017, two exploration wells were drilled: Portugal Cove E-38 and Bonaventure O-96 in the Flemish Pass.
- Prior to drilling an exploration well on an exploration licence (EL) in NL’s Offshore Area, companies need to file an environmental assessment (EA). Prior to August 2019, proponents would file with the Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency (CEAA) to comply with the Canadian Environmental Assessment Act 2012 (CEAA 2012). In August 2019, Bill C-69 was passed and replaces the CEAA 2012 with the Impact Assessment Act (IAA).
- Three projects have been approved under CEAA 2012:
  - Equinor Flemish Pass Exploration Drilling: a maximum of 24 wells by 2027 on 4 ELs.
  - ExxonMobil Eastern Newfoundland Exploration Drilling: a maximum of 18 wells by 2029 on 3 ELs. ExxonMobil is in the process of drilling one of these wells, Harp L-42.
  - CNOOC Flemish Pass Exploration Drilling: a maximum of 10 wells by 2028 on 2 ELs.
- Upon EA approval, companies then must secure a rig to drill the well(s). The contracted rigs must be mobilized to the region and undergo the Rig Intake process with the C-NLOPB. The Rig Intake process is estimated to take 12-18 months.

**Analysis:**

- The drilling of exploration wells is contingent on EA approval. CEAA approvals average 967 days from filing date (or 909 days from EA commencement date). This is based on CNOOC, Equinor and ExxonMobil’s EAs that have been approved.
- Four to eight exploration wells are forecast to be drilled offshore NL in 2020, all in the Flemish Pass Basin. This forecast is based on press releases, CEAA EA approval, and Request for Proposals for remote-operated vehicle site surveys, which are typically acquired in the year leading up to a well being drilled. For a breakdown, see Table 1.

Company	Possible Number of Wells	ELs	EA approved? Potential approval date	Rig
CNOOC	1-3	1144, 1150	Yes	Stena Icemax
Equinor	1-3	1126, 1139, 1140, 1141, 1142	Yes	Transocean Barents
ExxonMobil	2	1134, 1135	Yes	West Aquarius

**Table 1.** Forecasted exploration drilling for 2020.

**Action Being Taken:**

- This note is for information purposes only.

**Prepared/Approved by:** A. Krakowka / J. Petrovic  
**FOR DIVISIONAL USE ONLY:**

December 18, 2019