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Seismic on Lakes in Alberta continues to be one of the most frustrating issues for our Industry these days. We continue to work with Alberta Sustainable Resource Development (SRD) in hopes of creating solutions for some or all of the varying degrees of sensitivities. Water bodies have been separated in social and resource sensitivities.

This process is to give:

1. A consistent approach to applying for exploration programs on water bodies within Alberta
2. Direction as to what is expected when applying for exploration programs on waterbodies within Alberta
3. SRD flexibility to move waterbodies up or down within the sensitivity categories
4. SRD flexibility to add additional conditions to the letter of approval
5. The ability for SRD to respond to public inquiries on programs being applied for or approved on water bodies within Alberta.

Social sensitivity may include boating, fishing, swimming, camping facilities, adjacent recreational property, etc. Resource sensitivities may include recreational or sport fishing, commercial fishing, spawning, fishbearing, wildlife use, etc. Water bodies will vary in sensitivity and will increase or decrease depending upon the situation. e.g. a slough would have a lower sensitivity in social and resource values than highly used recreational lakes. Therefore, requirements will vary regarding public involvement, application and operations for proposed seismic programs on water bodies based on the social and resource sensitivities.

Engaging the public could range from public information sessions to public involvement. Public information sessions are, at the very least, an open house that explains various operational aspects and mitigative measures of the program. Public involvement could include presentations by the applicant, a question and answer forum and information booths. This is the program licensee's initiative prior to application; therefore SRD would not be involved. Industry is encouraged to utilize the Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers "Guide for Effective Public Involvement" (see Enform for training) to plan public involvement.

**Water bodies that are generally considered to have a low sensitivity are water bodies that have:**

- No recreational use;
- No adjacent recreational properties;
- No to little developed access;
- Are non fishbearing as per the Fisheries Act; and
- Usually frozen to bottom during winter months.

**Water bodies that are considered to have an intermediate sensitivity are water bodies that have:**

- Fishbearing (may have sport fish at certain times of the year)
- No-recreational use;

- No adjacent recreational properties;
- No to little developed access;
- May have sensitive species – wildlife and/or vegetation

**Water bodies that are considered to have a high sensitivity are water bodies that have:**

- May or may not have recreational use (e.g. swimming, boating, etc.);
- May or may not have recreational facilities (e.g. public beach, camping, etc.);
- May or may not have adjacent recreational property;
- Aboriginal use, commercial and/or recreation fishing;
- Aquatic and non-aquatic Species At Risk (federal and provincial);
- NAWMP key water bodies;
- Wildlife use (i.e. colonial nesters);
- Stock and population status (low or threatened);

Prior to application and depending upon the level of sensitivity the company would verify if the water body is fishbearing; determine the occurrence of and what fish species inhabit the waterbody and identify any hearing specialist species; hypothesize impacts to aquatic species, sensitive or threatened populations; conduct benthic invertebrate sampling before and after the seismic program; and hold and complete public involvement sessions with local residents utilizing accepted guidelines (for example, the Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers “Guide for Effective Public Involvement”).

It is likely that the time, effort and economics involved would increase as the sensitivity level increased. The Government would reserve the right to change the proposed level of sensitivity and as well would likely increase the amount of operational conditions as the sensitivity level increased.

At this time there is nothing in stone as these high level concepts must be pushed to higher levels within the Government for the test of political will. Companies are currently able to conduct programs on surface waters in Alberta that are non-fish bearing. Industry hopes that areas noted as “intermediate” will lend themselves to a process whereby we can once again conduct seismic programs. It is difficult to say whether high sensitivity areas will have seismic programs on them in any near future. Even if a process is agreed to for such areas, suffice it to say that much time, effort and money will be required to actually complete it.

Section 50 of the Mines and Minerals Act provides Geophysical programs with the utmost level of confidentiality. This has been eroded over time in practice as we provide more and more information to various groups (i.e. Aboriginal Consultation). Certainly public forums for Lake Seismic are another step down the slippery slope. However the intent many years ago was to protect the competitive nature of the industry and enhance bid amounts for land sales. Over the years we have clearly separated ourselves from Energy (and the rest of Oil and Gas) by being regulated by SRD and staying away from specifying activities that may come later. The line of separation is fading rapidly.

From the Thursday Files

*Success consists of going from failure to failure without loss of enthusiasm.*  
**-Winston Churchill**