



# **Navigating NEPA**

## **An Oil and Gas Exploration and Production-Focused Training Program**



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# Project Details

- **Funding provided by the U.S. Department of Energy's National Energy Technology Laboratory (NETL) in Tulsa, Oklahoma**
- **NETL's O&G Environmental Program objective is to encourage domestic production from federal land or mineral estate while at the same time improving environmental protection**
- **This project has been performed as part of the larger Federal Lands Access Project**



# Project Purpose

- **To develop an oil and gas industry-focused training program addressing the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1970**
- **NEPA is the fundamental environmental policy in the United States addressing environmental impacts resulting from federal actions – such as drilling for oil or gas on federal land or mineral estate**



# Project Contributors and Cooperators

- **Lead Researchers**
  - Interstate Oil & Gas Compact Commission
  - ALL Consulting
- **Project Advisory Council States (PAC)**
  - Alaska Dept. of Natural Resources
  - Alaska Oil and Gas Conservation Commission
  - Montana Board of Oil & Gas Conservation
  - Wyoming Oil and Gas Conservation Commission
- **Federal Agencies**
  - Bureau of Land Management
  - Forest Service
- **IOGCC Public Lands Committee (PLC)**



# **Navigating NEPA Presentation Overview**

**This presentation will address the following elements:**

- **Demonstration of the need for an oil and gas-focused NEPA training program**
- **A brief overview of the project:**
  - Goals
  - Target audience
  - Deliverables
  - Schedule



# Navigating NEPA Presentation Overview

- **What is unique about NEPA as it affects oil and gas?**
- **A brief overview of what the NEPA training program covers.**



# **Navigating NEPA**

## **Demonstration of Need**

- **Existing training programs covering generic NEPA issues already exist – e.g.: The Shipley Group**
- **Until now, oil and gas-focused NEPA training was not available**
- **Oil and gas exploration and production activities have unique aspects when it comes to NEPA**





# Navigating NEPA Project Goals

- To educate NEPA stakeholders about the unique requirements for oil and natural gas exploration and production on federal lands or mineral estate.
- To form a basis of uniform criteria and principles regarding NEPA processes for oil and natural gas exploration and production on federal lands or mineral estate.



# Navigating NEPA Project Goals

- To facilitate cooperation, collaboration, and communication between stakeholders in the NEPA process.
- To form a basis for continued future planning and communications.



# Navigating NEPA Training Program Elements

- **Intended audience**
  - Junior-level practitioners with limited prior NEPA or oil and gas experience
  - Federal, state, and industry personnel
- **One-day seminar – project deliverables**
  - Seminar presentation
  - Handbook to supplement the presentation



# **Navigating NEPA**

## **Project Overview & Schedule**

- **Task 1 - conceptual plan roll-out presentation at IOGCC's Mid-Year Meeting in Calgary – May 2008**
  - There we solicited input regarding aspects of NEPA relevant to oil and gas operations
- **Task 2 - preparation of technical content for the seminar and handbook**



# **Navigating NEPA Project Overview & Schedule**

- **Task 3 – presentation of a final full-scale training seminar following IOGCC’s Annual Meeting in Santa Fe – November 19, 2008**
- **Opportunities for subsequent training sessions**



# What's Unique to Oil and Gas?

Oil and gas exploration and production involves some atypical or unique NEPA circumstances such as:

- **Programmatic nature of federal lands or minerals development**
  - Management of large tracts of land using broad-based evaluation and guidance
  - Superimposed site-specific environmental impact evaluation



# What's Unique to Oil and Gas?

- **Produced water impact to watersheds**
- **Wildlife issues**
  - Habitat fragmentation
  - Population dynamics – cause and effect



# What's Unique to Oil and Gas?

- Adaptive management approach
- Public involvement
- Input from the PAC/PLC and IOGCC membership was requested using surveys to identify additional items of interest





# Overview of Seminar Presentation

- **Introduction to the fundamentals of NEPA and its applicability to oil and gas exploration and production activities**
- **NEPA is a tiered multiple land use planning process including:**
  - **Categorical Exclusions**
    - **Types and applicability**



# Overview of Seminar Presentation

- Environmental Assessments
  - Finding of No Significant Impact
- Environmental Impact Statements
  - Affected environment
  - Alternatives development
  - Environmental consequences of alternatives
  - Record of Decision
- **Use of Adaptive Management**



# Overview of Seminar Presentation

- **Guidance on selecting the appropriate NEPA document to prepare:**
  - Categorical Exclusion
  - Environmental Assessment
  - Environmental Impact Statement



# Overview of Seminar Presentation NEPA Process

- **Guidance on the NEPA process including:**
  - Programmatic vs. project-specific approach
  - Scoping
  - Tiering off of pre-existing documents
  - Supplemental documents



# Overview of Seminar Presentation NEPA Process

- Impact analysis
- Use of required mitigation measures
- Public participation
- Roles and responsibilities: agencies, companies



# Overview of Seminar Presentation Issues

- “Hot-buttons”
- **Public comment – substantive vs. opinion**
  - How to formulate a substantive comment



# Overview of Handbook

**Handbook parallels the seminar presentation:**

- **Presentation content – slides**
- **Supplemental content – expanded text to illustrate specific issues**



# Santa Fe Seminar

**Presentation on November 19, 2008 in Santa Fe will have a slightly different approach:**

- **Bob Hargrove of U.S. EPA will present an introduction to NEPA**
- **Followed by a panel discussion of oil and gas NEPA issues**





# Where do we go from here?

- **Future sessions of this seminar**
- **Future development of additional seminars**
  - Potential issue-focused seminars
    - O&G use of categorical exclusions
    - Adaptive management as a developmental tool



# Contact Information

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