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)
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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.
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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
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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.
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Project Goals

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