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BOEMRE Implements Changes to Improve Efficiency of Permit Review Process

Issues Permit Review Checklist to Ensure Submission of Complete Applications

WASHINGTON – Bureau of Ocean Energy Management, Regulation and Enforcement (BOEMRE) Director Michael R. Bromwich today announced that the bureau is putting in place significant improvements in the oil and gas permit application process. These improvements include the publication of a permit application checklist to assist offshore oil and gas operators in submitting complete applications to drill; the implementation of completeness checks by BOEMRE personnel before significant staff time is spent reviewing the application; and the development of clear permit review priorities that will expedite agency reviews.

“We are constantly looking for ways to create a smarter, more efficient, and more transparent permit review process,” said Director Bromwich. “Our goal is to make the process of submitting permit applications easier, reduce the time it takes to review permits and improve BOEMRE’s communication with operators during the permit review process. We will continue to search for additional ways to improve our processes without in any way modifying or relaxing the more stringent safety and environmental rules we have implemented over the past year.”

Key improvements that are being implemented include:

- The publication of a “completeness” checklist for offshore oil and gas operators. This high-level checklist, which aligns with BOEMRE’s review process, includes the main components that need to be submitted by operators to make a permit application complete. This checklist does not ensure approval of an application, but will clarify for operators what is needed in their submission. The development of the checklist comes after multiple meetings with operators who have requested such additional guidance. The checklist can be viewed at: <http://www.boemre.gov/ooc/PDFs/APDSubmissionChecklistFINAL.pdf>.
- To improve the efficiency of the review process and reduce the number of permits returned to operators because of incomplete information, BOEMRE personnel will conduct completeness checks before beginning an in-depth, substantive review of the application. Bureau personnel will focus on identifying significant omissions during the initial review so as to quickly identify applications that are not ready for full review. Deficiencies and omissions will be communicated to the operator for correction at the same time. This does not guarantee that incomplete information will not be found later in the review, but the completeness check is designed to capture the major gaps in submission criteria early in the review process.
- In an effort to ensure efficiency, permits found to be complete will have a higher priority in the review process. The bureau has established priorities for reviewing permit applications as follows:

- Permits for ongoing operations, such as sidetracks or deeper exploration of an existing well;
- Applications deemed complete; and
- If staff time allows, applications that are not deemed complete, such as those missing a required containment plan or the necessary professional engineer certifications, may begin to be processed. This category also includes permit applications without an approved exploration or development plan.

BOEMRE has already approved 43 deepwater permits for 15 unique wells that require subsea containment since an applicant first successfully demonstrated containment capabilities in mid-February. There are currently 24 permits pending and 18 permits have been returned to the operator with requests for additional information, particularly information regarding containment. The changes announced today should over time substantially reduce the number of permits that need to be returned to operators.

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