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BOEMRE Continues Focus on Improved Efficiency of Plan and Permit Review Process

Holds Technical Permitting Workshop for More Than 200 Industry Personnel

WASHINGTON – Bureau of Ocean Energy Management, Regulation and Enforcement (BOEMRE) Director Michael R. Bromwich today announced that the bureau has developed and implemented several new tools to help offshore oil and gas operators improve their exploration and development plan and permit applications. These tools will allow offshore operators to better track their submissions and improve the quality and completeness of their applications, which will decrease processing delays.

“We continue to meet with operators individually and in large groups on a frequent basis. We take very seriously requests for additional information and additional clarity regarding our plan and permit review process. Recently, we have been asked to identify the most common errors and the most frequently-encountered reasons for plan and permit applications to be returned to operators,” said Director Bromwich. “Our goal is to reduce the amount of back and forth with plan and permit applications and to help the industry learn from the best practices that many operators have developed to submit successful applications. That will result in higher quality applications in the first instance and reduce the need for them to be returned to operators. We will continue to search for additional ways to improve our own processes and make them more efficient, without in any way modifying or relaxing the more stringent safety and environmental rules we have implemented over the past year.”

For a complete list of BOEMRE's reforms to date, go to:
<http://boemre.gov/ReorganizationRegulatoryReform.htm>

With respect to permits, BOEMRE has added a new feature to its online application system (eWells), which allows authorized users to track the status of permit applications. This allows operators to follow where their application is in the processing system. This increases transparency and provides greater predictability for operators.

With respect to plans, BOEMRE has announced a new online resource to help operators improve the accuracy of their exploration plan (EP) and development operation coordination document (DOCD) submissions. The website offers fact sheets and documents to assist offshore operators in submitting complete applications, which will decrease processing delays. Guidance includes a fact sheet that offers information on how operators can submit stronger applications, frequently asked questions on the specific elements of a successful submission, and a new EP/DOCD checklist that can be used to ensure the inclusion of needed information in an operator's application. The page is online at: <http://www.gomr.boemre.gov/homepg/plans/index.html>.

Today's announcements were shared with more than 200 offshore industry personnel at a workshop held by BOEMRE in its Gulf of Mexico Regional office. The full-day workshop includes a discussion of common errors and omissions found in the submission of permit applications, and overviews and updates on sub-sea containment and the bureau's well screening tool. One highlight will be an industry panel that will discuss proven methods and strategies for the completion of fully compliant permit applications focusing on the well screening tool, a critical aspect of the sub-sea containment

requirements which is most often a cause of returned permit applications.

These improvements in the permit and plan review process are consistent with other reforms in the process that have recently been implemented. In early June, BOEMRE announced specific improvements to the permit application and review process, including the publication of a permit application checklist to assist offshore oil and gas operators in submitting complete applications to drill. The bureau also implemented a requirement that BOEMRE personnel conduct completeness checks before beginning an in-depth, substantive review of the application. This allows staff to capture the major gaps in the submission early in the review process. In addition, we developed clear permit review priorities that will expedite our review. For more information, go to: <http://www.boemre.gov/oc/press/2011/press0603.htm>.

BOEMRE has approved 113 deepwater permits for 34 unique wells that require subsea containment since an applicant first successfully demonstrated containment capabilities in mid-February. There are currently 17 permits pending and 22 permits have been returned to the operator with requests for additional information, particularly information regarding containment. Additionally, BOEMRE has approved 45 permits for activities including water injection wells and procedures using surface blowout preventers. Only 1 of these permits is pending and 1 permit has been returned to the operator for additional information.

BOEMRE has also approved 69 new shallow water well permits have been issued since the implementation of new safety and environmental standards on June 8, 2010. Permits have averaged more than 7 per month since fall 2010, compared to an average of 8 permits per month in 2009. Just 13 of these permits are currently pending; with 10 having been returned to the operator for more information.

For more information on permit approvals, go to:

http://www.gomr.boemre.gov/homepg/offshore/safety/well_permits.html

For more information on plan approvals, go to:

http://www.gomr.boemre.gov/homepg/offshore/safety/well_plans.html

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