



Environmental
Studies
Research
Funds

UPDATE
UPDATE

HIGHLIGHTS OF ITEMS IN THIS ISSUE:

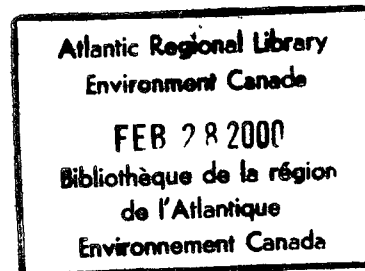
- ⇒ ESRF Background
- ⇒ The 1999 study program
- ⇒ The 2000 study program
- ⇒ Unsolicited proposals are generally not considered by the ESRF, however unique proposals may be funded under exceptional circumstances
- ⇒ To date ESRF has published 135 Technical Reports
- ⇒ ESRF Management Board

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ESRF Background

The Environmental Studies Research Funds (ESRF) is a research program which sponsors environmental and social studies designed to assist government/regulatory decision-making related to oil & gas exploration and development on Canada's frontier lands. The ESRF program receives its legislated mandate through the Canada Petroleum Resources Act (CPRA). The ESRF is directed by a joint government-industry-public Management Board and is administered by a small secretariat, which resides within the National Energy Board office in Calgary, Alberta. Funds to undertake the studies are raised by a levy on active oil and gas licences in the 31 regions defined under the ESRF Regions Regulation.

An Annual Report for ESRF is published each spring. Included in this report is a list of published ESRF reports. These reports are distributed to oil and gas companies, universities, federal, provincial and territorial government libraries, and research institutes.

ESRF is Active Again

The Environmental Studies Research Funds (ESRF) Management Board has been extremely active since May 1998. At that meeting, the Management Board agreed that ESRF should come off its hiatus, as there was increased frontier activity in the oil and gas industry. Since that initial meeting, the Management Board has met to develop and initiate the 1999 and 2000 study program and to prepare the budgets and levies which were approved by the Ministers of Natural Resources and Indian and Northern Affairs. In January 1999, Bonnie J. Gray of the National Energy Board was selected as Chair of the Board with Ian Scott of the Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers selected as Vice-Chair. The current list of members is included in Section 6.0.

The philosophy of the ESRF Management Board is to take a hands on approach to the conduct of ESRF business. On behalf of the Ministers, the Board sets ESRF priorities and facilitates the development of study proposals. The program operates on a calendar year basis with meetings in winter to assess information requirements of government and industry as well as to determine program priorities. In the spring, the Management Board develops the study program, which is finalized by late summer. A proposed budget and levy recommendation is determined and forwarded to the Ministers for their approval by November 1, with the call for proposals following early in the new year.

The day to day operation of the ESRF is overseen by a Secretariat within the National Energy Board. The Secretariat is responsible for the management of all ESRF studies in conjunction with scientific advisors; the financial control of the program; the peer review and publication program; and communication matters. Presently, the Coordinator of the ESRF is Ms. Kym Hopper-Smith.

Solicited and Unsolicited Proposals

The ESRF is a focused program dealing exclusively with environmental and social research related to oil & gas exploration and development on Canada's frontier lands. Each year the ESRF Management Board initiates the budget/planning process by determining priority subject areas within which study proposals will be considered. Following Ministerial approval of the study programs and budget, a competitive bidding process is implemented to solicit specific proposals on clearly defined priority subjects. In general, unsolicited proposals are not encouraged by the Board; however, in exceptional circumstances a research proposal which does not address any published priority area, but which is considered relevant, may be accepted by the Board. Unsolicited proposals may be sent to the Chair or any other member of the ESRF Management Board.

1999 Study Program

Below is a list of the studies that comprised the 1999 program. We are currently in the process of issuing Requests for Proposals for these studies by invitation. As well, the RFPs are posted on the following 2 websites: <http://www.cnsopb.ns.ca> and <http://www.cnopb.nfnet.com>.

Effects of Seismic Exploration on the East Coast Fishery

This project will monitor and assess the effects of an operating seismic program on the Atlantic herring and groundfish fisheries. The study will examine: 1) disturbance effects on herring and groundfish and associated effects on both fisheries, and 2) physical effects on herring. This project will be a multi-year commitment.

Practical Considerations for Cumulative Effects Monitoring and Assessment in Eastern Canadian Offshore Areas

The project will evaluate the applicability of cumulative environmental effects assessment (CEA) and monitoring theory and practice to offshore petroleum development on the East Coast of Canada. Using the particular example of the northeast Grand Banks, it will recommend practical, scientifically defensible approaches to the identification and evaluation of the significance of cumulative effects based on consideration of realistic environmental conditions and development scenarios. This project will be a multi-year commitment.

Coastal Resource Inventory - Great Northern Peninsula (North Head, Bay of Islands to Cap Bauld)

This project complements other resource inventory projects undertaken by ESRF in the past. However, in addition to identification of shoreline types and features, it will provide detailed segment-specific options, strategies and recommendations for protection, treatment and clean-up. The database contains 143 attributes for each of the roughly 8,000-shoreline segments in the Atlantic Region. The existing environmental sensitivities included at this stage for the west coast of Newfoundland are only those identified in previous atlases and the information is sparse and dated. The products would include both digital and hard copy atlases.

2000 Study Program

Currently there are 2 new studies proposed for 2000 as well as 2 continuing projects. The continuing study programs are the *Effects of Seismic Exploration on the East Coast Fishery* and *Practical Considerations for Cumulative Effects Monitoring and Assessment in Eastern Canadian Offshore Areas* as outlined above: The 2 new proposals are:

Seabird Monitoring

The 1999 seabird monitoring feasibility studies were undertaken by industry. This proposal asks the Management Board to set aside a maximum of \$30K of ESRF funds as a contribution to other funds from Environment Canada for continuation of the work. The final study report will be available by year-end.

Identification of Sensitive Areas and Environmental Constraints to Oil and Gas Exploration in the Southern Gulf of St. Lawrence

This project will identify sensitive areas and important fishing grounds in the Southern Gulf of St. Lawrence. This information will be packaged into a single reference document, which will be used for subsequent environmental assessments of seismic, exploration drilling, and production activities.

ESRF Publications

Reports on all ESRF studies are submitted to peer review to ensure that the research is conducted in a credible, scientifically defensible manner. Those reports accepted are published in the ESRF Technical Report Series. Since its inception, the ESRF has published 135 reports. A list of publications is available from the Secretariat.

Ms. Kym Hopper-Smith
Coordinator, ESRF Secretariat
National Energy Board
444 Seventh Avenue S.E.
Calgary, Alberta
T2P 0X8

ESRF Management Board

Bonnie J. Gray (Chair)
National Energy Board
Calgary, Alberta
403-299-3675

Earl M. Johnson (Executive Member)
Public Member – South
North Harbour, Newfoundland
709-549-2289

Frank T'Seleie
Public Member – North
Fort Good Hope, NWT
705-760-9179

Hiram Beaubier
Department of Indian Affairs
and Northern Development
Ottawa, Ontario
819-997-9381

Peter Blackall
Environment Canada
Edmonton, Alberta
780-951-8862

Ronald Pierce (Observer)
Fisheries and Oceans Canada
Ottawa, Ontario
613-998-4361

Ian Scott (Vice-chair)
Canadian Association of
Petroleum Producers
Calgary, Alberta
403-267-1132

Robert H. Harper
Mobil Oil Canada
Calgary, Alberta
403-260-7614

C.W. (Cal) Ross
Sable Offshore Energy Incorporated
Halifax, Nova Scotia
902-387-3031

David G. Taylor
Hibernia Management and
Development Co. Ltd.,
St. John's, Newfoundland
709-778-7366

Andy Parker
Canada-Nova Scotia Offshore
Petroleum Board
Halifax, Nova Scotia
902-422-5588

David Burley
Canada-Newfoundland Offshore
Petroleum Board
St. John's, Newfoundland
709- 778-1403

