



June 9th, 2011

Ms. Christy Wickenheiser
Environmental Specialist
National Energy Board
444 Seventh Avenue S.W.
Calgary, AB T2P 0X8

Reference: EIA-2D Seismic Survey – Baffin Bay/Davis Strait Offshore Project Registry reference # 10-01-53884

Dear Ms. Wickenheiser,

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Arctic Bay

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Grise Fiord

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Qikiqtarjuaq

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Resolute Bay

Arctic Fishery Alliance LP (AFA) consists of four hunters and trappers associations and four community trusts from the communities of Qikiqtarjuaq, Grise Fiord, Arctic Bay and Resolute Bay. The partnership was formed in 2008 and in 2010 it acquired a 100 foot factory-freezer fixed gear vessel (“Suvak”) to harvest its Greenland halibut (turbot) quotas in NAFO divisions 0B (510 tonnes) and 0A (950 tonnes). The vessel’s fishing activity takes place in NAFO divisions 0A and 0B off the coast of Baffin Island when ice conditions permit (generally starting mid-April for 0B and late July for 0A), and the vessel is currently fishing in division 0B at approx. 63° North, 58° West.

We have reviewed the EIA for this proposed seismic survey. While it appears to be a comprehensive document, we feel that it has certain shortcomings in the area of impact on the turbot fishery, which we would like to point out in the following paragraphs.

In Section 4.9.1 it is stated that “*Turbot catches in 2007 were near the survey area but were concentrated within extent of the land-fast ice and along the Canada-Greenland international boundary (figure 50); this represents the farthest extent of the survey. Interactions with this fishery are not expected to be significant.*” This statement is erroneous as it is based on old data from 2006-07. In the earlier years of the turbot fishery there was heavy concentration of catches around and within the Narwhal exclusion zone. Since then fishing in the exclusion zone has been banned, and the turbot fishery has expanded both south and more particularly north, with some vessels fishing as far north as Pond Inlet; however, the fixed gear fishery is generally concentrated closer to Qikiqtarjuaq.

In Section 5.2.7 it is admitted that “*The fixed gear (gill nets and long lines) of the turbot fishery poses the highest potential for*

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gear conflict if they are concurrent and co-location with seismic survey operations". There is reference in this section to "...compensation paid for determined losses" and "...mitigation plans to avoid active fishing areas..." together with the statement that "...the economic impacts on fishers would be negligible, and thus not significant". Section 5.2.12 deals with accidental damage to fishing gear and provision for compensation, including "...any additional financial loss that is demonstrated to be associated with the incident..."


While the focus in the above sections is on damage to fishing gear, it is our opinion that the greater impact will be the reduced catch rates in the turbot fishery immediately following the seismic survey. The fact that seismic discharges cause fish concentrations to scatter causing reduced catch rates is well documented in Norwegian and Canadian research studies. This fact gives us sound justification for our concerns. This will be evident from a combination of lower hauls to DFO or increased fishing effort in an attempt to compensate for lower catch rates. During the course of our fishery this year we will be documenting this information and will insist that the company responsible for the seismic survey be held accountable to provide appropriate compensation to the fishing industry.

Gill nets are usually left in the same location throughout the entire fishing season and are not relocated on a regular basis. Moving gear away from the path of a seismic ship requires considerable effort and loss of fishing time. It may take a week or more to relocate gear and then wait for further "soak time". Will, as is the case with mobile fishing gear, the seismic vessel be required to remain a certain distance from fixed gear? Gill nets take up considerable space on the ocean bottom. A "string" of 50 nets is about 5 kilometers long and each vessel may have from 5 to 10 strings in the water at any time for a total of 25 to 50 km of nets. There are currently 10 gill net vessels fishing in division 0B and there may be 4 to 6 gill net vessels fishing in division 0A during 2011.

Section 5.2.10 discusses communications with the fishing industry and refers to communications with fisheries organizations and notices on the CBC Radio's Fisheries Broadcast. While these measures may have been used for southern fisheries, they are not suitable or adequate for the Nunavut fishery. As there are only four quota holders in the offshore Nunavut fishery it would be more appropriate if they could each be placed on an email list for appropriate notices. Notices should include access to daily tracking location information on the seismic vessel so that the fishing fleet can follow the location of the seismic vessel and be informed in advance of its planned route.

It is our understanding that when the fishing industry has a claim for damages against any company involved in the oil industry it generally takes a long time for them to be compensated and this can have a negative impact on cash flow. We insist on a commitment that any claims be settled within 60 days from date of notice of claim.

Trusting the above comments are helpful and will be taken into account in the development and implementation of the proposed seismic survey.



Harry Earle
General Manager
Arctic Fishery Alliance L.P.