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The Environmental Studies Research Fund ANNUAL REPORT 2019 - 2020

Message from the Chair

I am very pleased, on behalf of the ESRF Management Board, to submit the Environmental Studies Research Fund (ESRF) 2019 - 2020 Annual Report.

Over this past year, the Fund has welcomed three new Board members and set new priority areas for future research related to the environment and social impacts of offshore oil and gas activities on Canada's frontier lands in the areas of the migratory behavior of Atlantic salmon, Indigenous Knowledge and seabirds.



Looking ahead to our upcoming year, the Management Board has concluded an open call for research targeted on Atlantic salmon migratory behaviour while at sea that will increase our understanding of possible interaction between this species and with offshore oil and gas activities on Canada's east coast. The Management Board looks forward to awarding research contract(s) this spring. In addition to the Atlantic salmon call for research we are also busy preparing future calls for proposals for new priority research areas.

The Fund's ongoing support of research in Canada's frontier lands would not be possible without the dedication of the ESRF Management Board Members and Secretariat. This year, I would specifically like to thank Eric Theriault (who has retired after many years representing the Canada-Nova Scotia Offshore Petroleum Board) and Robert Steedman (who has retired after many years representing the National Energy Board) for their service to the Board. Their insights over their years of service have contributed greatly to the program ongoing success. I would also like to welcome, Anastassia Manuilova, Dena Murphy and Vicki Sahanatien as new Members of the Management Board. They bring with them combined experience with the Canadian oil and gas industry, environmental management, regulatory and southern and northern issues.

In closing, best of luck to all researchers this field season and we look forward to discussing progress made and research findings.

Jennifer Matthews

Chairperson, ESRF Management Board

Matthews

May 27, 2020

Mandate

The Environmental Studies Research Fund (ESRF) is a research program that sponsors studies on environmental and social implications related to oil and gas exploration and development in Canada's frontier lands.

The information arising from these studies is designed to assist all involved stakeholders, including citizens, companies and government, in their decision-making related to oil and gas exploration and development.

Initiated in 1983 under the *Canada Oil and Gas Act* (COGA), the ESRF now receives its legislated mandate through the superseding legislation, the *Canadian Petroleum Resources Act* (CPRA), proclaimed in February 1987.

ESRF research is funded by levies on oil and gas companies that hold licenses for exploration and development in Canada's frontier lands.

The Minister of Natural Resources, is responsible for the administration of the ESRF South Account for regions mainly south of 60° latitude, including the Hudson Bay, and Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada, is responsible for the administration of the North Account for regions north of 60° (See Annex 1 for specific details).

The ESRF is directed by a twelve-member joint government/industry/public Management Board and is administered by a Secretariat that resides within the Office of Energy Research and Development of Natural Resources Canada.

FRONTIER LANDS

The Canada Petroleum

Resources Act "frontier lands"

definition was amended on

April 1, 2014, to include:

- (a) that part of the onshore that is under the administration of a federal minister,
- (b) Nunavut,
- (c) Sable Island,
- (d) the submarine areas in that part — of the internal waters of Canada or the territorial sea of Canada — that is not situated
 - (i) in a province other than the Northwest Territories, or
 - (ii) in that part of the onshore that is not under the administration of a federal minister, or
- (e) the continental shelf of Canada,

but does not include the adjoining area, as defined in section 2 of the *Yukon Act*.

ESRF Management Board Members

Private Sector

Jennifer Matthews, Chairperson
Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers

Marielle Thillet Encana Corporation

Stephen Bettles Husky Energy

Sherry Becker Imperial

Public Sector

Vicki Sahanatien Northern Regions

Philip Walsh Southern Regions

Government of Canada

Mark Hopkins / Daniel VanVliet Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada

Janine Murray
Environment and Climate Change Canada

Patrice Simon / Mike Stoneman Fisheries and Oceans Canada

Robert Steedman (Vice-Chairperson) / Anastassia Manuilova National Energy Board

Offshore Petroleum Boards

Elizabeth Young Canada-Newfoundland and Labrador Offshore Petroleum Board

Dena Murphy
Canada-Nova Scotia Offshore Petroleum Board

The ESRF Management Board members are selected for their expertise and specialized technical knowledge relative to the mandate of the Fund.

Members of the Management Board are appointed jointly by the Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs and the Minister of Natural Resources.

The ESRF Management Board directs the business of the Fund, sets priorities for study topics, determines the program budget and facilitates the development of study proposals.

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ESRF Research Priority Areas 2015-2020

The five research priority areas for the 2015-2020 funding cycle were:

North

- 1. Spill Preparedness and Response, Fate and Effects: to support marine safety by studying the fate and effects of accidental releases of petroleum and other hazardous substances in the Arctic marine environment and improve responses.
- 2. Regional Effects Assessment and Management: to support stakeholders in preparing and reviewing applications for oil and gas activities on themes including biophysical, socioeconomic, traditional knowledge and cumulative effects.

Atlantic Offshore

- 3. Seismic: to improve the understanding of the effects of seismic sound on commercial fish and invertebrates, as well as marine mammals and/or species at risk.
- 4. Oil and Gas Liquids Spill Fate and Effects: to support marine safety by studying the fate and effects of accidental releases of petroleum in the Newfoundland-Labrador and Nova Scotia Offshore Areas.
- 5. Atlantic salmon migration at sea.

Studies in 2019-2020

SOUTHERN REGIONS

Atlantic Salmon Migration at Sea (2020-01S). Arising from concerns raised by Indigenous groups in Eastern Canada during the Regional Environmental Assessment for Exploration Drilling this study will follow tagged Atlantic salmon (Salmo salar) along their East Coast migratory routes to determine the their presence in specific Canadian offshore regions. The outcomes will support the decision-making process for current and future offshore oil and gas activities by providing science-based information on Atlantic salmon migratory patterns at sea, especially in areas of offshore oil and gas activities in eastern Canada.

Assessment of Potential Risks of Seismic Surveys to Affect Ground fish Resources (2018-01S). Oil and gas exploration in Southern Atlantic frontier regions has been very active at a time when the fishing industry in this same area is becoming increasingly reliant on rebuilding the ground fish fishery. The effects of ocean noise on marine life is a growing concern globally, however the specific impacts including non-lethal effects and how they are manifested remains poorly defined for many species groups including fish. This project will examine potential risks of seismic air gun surveys to affect commercially important and culturally important ground fish species, including commercial catchability, and fish behaviour (i.e., movement).

Assessment of the Potential Risks of Seismic Surveys to Affect Snow Crab Resources (2014-015). The snow crab fishery is one of the highest landed value fisheries in the Newfoundland and Labrador region. Fishers have expressed concern over the potential for reduction in catch of snow crab in proximity to active seismic survey operations. This study aims to investigate potential effects of seismic exploration activity on commercial snow crab catch rates using scientific measures of changes in crab behavior (i.e. movement), commercial catchability, and physiological effects in response to seismic air gun operations. This study is completed. The ESRF report is being finalized and publications arising from the research are being submitted to peer-reviewed journals.

The ESRF has sponsored and published over 200 studies on oil and gas exploration and development on frontier lands, including such topics as:

- environmental effects
 on fish, bird and animal
 habits and habitats;
- iceberg detection and flow patterns;
- oil spill prevention and countermeasures;
- dispersant effectiveness in cold waters and ice;
- social and economic issues;
- improving accuracy of ocean and weather forecasting; and
- verification of codes and standards.

Reports can be accessed at: www.esrfunds.org/174

Investigation of Effects of East Coast Canada Water Accommodated Fraction and Chemically Enhanced Water Accommodated Fraction on Early Life Stages of Commercially Harvested Marine Species (2014-04S). The potential effects of exposure of commercial fish species to a crude oil spill and any dispersants used to mitigate the effects of such a spill are a concern. This study examines the toxicology of those fractions of a representative east coast crude oil that are entrained in water, both naturally and as a result of dispersant use, to the early life stages of Atlantic herring, Atlantic cod, American lobster and Northern shrimp. This study is completed. The ESRF report is being finalized and publications arising from the research are being submitted to peer-reviewed journals.

Development, Validation and Implementation of an Operational Ocean Forecasting System for the Grand Banks and Orphan Basin for Daily Operational Delivery at the Canadian Meteorological Centre (2013-03S). This report covers the development to implement a Canadian east coast operational coupled ocean and ice forecast system for the Grand Banks and Orphan Basin capable of ingesting the vast quantities of available operational satellite data and limited in-situ data for the region to provide reliable assessed and forecast currents any ocean depth. The operational forecast output is available for interested third parties to: run iceberg drift predictions; to run oil spill scenario tests; environmental characterization for environmental assessments, strategic planning and operations; and if ever needed to run oil spill drift and fate predictions for environmental response. Overall this project enables an increase in resolution of the ocean forecast model for the east coast along with improving initial conditions for the forecast system. The model output will increase the realism of drift prediction scenarios for the east coast of Canada. (ESRF Report # 213; Query report #213 at https://www.esrfunds.org/174)

NORTHERN REGIONS

Integrated Beaufort Observatory (2014-02N). This was a four-year mooring program aimed at contributing key oceanographic information required for decisions on development and regulations in the offshore Canadian Beaufort Sea. The project used a series of integrated state-of-the-art environmental technologies deployed on ocean moorings in the Beaufort Sea to enable systematic observation of the marine environment including ice and ocean conditions. The project built upon time-series acquired by Fisheries and Oceans Canada since the 1970's and a number of other related projects that took place between 2002-2015. Key observations derived from the project can be found in ESRF Report #218. Data from the program is also available publicly through the Polar Data Catalogue. (Query report #218 at https://www.esrfunds.org/174)

Financial Statements

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION

The ESRF Management Board is responsible for the presentation of the annual financial statements to the Ministers of Natural Resources and Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs pursuant to the *Canada Petroleum Resources Act*.

Levies are collected from oil and gas companies that hold licenses for exploration and development in Canada's frontier lands. In accordance with the *Canada Petroleum Resources Act*, when a license is issued during the course of the year, levies are collected for the current year and the two years prior. The collection of unpaid levies is pursued on an ongoing basis by the ESRF Secretariat.

Table 1 below shows the fiscal information for the annual expenditures for ESRF in the 2019-20 fiscal year. All expenses are paid out of the fiscal year in which they are invoiced.

In 2019-20 the total study expenditures for the ESRF amounted to \$1,597,533. Administration costs for this period were \$268,001. Revenues collected through levies were \$1,628,111.

Table 1 – ESRF Expenditures April 1, 2019 to March 31, 2020 (in dollars)

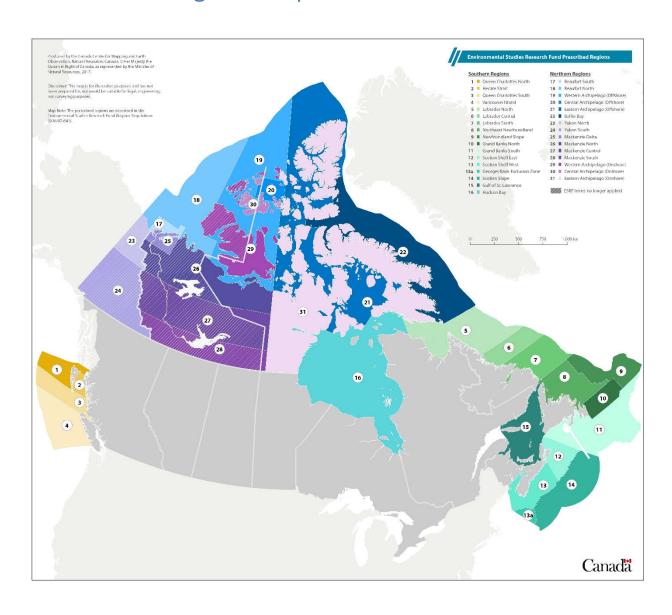
REGION	OPENING CASH BALANCE APRIL 1, 2019 (\$)	TOTAL REVENUE, LEVIES & RETURNS (\$)	ADMINISTRATION COSTS (\$)	STUDY PROGRAM COSTS (\$)	CLOSING BALANCE MARCH 31, 2020 (\$)
SOUTH REGION	5,838,925	1,628,111	268,001	1,478,342	5,720,693
NORTH REGION	274,139			119,191	154,948
TOTAL	6,113,064	1,628,111	268,001	1,597,533	5,875,641

NOTE: The Public Accounts of Canada closing balances for the Southern and Northern Regions at the end of the 2019-20 fiscal year may differ. Given accounting processes at year-end, the distribution of Administration Costs between the regional accounts is not possible until the new fiscal year. The Administration Costs in this table account for the redistribution of funds between the accounts.

Table 2 – ESRF Regional sub accounts – Levy income 2019-20 (in dollars)

		LEVY RATE Levy 31 2019-2020	REVENUES Levy 31 2019-2020	REVENUES Back Levies	TOTAL LEVY INCOME
REG	GION	(\$/Hectare)	(\$)	(\$)	(\$)
1	Queen Charlottes North	0	-	-	-
2	Hecate Strait	0	-	-	-
3	Queen Charlottes South	0	-	-	-
4	Vancouver Island	0	-	-	-
5	Labrador North	0.1194	392	-	392
6	Labrador Central	0.1684	2,556	-	2,556
7	Labrador South	0	-	-	-
8	Northeast Newfoundland	0.427	110,532	-	110,532
9	Newfoundland Slope	0.2018	808,920	-	808,920
10	Grand Banks North	0	-	104,069	104,069
11	Grand Banks South	0.3912	112,979	136,467	249,446
12	Scotian Shelf East	0.2163	25,087	-	25,087
13	Scotian Shelf West	0	-	-	-
14	Scotian Slope	0.2448	307,058	-	307,058
15	Gulf of St. Lawrence	0.2899	20,051	-	20,051
16	Hudson Bay	0	-	-	-
	Total South		\$1,387,575	\$240,536	\$1,628,111
17	Beaufort South	0	-	-	-
18	Beaufort North	0	-	-	-
19	Western Archipelago-Offshore	0	-	-	-
20	Central Archipelago-Offshore	0	-	-	-
21	Eastern Archipelago-Offshore	0	-	-	-
22	Baffin Bay	0	-	-	-
23	Yukon North	0	-	-	-
24	Yukon South	0	-	-	-
25	Mackenzie Delta	0	-	-	-
26	Mackenzie North	0	-	-	-
27	Mackenzie Central	0	-	-	-
28	Mackenzie South	0	-	-	-
29	Western Archipelago-Onshore	0	-	-	-
30	Central Archipelago-Onshore	0	-	-	-
31	Eastern Archipelago-Onshore	0	-	-	-
	Total North		\$0,00	-	\$0,00
	TOTAL				\$1,628,111

Annex 1: ESRF Regional Map



Annex 2: Complete description of the ESRF Research Priority Areas for the 2019-2020 cycle

Northern Research Priority Areas

A five-year moratorium was established in 2016 on Arctic offshore oil and gas exploration. Therefore, ESRF-supported research activities in that region are currently not prioritized.

Southern Research Priority Areas

In 2019 the ESRF Management Board reviewed its research priorities for the 2019-2020 funding cycle. A number of potential research topics were discussed arising from consultations with the Management Board's East Coast Advisory Committee, past research priorities and topics raised during current environmental assessment processes. On that basis, a number of research topics were identified and ranked as short-term for consideration as proposal calls for 2020; medium-term to be reviewed as potential 2021 calls and long-term for consideration post-2021 calls.

The short-term priorities were identified as Seabirds and Indigenous Knowledge. Additional details and the status of work related to these priorities is summarized below.

1. Research Priority Area #1: Seabirds

With respect to seabirds, potential research could encompass oil spill preparedness and response focussing on effects on seabirds; the population dynamics of Leach's Storm Petrel in Atlantic Canada; and, the attraction of seabirds to light sources offshore. ESRF has undertaken consultations with Environment and Climate Change Canada to develop more precise research needs. The outcome of that discussion will be reviewed by the Management Board to inform any proposal calls that will be issued in 2020.

2. Research Priority Area #2: Indigenous Knowledge

With respect to Indigenous Knowledge, the Management Board took note of the outcomes of the engagement with more than forty Indigenous Groups in Atlantic Canada during a Regional Environmental Assessment of Exploration Drilling. To help determine how and what kind of an ESRF research project could usefully address this issue, the Management Board has undertaken exploratory discussions with representatives of indigenous people in Atlantic Canada, and other knowledgeable individuals. The end goal is to collaboratively scope a project that incorporates Indigenous Knowledge, in order to address some of the concerns raised during the Regional Environmental Assessment of Exploration Drilling, and to help maximize the value of ESRF undertakings to local Indigenous communities.

Annex 3: Study Selection Process

ESRF funding can be provided solely to legal entities validly incorporated or registered in Canada, including companies, industry associations, research associations, standards organizations, Indigenous and community groups, academic institutions as well as federal, provincial, territorial and municipal governments and their departments and agencies. These organisations are invited to participate in the ESRF study selection process.

The study selection process has three distinct phases:

- Letters of Interest
- Full project proposals
- Funding Agreements (or Memoranda of Understanding)

The selection process is launched with the ESRF Call for Letters of Interest (LOI). The received letters are reviewed by technical review committees and the ESRF Management Board members. The ESRF Management Board decides which proponents should be invited to submit full proposals.

Proponents who were successful in having their LOIs selected are invited to submit a full proposal, presenting a detailed version of their proposed research study. The received full proposals are reviewed, similarly to LOIs, by technical review committees and the ESRF Management Board members.

The ESRF Management Board decides which full proposal proponents should be invited to negotiate a Funding Agreement or, if the proponent is a federal, provincial or municipal government organization, a Memorandum of Understanding.

Selection Criteria

The LOIs and proposals that meet basic requirements regarding eligibility and completeness of information will be reviewed by a committee of technical experts mandated by the ESRF Management Board. These Technical Review Committees use the criteria provided in the LOI and full proposal Applicants' Guide to evaluate:

- the significance of the potential impact of the study being proposed; and,
- the probability that the study achieves its stated objective.

In addition to the above, the ESRF Management Board may consider other criteria, such as regional balance, in the final project selection. Any such criteria will be applied equitably to all Project Proposals reviewed.

Commitment to fairness and transparency

The ESRF Management Board, Natural Resources Canada and Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs are committed to manage the selection process for the ESRF studies fairly and transparently. All assessments and decisions will be done in accordance with this commitment. No specific guidance or advice on preparing a LOI or full project proposal will be provided to any of the proponents. No meetings on the ESRF call for LOIs or call for full project proposals will be

held between any applicant and anyone involved with the project selection process. Further, to avoid the risk of real, perceived or potential conflict of interest, members of expert technical committees who have a vested interest as a potential participant in a particular project will be required to sign a declaration regarding their interest in the project and will not be allowed to participate in the assessment of that project.

Annex 4: Bibliography of Past ESRF Publications, 1985 - 2020

All ESRF studies are subject to a scientific/technical peer review. Reports that are deemed to be scientifically or technically significant are published in the ESRF Technical Report Series. Since its inception in 1983, the ESRF has published over 200 reports and related studies.

All published reports and studies are available for download through the ESRF website: http://www.esrfunds.org/174.

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