

STATE OF ALASKA

FRANK H. MURKOWSKI, GOVERNOR

DEPT. OF ENVIRONMENTAL CONSERVATION
DIVISION OF SPILL PREVENTION AND RESPONSE
INDUSTRY PREPAREDNESS PROGRAM
Exploration Production & Refineries

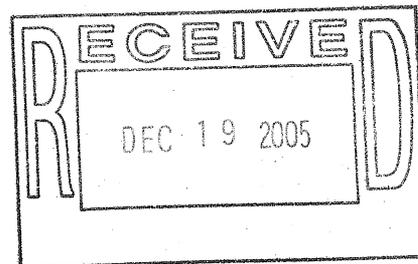
555 Cordova Street
Anchorage, AK 99501
PHONE: (907) 269-3094
FAX: (907) 269-7687
<http://www.dec.state.ak.us>

November 29, 2005

File No.: 305.30 (5117)

OIL DISCHARGE PREVENTION AND CONTINGENCY PLAN APPROVAL

Ms. Julie Lina
Pioneer Natural Resources Alaska, Inc.
700 G Street, Suite 600
Anchorage, AK, 99501



**SUBJECT: Plan Approval for Oil Discharge Prevention and Contingency Plan for
Pioneer Natural Resources Alaska, Inc, dated September 2005.
ADEC Plan # 054-CP-5117.**

Dear Ms. Lina:

The Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation (Department) has completed our review of the Pioneer Natural Resources Oil Discharge and Contingency Plan dated September 2005 with revisions through November 14, 2005, for consistency with AS 46.04 and 18 AAC 75. Based on our review, the Department has determined that your plan is consistent with the applicable requirements of the referenced statute/regulation and is hereby approved.

This approval applies to the following Oil Discharge Prevention and Contingency Plan (plan):

Plan Title: **Pioneer Natural Resources Alaska, Inc. Oil Discharge
Prevention and Contingency Plan, September 2005.**

Supporting Documents: **Alaska Clean Seas Technical Manual**

Plan Holder: **Pioneer Natural Resources
700 G Street, Suite 600
Anchorage, AK 99501**

Covered Facilities: **Exploration operations for up to five new exploratory wells on
State lands south of Prudhoe Bay and the Kuparuk River
Units with drilling to begin during the 2005-2006 winter
season.**

PLAN APPROVAL: The referenced plan is proposed for winter exploration drilling on the North Slope. The Department has determined that the referenced plan satisfies minimum planning standards and other requirements established under applicable statutes and regulations. Approval of the referenced plan is hereby granted, **effective November 29, 2005.**

A certificate of approval stating that the Department has approved the contingency plan is enclosed.

This approval is subject to the following terms and conditions:

1. Notice of Changed Relationship with Response Contractor.

Because the plan relies on the use of response contractor(s) for its implementation, the plan holder must immediately notify the Department in writing of any change in the contractual relationship with the plan holder's response contractor(s), and of any event including but not limited to any breach by either party to the response contract that may excuse a response contractor from performing, that indicates a response contractor may fail or refuse to perform, or that may otherwise affect the response, prevention, or preparedness capabilities described in the approved plan.

This condition is reasonably necessary because there are certain risks associated with allowing a plan holder to rely in part or total upon a response contractor instead of obtaining its own response capability. The risks arise, in part, because the certainty of the contractor's response is dependent upon the continuation of the legal relationship between it and the plan holder. Given this risk, the Department must be promptly informed of any change of the contractual relationship between the plan holder and the response contractor, and of any other event that may arguably excuse the response contractor from performing or that would otherwise affect the response, prevention, or preparedness capabilities described in the approved plan. The Department may seek appropriate modifications to the plan or take other steps to ensure that the plan holder has continuous access to sufficient resources to protect the environment and to contain, cleanup, and mitigate potential oil spills.

2. Documentation Required Prior to Initiation of Operations.

- a. A copy of the Blowout Contingency Plan (BCP) does not have to be submitted as a part of this contingency plan but must be made available to the Department for inspection upon request under 18 AAC 75.480.
- b. All phone numbers for the drilling rigs must be kept current for each location where drilling or fuel transfer operations are performed as described in 18 AAC 75.415 (b).

These conditions are reasonable and necessary to provide compliance with 18 AAC 75. The Department will review the blowout contingency plan required in 18 AAC 75.480 when

performing site inspections. Phone numbers are subject to change when exploration drilling rigs are moved from one location to another and must be kept current as required in 18 AAC 75.415 (b).

3. Oil Storage Tanks.

If Pioneer is going to undertake well flow-testing, an amendment must be submitted to the Department to address storage tank issues if a tank with a greater than 10,000-gallon capacity will be used. The amendment must include a description of the oil storage containers greater than 10,000 gallons that will be used in conjunction with drilling operations for each drilling location. The description must include a tank identification number, capacity, construction date, specifications, application, and date and type of the last API 653 inspection, and any other information as required by 18 AAC 75.425(e)(2)(E) and 18 AAC 75.425(e)(3)(A)(i) and (ii). The tanks must be placed on the pad and an updated pad layout drawing reflecting the location of the tanks must be submitted to the Department. This information must be submitted prior to well testing. In addition, a "Flow Test Tank Scenario" must be included with the amendment.

This condition is reasonable and necessary so that in the event of well flow-testing, a plan amendment that reflects specific details of the tanks is in place to guide proper response actions. A scenario is needed to address the requirements of 18 AAC 75.425(e)(1)(F) and 18 AAC 75.434.

4. Pioneer Pad Orientation (layout)

Pioneer must provide "as-built" type drawings for each proposed pad orientation to true-north, with the oil blow-out plume (spill trajectory) superimposed, relative to the location of the drill rig, crew quarters (if on-site), fuel storage tank(s), testing tanks, road access (contingency), any pre-staged spill response equipment, and potential berming and collection areas for free oil recovery.

This condition is reasonable and necessary to ensure site specific details of the facility layout/orientation is available to guide responders in an emergency event or discharge of any size for compliance with AS 46.04.030(e) and 18 AAC 75.425(e)(1).

5. Actual Flow Rate and Response Planning Standard.

Once the flow rate of an exploration well has been tested, if that flow rate exceeds 5,500 barrels per day, Pioneer must submit a plan amendment addressing the increased response planning standard (RPS) volume within 30 days of the flow test.

This condition is reasonable and necessary to ensure the plan holder's ability to respond to a larger volume discharge than was originally planned for. The actual flow rate of a well cannot be determined until the well is tested. The RPS initially set at 5,500 barrels per day in this plan and in 18 AAC 75.434(b) is a realistic maximum oil discharge volume; however, if a higher flow is encountered, an amendment must be submitted in accordance with 18 AAC 75.434(d).

6. Seasonal Drilling Restrictions.

To reduce the risk or magnitude of an oil discharge and to ensure the effectiveness of planned spill response methods prior to periods of broken ice when the planned response methods are rendered ineffective by environmental limitations, all drilling operations into hydrocarbon bearing formations for the Pioneer Natural Resources North Slope wells must be completed by **April 24** of each year, based on the drilling season description in Section 1.0 of the plan, and the number of days required to complete cleanup.

This condition is reasonable and necessary to ensure the plan holder's compliance with specific temporary measures until environmental conditions improve to reduce the risk or magnitude of an oil discharge during periods of broken ice when planned spill response methods are rendered ineffective by environmental limitations, which are provided at 18 AAC 75.445(f). Additionally, the condition is necessary to ensure that oil produced during a formation flow test or other drilling operation is collected and stored in a manner that prevents the oil from entering the land or waters of the state consistent with the standards of 18 AAC 75.045(a) and 18 AAC 75.445(d)(2).

EXPIRATION: This approval **expires November 29, 2010**. After the approval expires, Alaska law prohibits operation of these facilities until an approved plan is once again in effect.

RENEWAL: To renew this approval, the plan holder must submit a completed renewal application and plan to the Department no later than 180 days prior to the expiration of this approval. This is to ensure that the submitted plan is approved before the current plan in effect expires. [18 AAC 75.420]

AMENDMENT: Before any change to this plan may take effect, the plan holder must submit an Application for Amendment to the plan with any additional information needed to evaluate the proposed amendment. This is to ensure that changes to the plan do not diminish the plan holder's ability to respond to a discharge and to evaluate any additional environmental considerations that may need to be taken into account. [18 AAC 75.415]

REVOCATION, SUSPENSION, OR MODIFICATION: This approval is effective only while the plan holder is in "compliance with the plan" and with all of the terms and conditions described above. The Department may, after notice and opportunity for a hearing, revoke, suspend, or require the modification of an approved plan if the plan holder is not in compliance with it, or for any other reason stated in AS 46.04.030(f). In addition, Alaska law provides that a vessel or facility that is not in "compliance with the plan" may not operate (AS 46.04.030).

The Department may terminate approval prior to the expiration date if deficiencies are identified that would adversely affect spill prevention, response or preparedness capabilities.

DUTY TO RESPOND: Notwithstanding any other provisions or requirements of this contingency plan, a person causing or permitting the discharge of oil is required by law to immediately contain and cleanup the discharge regardless of the adequacy or inadequacy of a contingency plan (AS 46.04.020).

NOTIFICATION OF NON-READINESS: Within **twenty-four (24) hours** after any significant response equipment specified in the plan becomes non-operational or is removed from its designated storage location, the plan holder must notify the Department in writing and provide a schedule for the equipment's substitution, repair, or return to service (18 AAC 75.475(b)).

CIVIL AND CRIMINAL SANCTIONS: Failure to comply with the plan may subject the plan holder to civil liability for damages and to civil and criminal penalties. Civil and criminal sanctions may also be imposed for any violation of AS 46.04, any regulation issued thereunder, or any violation of a lawful order of the Department.

INSPECTIONS, DRILLS, RIGHTS TO ACCESS AND VERIFICATION OF EQUIPMENT, SUPPLIES AND PERSONNEL: The Department has the right to verify the ability of the plan holder to carry out the provisions of its contingency plan and access to inventories of equipment, supplies and personnel through such means as inspections and discharge exercises, without prior notice to the plan holder. The Department has the right to enter and inspect the covered vessel or facility in a safe manner at any reasonable time for these purposes and to otherwise ensure compliance with the plan and the terms and conditions (AS 46.04.030(e) and AS 46.04.060). The plan holder shall conduct exercises for the purpose of testing the adequacy of the contingency plan and its implementation (18 AAC 75.480 and 485).

FAILURE TO PERFORM: In granting approval of the plan, the Department has determined that the plan, as represented to it by the applicant in the plan and application for approval, satisfies the minimum planning standards and other requirements established by applicable statutes and regulations, taking as true all information provided by the applicant. The Department does not warrant to the applicant, the plan holder, or any other person or entity: (1) the accuracy or validity of the information or assurances relied upon; (2) that the plan is or will be implemented; or (3) that even full compliance and implementation with the plan will result in complete containment, control, or clean-up of any given oil spill, including a spill specifically described in the planning standards. The plan holder is encouraged to take any additional precautions and obtain any additional response capability it deems appropriate to further guard against the risk of oil spills and to enhance its ability to comply with its duty under AS 46.04.020(a) to immediately contain and clean up an oil discharge.

COMPLIANCE WITH APPLICABLE LAWS: If amendments to the approved plan are necessary to meet the requirements of any new laws or regulations, the plan holder must submit an application for amendment to the Department at the above address. The plan holder must adhere to all applicable state statutes and regulations as they may be amended from time to time.

Ms. Julie Lina
Pioneer Natural Resources, Alaska, Inc.

6

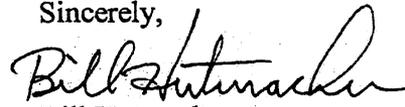
November 29, 2005

This approval does not relieve the plan holder of the responsibility for securing other federal, state or local approvals or permits, and that the plan holder is still required to comply with all other applicable laws.

INFORMAL REVIEW or ADJUDICATORY HEARING: Any person who disagrees with this decision may request an adjudicatory hearing in accordance with 18 AAC 15.195- 18 AAC 15.340 or an informal review by the Division Director in accordance with 18 AAC 15.185. **Informal review requests** must be delivered to the Division Director, 410 Willoughby Avenue, Suite 303, Juneau, Alaska 99801, within 15 days of the permit decision. **Adjudicatory hearing requests** must be delivered to the Commissioner of the Department of Environmental Conservation, 410 Willoughby Avenue, Suite 303, Juneau, Alaska 99801, within 30 days of the permit decision. If a hearing is not requested within 30 days, the right to appeal is waived. Anyone who submits a request for an informal review or an adjudicatory hearing should also send a copy of the request to the undersigned.

If you have any questions, please contact Gary Evans at 269-7536 or Lydia Miner at 269-7680.

Sincerely,



Bill Hutmacher
Program Manager

Encl.: Summary of Basis for Decision
Certificate of Approval, Number 05-CER-3650

cc w/o Certificate:

Lydia Miner, ADEC, Section Manager
Gary Evans, ADEC
Jack Winters/Mac McLean, ADFG, Fairbanks
Carol Fries, ADNR
Rex Okakok, North Slope Borough
Ed Meggert, ADEC PERP
Mark Fink, ADFG, Anchorage
Christy Bohl, MMS, Anchorage
Carl Lautenberger, USEPA, Anchorage
Capt. Mark DeVries, USCG, Anchorage MSO
LE Herrick, USDOT-RSPA
Ben Greene, ADNR-OPMP
Trustees for Alaska
Northern Alaska Environmental Center

ALASKA DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL CONSERVATION
DIVISION OF SPILL PREVENTION AND RESPONSE
INDUSTRY PREPAREDNESS AND PIPELINE PROGRAM

PIONEER NATURAL RESOURCES ALASKA, INC.
NORTH SLOPE EXPLORATION OIL
DISCHARGE PREVENTION AND CONTINGENCY PLAN

Summary of Basis for Department Decision
November 29, 2005

Pursuant to 18 AAC 75.460(b)(1), the following is a summary of the basis for the Department's decision to approve the Pioneer Natural Resources Alaska, Inc. Exploration Oil and Discharge Prevention and Contingency Plan, dated September 2005, including referenced portions of the Alaskan Clean Seas Technical Manual, subsequent plan revisions and additional information submitted by the applicant, with regard to key issues raised during the public comment period on the plan application.

Response Planning Standards (RPS)

The response planning standard volume for an exploration facility as defined at 18 AAC 75.434. (b) is 16,500 barrels for the first 72 hours, plus an additional 5,500 barrels for each day beyond 72 hours.

Since this is an exploration project and there is no historical data available the Department finds that response planning standards identified in the plan are in accordance with the requirements in 18 AAC 75.434.

Response Scenarios

Pursuant to 18 AAC 75.425(e)(1)(f), the plan must contain a description of the discharge containment, control, and clean-up actions to be taken, which clearly demonstrate the strategies and procedures to conduct and maintain an effective response; presented in the form of a response scenario to a discharge of the response planning standard volume.

The Department finds that the response scenarios provide a logical plan of action with tactics, equipment and personnel requirements identified in the Alaskan Clean Seas Technical Manual, or maintained on site during exploration operations, sufficient to demonstrate a response to a discharge of the response planning standards for this response zone.

North Slope Industry Guidance Planning Assumptions

The planning assumptions identified in the Alaskan Clean Seas Technical Manual have not been used in this plan.

Seasonal Drilling Restrictions. To reduce the risk or magnitude of an oil discharge and to ensure the effectiveness of planned spill response methods prior to periods of broken ice when the planned response methods are rendered ineffective by environmental limitations, all drilling operations into hydrocarbon bearing formations for the Pioneer Natural Resources North Slope wells must be completed by **April 24** of each year, based on the description of the drilling season in Section 1.0 of the plan, and the number of days required to complete cleanup.