Sequoia 3D Seismic Survey

ConocoPhillips

Project Update | February 2021

ConocoPhillips Australia is planning to undertake a three-dimensional (3D) marine seismic survey (the Sequoia 3D seismic survey) in Exploration Permit T/49P to enable assessment of the natural gas reservoirs in the eastern offshore Otway Basin. The permit is located in waters west of Tasmania's King Island.

Since the last project update regarding the proposed Sequoia 3D marine seismic survey, ConocoPhillips Australia has continued to consult with relevant stakeholders and the Environment Plan was available for public comment by NOPSEMA.

Changes to the seismic acquisition area

In considering feedback from relevant stakeholders and based on submissions received during the public comment period we have opted to add an additional control to the proposed Sequoia 3D marine seismic survey.

The new control will be to excise the giant crab habitat in the south west region of the survey area from the seismic acquisition area (see Figure 1). Based on the Department of Environment and Energy's 2014 assessment of the Tasmanian Giant Crab fishery, most harvesting of giant crab occurs at depths between 140 and 300 metres. Based on the available research, additional acoustic modelling has been undertaken to calculate the 'distance to no effect' to the fishery, as a result an additional excise buffer of approximately 450m has been applied either side of the fishery. As such, we will be removing the giant crab habitat within the canyon area in the south west of the survey from the acquisition area, reducing the acquisition area to approximately 2700km^2.

This is in addition to the reduction of the original operational area. In late 2020, based on stakeholder feedback received during Environment Plan development, we reduced the operational area from 6500km^2 to 4090km^2 which resulted in: 27% reduction in Victorian fishing grids, 19% reduction in Tasmanian rock lobster grids and complete avoidance of the Apollo Marine Park.

Timing

Our primary control is to acquire seismic in the months that have least impact commercially and environmentally which is why we are seeking approval in the Environment Plan to undertake the seismic acquisition in the August to October 2021 timeframe. The seismic activity is forecast to take 60 days which incorporates allowances for downtime related to weather and other operational constraints.

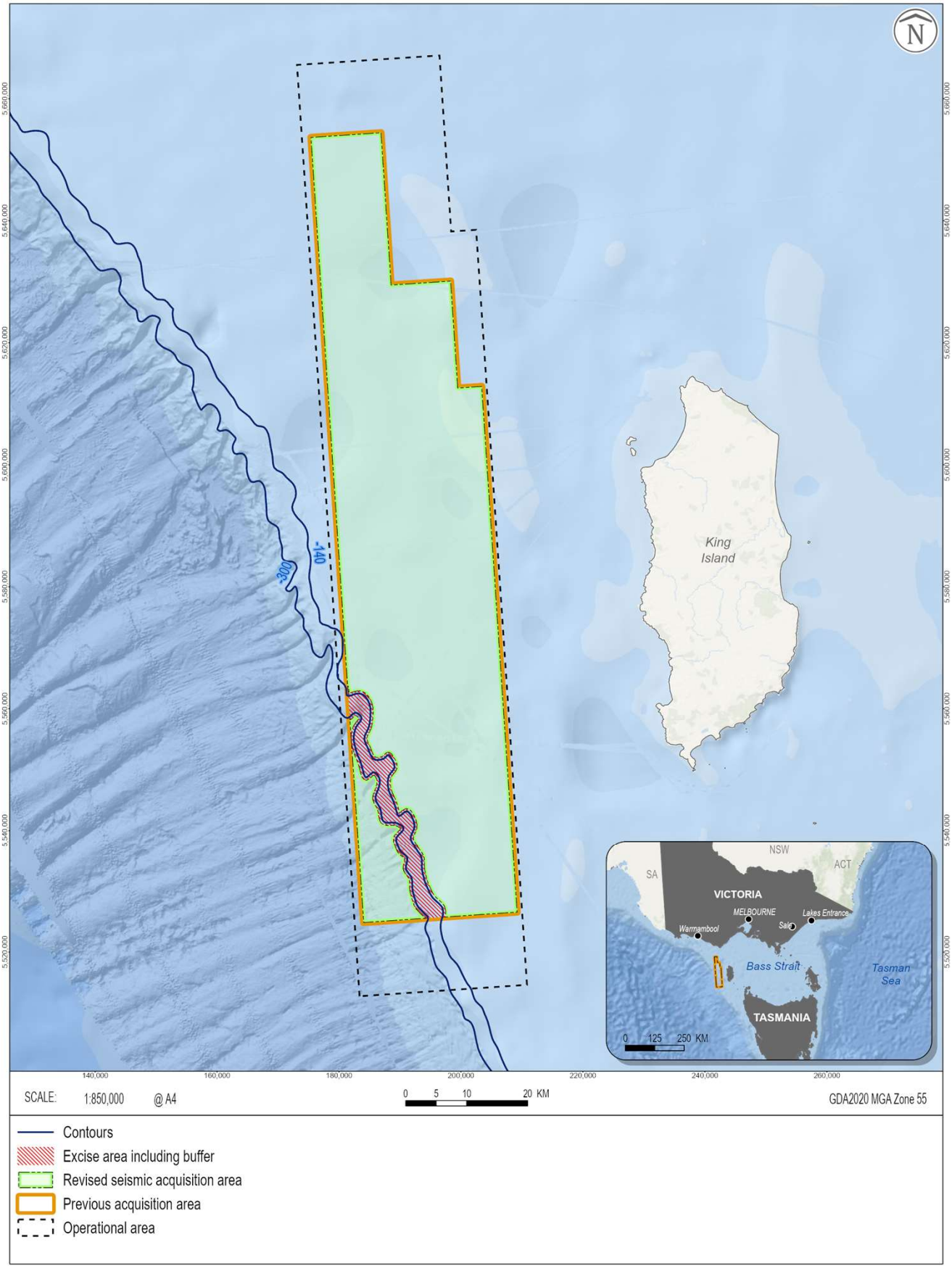

Figure 1.. Revised Sequoia 3D marine seismic survey map

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Frequently asked questions

What approvals are required by the Government?

Prior to commencing any activity, ConocoPhillips Australia must submit an Environment Plan to the offshore regulator, NOPSEMA, for approval under the Commonwealth Offshore Petroleum and Greenhouse Gas Storage (Environment) Regulations 2009.

What is the purpose of an Environment Plan and what does it include?

The purpose of the Environment Plan is to describe the impacts and risks of the proposed activity, assess them and determine whether they are acceptable and are as low as reasonably practicable. The Environment Plan must also include a description of the existing environment and the proposed activity, an evaluation of the impacts and risks associated with the activities, environmental performance outcomes and standards, implementation strategy, and reporting requirements.

Why do you have to do a seismic survey?

Acquiring seismic and the subsequent interpretation of it is a necessary step in the process of delineating potential oil and gas reserves in the offshore environment. Geologists and geophysicists use this data to identify the location of potential oil and gas reserves and to allow appropriate positioning of any potential drilling locations. As acquisition of this type is a necessary step in the appropriate, efficient and safe delineation of oil and gas resources, exploration titles (like T/49P) often have work commitments attached to them that must be fulfilled for a company to retain tenure over that area. T/49P has a regulatory requirement to undertake a marine seismic survey to fulfill the title's work program commitments.

Can you ensure the seismic survey won't have an impact on marine life?

Based on current and available science the proposed activity will have minimal impact on marine life and we have been careful to implement controls to reduce this risk to as low as reasonably practicable. You can read more on our evaluation of the environmental risks and our controls in our Environment Plan: https://info.nopsema.gov.au/environment_plans/524/show_public

Why have you chosen August to October to undertake a marine seismic survey?

Acquiring seismic in the months that have the least impact commercially and environmentally is a control we can apply to reduce the risks and minimise acoustic disturbance to marine life to as low as reasonably practicable. The window of least impact is August to October. This is based on the research available to us on the activities of all fishing industries (including Tasmanian and Victorian Rock Lobster, Tasmanian and Victorian Giant Crab and other fish including the Southern Bluefin Tuna), whales and other important marine life.

How long will the seismic activity take?

We expect the entire seismic activity to take approximately 60-days to complete. This estimate incorporates all operations required to conduct the survey, including arrival and deployment, downtime due to weather events, downtime due to whale sightings, unforeseen operational constraints, actual seismic acquisition, equipment retrieval and demobilisation. A three month period (August to October) allows for uncertainty in this estimate of operational duration. It is important to note that we expect to only be acquiring data and actively using the sound sources for approximately 30 days within this estimate.

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Frequently asked questions continued

Why are you resurveying an area where seismic data has already been acquired?

The vast majority of the Sequoia 3D marine seismic survey is being acquired where no 3D seismic has been acquired in the past. We understand the fishing industry's concerns about repeated marine seismic surveys in the one area. To date, a 3D marine seismic survey has been acquired over a small proportion of the T/49P permit in 2014 called the Flanagan 3D. Some 2D seismic data has been acquired over part of the survey area, however, the bulk of this data was acquired between 1960s and the early 2000s.

2D data represents discrete widely spaced lines (in the case of the T/49P area = ~2-5km spacing) of seismic data that is not able to be used for detailed assessment of the subsurface and eventual drilling well placement. 3D seismic data allows a near complete picture of the subsurface which in turn allows appropriate assessment and well placement.

The proposed Sequoia 3D marine seismic survey will partly overlap with the Flanagan 3D only so the two seismic surveys can be joined together to provide a complete picture of the area.

Why don't oil and gas companies share seismic data to reduce resurveying?

Titleholders of petroleum titles in Commonwealth waters of Australia are required to submit all proprietary seismic data acquired to the regulators (NOPTA) within 18 months of the acquisition date. The regulator will make this freely accessible to everyone three years after the date of acquisition.

About ConocoPhillips

ConocoPhillips is a global exploration and production company with operations and activities in 17 countries. We explore for, develop and produce crude oil and natural gas. A commitment to safety, operating excellence and environmental stewardship guide our operations.

ConocoPhillips Australia was established almost two decades ago. Headquartered in Brisbane, Queensland, we are a 37.5 percent shareholder in Australia Pacific LNG and operate the LNG facility on Curtis Island. We are also pursuing exploration opportunities in Australia. We have a proud track record for safety and environmental performance and draw from a global knowledge set to explore for, develop and produce oil and gas for our domestic and global customers.

Contact us

If you would like to ask questions, provide feedback or request a meeting about the proposed Sequoia seismic survey contact ConocoPhillips Australia in any one of the following ways:

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