

(Seattle ? Sept. 19, 2011) Today, EPA Region 10

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(Seattle - Sept. 19, 2011) Today, EPA Region 10 issued final air quality permits to Shell for oil and gas exploration drilling in the Alaska Arctic. The permits will allow Shell to operate the *Discoverer* drillship and a support fleet of icebreakers, oil spill response vessels, and supply ships for up to 120 days each year in the Chukchi Sea and Beaufort Sea Outer Continental Shelf starting in 2012.

Shell's exploration drilling fleet will emit more than 250 tons of air pollutants a year and therefore, under existing law, must have federal Clean Air Act Outer Continental Shelf (OCS)/Prevention of Significant Deterioration (PSD) permits. The permits set strict limits on air pollution from these vessels.

EPA Region 10 issued similar OCS/PSD air permits to Shell in 2010. Those permits were challenged by North Slope communities and environmental groups to the Environmental Appeals Board, which sent the permits back to EPA Region 10 in December 2010. EPA Region 10 revised the permits to address the issues raised by the Board.

Under the new permits, Shell will reduce its fleet emissions of most key air pollutants including fine particulates and nitrogen dioxide by more than 50 percent from the levels allowed in their 2010 permits. These reductions are largely due to new emissions controls Shell added to meet the new nitrogen dioxide standard that went into effect in 2011.

EPA Region 10's approval of these revised OCS/PSD air permits is based in part on installation of state-of-the-art pollution reduction controls on the *Discoverer* drillship to meet Best Available Control Technology requirements and to comply with the National Ambient Air Quality Standards.

The permits also require Shell to reduce air emissions by using Selective Catalytic Reduction and Oxidation Catalyst controls on two icebreakers, Catalytic Diesel Particulate Filters on the *Nanuq* oil spill response vessel and Ultra Low Sulfur Diesel fuel on the *Discoverer* drillship and all vessels in the support fleet.

EPA Region 10 proposed the draft permits for public comment on July 6, 2011 and held informational meetings and a public hearing in Barrow, Alaska on Aug. 3 & 4, 2011.

The final permits and EPA Region 10's responses to public comments are available on the web at: <http://yosemite.epa.gov/R10/AIRPAGE.NSF/Permits/ocsap/> [1].

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Public petitions for review of these permits must be received by the Environmental Appeals Board no later than Oct. 24, 2011. More information about the procedures for filing an appeal including using the Board's e-filing system can be found at: <http://www.epa.gov/eab/> [2].

EPA Region 10 has proposed two other draft air permits for oil and gas exploration in the Alaska Arctic. Shell applied for an OCS/Title V air permit to operate its drilling rig *Kulluk*, in the Beaufort Sea starting in 2012. Public comment on the Shell *Kulluk* draft permit closed Sept. 6. ConocoPhillips applied for an OCS/Title V permit to operate a jack-up drill rig in the Chukchi Sea starting in 2013. Public comment on the ConocoPhillips draft permit ends Sept. 21. EPA Region 10 will issue final permits after comments from the public are reviewed and considered.

EPA Region 10 air permits ensure compliance with air quality regulations during drilling operations but on their own do not authorize drilling. The U.S. Bureau of Ocean and Energy Management and Regulatory Enforcement is the federal agency that authorizes oil drilling in offshore federal waters. Find more at: <http://www.boemre.gov/> [3]

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[1] <http://yosemite.epa.gov/R10/AIRPAGE.NSF/Permits/ocsap/>

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