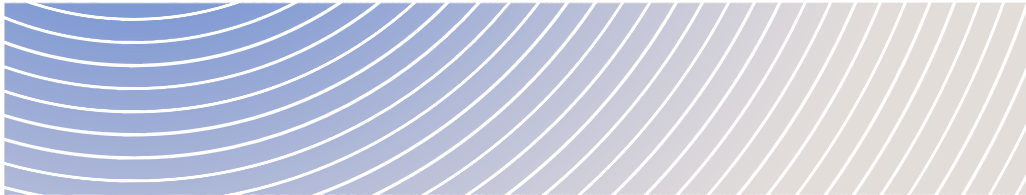




Ministerial Response Progress Report



REGIONAL ASSESSMENT OF OFFSHORE OIL AND GAS EXPLORATORY
DRILLING EAST OF NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR

July 2021



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List of Abbreviations and Acronyms

Abbreviation/Acronym	Definition
C-NLOPB	Canada-Newfoundland and Labrador Offshore Petroleum Board
C-NLCOM	Canada Newfoundland and Labrador Committee on Oceans Management
CSAS	Canadian Science Advisory Secretariat
DFO	Fisheries and Oceans Canada
ECCC	Environment and Climate Change Canada
ECCC-CWS	Canadian Wildlife Service, a branch of Environment and Climate Change Canada
ESRF	Environmental Studies Research Fund
G&C Agreement	Grants and Contribution Agreement
GIS Tool	Geographic Information System Decision Support Tool
GHG	Greenhouse Gas
Government of NL	Government of Newfoundland and Labrador
IAAC	Impact Assessment Agency of Canada
MPA	Marine protected area
MSP	Marine Spatial Planning
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
Ministerial Regulation	Regulations Respecting Excluded Physical Activities (Newfoundland and Labrador Offshore Exploratory Wells)
Ministerial Response	Ministerial Response to the Regional Assessment Committee Report for Offshore Exploratory Drilling East of Newfoundland and Labrador
Ministerial Response Progress Report	Regional Assessment Ministerial Response Progress Report
NRCan	Natural Resources Canada



OECM	Other effective area-based conservation measure
PAHs	Polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons
PCA	Parks Canada Agency
PTI	Passive integrated transponder
Registry	Canadian Impact Assessment Registry
Regional Assessment	Regional Assessment of Offshore Oil and Gas Exploratory Drilling East of Newfoundland and Labrador
RA Final Report	Regional Assessment of Offshore Oil and Gas Exploratory Drilling East of Newfoundland and Labrador Final Report
RA Follow-up Advisory Committee	Regional Assessment Follow-up Program Advisory Committee
RA Follow-Up Program	Follow-up Program for the Regional Assessment of Offshore Oil and Gas Exploration Drilling East of Newfoundland
ROCOM	The Regional Oversight Committee on Oceans Management
SEA	Strategic Environmental Assessment
SOCP	Statement of Canadian Practice with respect to the Mitigation of Seismic Sound in the Marine Environment
Steering Committee	The Regional Assessment Follow-up Program Steering Committee. This committee includes representatives from: IAAC, NRCan, the Government of NL's Department of Industry, Energy and Technology, the C-NLOPB, ECCC and DFO.
Study Area	The Regional Assessment Study area as defined in Figure 1.1 of the Regional Assessment of Offshore Oil and Gas Exploratory Drilling East of Newfoundland and Labrador Final Report.
TPHs	Total petroleum hydrocarbons

1. Introduction

On April 15, 2019, the federal Minister of the Environment and Climate Change (ECCC) announced the launch of the Regional Assessment of Offshore Oil and Gas Exploratory Drilling East of Newfoundland and Labrador (the Regional Assessment) and the appointment of a Committee to conduct the Regional Assessment (the RA Committee). The purpose of the Regional Assessment was to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of the federal impact assessment process for future offshore exploratory drilling projects in the defined offshore Regional Assessment Study Area (the Study Area) while ensuring the highest standards of environmental protection continue to be applied and maintained.

The RA Committee conducted its analysis and engagement activities over approximately a 10-month period, submitting its Final Report in February 2020 and final Geographic Information System (GIS) Tool in May 2020. In its Final Report, the RA Committee made forty-one (41) recommendations aimed at identifying and implementing environmental protection measures for future drilling proposals in the Study Area, as well as to helping to address key data gaps and other issues and initiatives. This included recommendations directed to the Minister of ECCC and/or the Impact Assessment Agency of Canada (IAAC) related to mitigation and follow-up requirements, review processes for future drilling projects and future updates to the Regional Assessment. It also included other recommendations made to various other federal and provincial agencies and non-governmental organizations.

On June 4th, 2020 the [Regulations Respecting Excluded Physical Activities - Newfoundland and Labrador Offshore Exploratory Wells](#), a Ministerial regulation under the Impact Assessment Act (IAA) that sets out requirements for future exploratory drilling projects in the Study Area came into force. Subsequently, the IAAC posted on the Canadian Impact Assessment Registry (the Registry) the Ministerial Response to the Regional Assessment Committee Report for Offshore Exploratory Drilling East of Newfoundland and Labrador (Ministerial Response). In this document, the Government of Canada and the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador (Government of NL) responded to the recommendations in the Final Report of the RA Committee and committed to establishing a Regional Assessment Follow-up Program (RA Follow-up Program). An additional commitment was made in the Ministerial Response for the Government of Canada to carry out a sector analysis of Greenhouse Gas (GHG) emissions from offshore exploratory drilling (see Commitment 42 – Greenhouse Gas Emissions).

The RA Follow-up Program will monitor and report on the implementation and effectiveness of the various outcomes of the Regional Assessment, including commitments made in the associated Ministerial Response. The RA Follow-up Program will also ensure that the information and analysis remain valid and up-to-date, and that it

continues to fulfill its intended function of informing decision-making as it pertains to future exploratory drilling and associated activities in the Study Area.

2. Purpose

The purpose of this Ministerial Response Progress Report is to report on the progress being made on the commitments by the government agencies and departments named in the Ministerial Response. This includes IAAC, Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO), ECCC, Natural Resources Canada (NRCan), the Canada-Newfoundland and Labrador Offshore Petroleum Board (C-NLOPB) and the Government of NL. Each commitment has been assigned a status based on the description in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Assigned status of commitment and description. These are used in the summary of commitments (Annex 1) and throughout the Ministerial Progress Report.

Status	Description
Completed – Fully met	Commitment was fully completed. No more actions or monitoring required.
Completed – Ongoing Monitoring	Commitment was completed but ongoing monitoring is required.
Progress Ongoing	Commitment has not been completed but progress has been made or actions were taken towards achieving the commitment and ensuring it remains on track for completion.

3. Progress on Commitments

The section below provides an overview of the commitments made, the responsible authority, the status of the commitment as well as any actions taken, or accomplishments made towards achieving the commitment. In some instances, a work plan may be included to indicate timelines for completion and future progress to be reported on.

The commitments in this report follow the format of those outlined in the Ministerial Response. A summary of the status of commitments that were accepted by the Ministers can be found in Annex 1. In future years, this summary commitment table will be

integrated into the Regional Assessment Follow-up Program Report (RA Follow-up Program Report). The outputs of the Regional Assessment will be reviewed and reported on through the RA Follow-up Program Report.

1. Mitigation and Follow-up Measures

Responsible Authority: IAAC

Ministerial Response Commitment:

- Develop a Ministerial Regulation that includes mitigation and follow-up measures that have been included as conditions of environmental assessment (EA) approvals for recent exploratory drilling projects in the Study Area under the *Canadian Environmental Assessment Act, 2012* (CEAA 2012).

Accomplishments:

- Mitigation and follow-up measures that have been included as conditions in recent environmental assessment decisions were incorporated into sections 1 to 41 of the Ministerial Regulation under Schedule 2. This includes mitigation measures that were identified in the RA Committee's Final Report. See the Ministerial Response for more information.

Status: Completed – Fully Met

2. Trained Seabird Observers

Responsible Authority: ECCC

Ministerial Response Commitment:

- ECCC will work with the C-NLOPB to develop a standard training program for seabird observers on drilling installations and support vessels. ECCC will complete the guidance required to support the development of a training program and provide a definition of "trained observers".

Accomplishments:

- ECCC completed the guidance (*ECCC-CWS standards for observers conducting seabird surveys and trainers providing instruction on seabird survey methods*) required to support the development of a training program and developed requirements for observers (defining trained observers), both provided to the C-NLOPB in spring 2020.

- ECCC hired a Seabird Survey Specialist who will provide guidance and input into an industry training program that will be designed to enable seabird surveyors to meet ECCC standards.
- ECCC met with the C-NLOPB and industry representatives in January 2021 to discuss development of training standards/program and outline expectations.

Workplan:

- ECCC will continue to conduct compliance verification according to ECCC requirements for standardized training of observers, including the evaluation of training programs and auditing data quality.
- ECCC will continue to identify opportunities to strengthen training and will communicate to proponents as necessary.
- By March 2023, trained observers will have collected high quality data associated with exploratory drilling activities within the Study Area.

Status: Completed - Ongoing Monitoring

3. Fisheries communications plans

Responsible Authority: C-NLOPB and IAAC

Ministerial Response Commitment:

- Develop a Ministerial Regulation that includes requirements for proponents to develop and implement a fisheries communications plan in consultation with the C-NLOPB, Indigenous groups and commercial fishers prior to the start of a drilling program.
- The C-NLOPB will review proponents' fisheries communications plan as part of the Operations Authorization approval process. This review will explore any implications and determine whether additional information is required to be consistent with this recommendation.

Accomplishments:

- The Ministerial Regulation includes a provision requiring proponents to develop and implement a fisheries communications plan in consultation with the C-NLOPB, Indigenous groups and commercial fishers prior to the start of a drilling program (section 4 under Schedule 2). See the Ministerial Response for more information.

Status: Completed – Fully Met

4. Pre-drilling notifications

Responsible Authority: C-NLOPB & IAAC

Ministerial Response Commitment:

- The C-NLOPB commits to maintaining an updated list of stakeholders—in consultation with the Governments of Canada and Newfoundland and Labrador—to ensure that communications from proponents, as outlined in the Ministerial Regulation, reaches all parties in a timely manner.

Accomplishments:

- The Ministerial Regulation includes a provision for a notification to be provided as part of the fisheries communications plan (section 4 under Schedule 2). See the Ministerial Response for more information.
- Initial list of stakeholders and Indigenous Groups was created by March 31st 2021, which includes contact information.
- List was completed by March 31st, 2021 and will be updated periodically as required and reviewed annually.

Workplan:

- List will be updated periodically as required and reviewed annually.

Status: Completed – Ongoing Monitoring

5. Migratory Birds Mitigation

Responsible Authority: IAAC

Ministerial Response Commitment:

- Develop a Ministerial Regulation that includes requirements for proponents to develop and implement mitigation measures related to avoiding harming, killing or disturbing migratory birds, including measures related to light effects.

Accomplishments:

- The recommended mitigation measures related to migratory birds are included in sections 21(e) and 21(h) under Schedule 2 of the Ministerial Regulation. See the Ministerial Response for more information.

Status: Completed – Fully Met

6. Seabird Monitoring

Responsible Authority: IAAC

Ministerial Response Commitment:

- Develop a Ministerial Regulation that includes requirements for proponents to incorporate new technologies, as they become available, into their seabird monitoring programs to complement research on, and mitigation of, light attraction.

Accomplishments:

- These requirements were incorporated into section 21(l) of the Ministerial Regulation under Schedule 2.

Status: Completed – Fully Met

7. Training on Seabird Strandings

Responsible Authority: IAAC

Ministerial Response Commitment:

- Develop a Ministerial Regulation that includes requirements for proponents to include general awareness regarding seabird strandings as part of their overall training/orientation programs for offshore workers.

Accomplishments:

- These requirements have been incorporated into section 21(m) of the Ministerial Regulation under Schedule 2.

Status: Completed – Fully Met

8. Activities in Marine Refuges and Closure Areas

Responsible Authority: DFO, C-NLOPB & IAAC

Ministerial Response Commitment:

- Develop a Ministerial Regulation that will include the following provisions:
 - Require a plan to be developed in consultation with DFO and the C-NLOPB when a project is proposed in an other effective area-based conservation measures (OECM), including a marine refuge. The plan will describe potential adverse effects

from the activity to the OECCM's objectives, explain measures to limit those effects, and describe associated monitoring and reporting activities.

- Require proponents prior to commencing any drilling activities, to conduct, in collaboration with the C-NLOPB and DFO, seabed investigation surveys to confirm the presence or absence of sensitive features. If features are present, proponents will change the location of their anchor(s) or well on the seafloor or redirect well cuttings discharges to avoid affecting these features. If these actions are not technically feasible, proponents will be required to consult with the C-NLOPB and DFO to determine the appropriate course of action.
- Require proponents to provide a copy of any additional mitigation measures to DFO if they intend to carry out activities in the Northwest Atlantic Fisheries Organization Vulnerable Marine Ecosystems Closed Areas.
- DFO and the C-NLOPB to pursue amendments to the existing Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to require DFO to approve the OECCM Plan prior to an authorization issuance.

Accomplishments:

- These provisions were incorporated in paragraph 3(l) and sections 12, 13 and 14 under Schedule 2 of the Ministerial Regulation. See the Ministerial Response for more information.
- The MOU was amended and signed by all parties in July 2020. Section 9.5 includes the information regarding OECCM Plans. [The MOU is available on the C-NLOPB's website.](#)

Status: Completed – Fully Met

9. Consultation in Regulatory Development

Responsible Authority: IAAC

Ministerial Response Commitment:

- IAAC should consult with applicable government departments and agencies, Indigenous and stakeholder groups and the public in the development of the Ministerial Regulation.

Accomplishments:

- IAAC developed the Ministerial Regulation in collaboration with ECCC, DFO, and NRCan, and in consultation with the Government of NL and the C-NLOPB.
- IAAC sought the views of Indigenous peoples, the public and stakeholders during regulatory development.

- See the Ministerial Response for more information.

Status: Completed – Fully Met

10. Notification Requirements

Responsible Authority: IAAC

Ministerial Response Commitment:

- Develop a Ministerial Regulation that will require proponents to notify IAAC in writing when they intend to carry out a project.
- IAAC will post the notification of whether the proposed project type is designated by the Ministerial Regulation on the Canadian Impact Assessment Registry.

Accomplishments:

- These commitments were incorporated in section 3 under Schedule 2 of the Ministerial Regulation. See the Ministerial Response for more information.

Status: Completed – Fully Met

11. Application of the Exclusion

Responsible Authority: IAAC

Ministerial Response Commitment:

- The exclusion will apply to activities as described in the *Physical Activities Regulations*, namely offshore exploratory wells in the first drilling program as set out in the exploration license(s) provided by the C-NLOPB.
- Any future changes to the Ministerial Regulation would also include transitional provisions related to projects that were under consideration at the time.

Accomplishments:

- The Ministerial Regulation came into force on June 4, 2020. See section 34 of the *Physical Activities Regulation* for more information on projects that would be eligible to receive an exclusion from undergoing a federal impact assessment.

Status: Completed – Fully Met

12. Review of Ministerial Regulation

Responsible Authority: IAAC

Ministerial Response Commitment:

- The Ministerial Regulation will be reviewed periodically, and at the latest within five years (June 2025).
- With the support of the federal departments and Government of NL, IAAC commits to considering the outcomes of the RA Follow-up Program in the reviews or revisions of the Ministerial Regulation.

Workplan:

- The goal of the review of the regulation will be to ensure that the highest standards of environmental protection continue to be maintained over time and to ensure the effectiveness of the streamlined process.
- The review process will occur within five years of the coming into force of the regulation.
- The review of the regulation will:
 - consider any cumulative effects that result from projects in the area;
 - consider any advice or perspectives from the RA Follow-up Program.
- IAAC will engage the public on any proposed changes to the regulation.
- Indigenous groups will be consulted in this review and will have an opportunity to participate in the process.

Status: Progress Ongoing

13. Adequate and Appropriate Modelling

Responsible Authority: IAAC

Ministerial Response Commitment:

- Develop a Ministerial Regulation that will require proponents to undertake adequate and appropriate modelling regarding: drill cuttings and their dispersion, and the predicted fate and behavior of potential oil spills.

- Proponents will lead a future consultative process with the C-NLOPB, NRCan, DFO, ECCC as required to ensure project-specific spill modelling is adequate and appropriate for the proposed exploratory drilling projects.

Accomplishments:

- These requirements were included in sections 6(b) and 32(a) under Schedule 2 of the Ministerial Regulation. See the Ministerial Response for more information.

Workplan:

- At the time of this Ministerial Response Progress Report, no projects have been proposed by proponents under the Ministerial Regulation. Timelines for completion of the commitment are dependent on proponents.

Status: Completed – Ongoing Monitoring

14. Annual Follow-up Program Report

Responsible Authority: IAAC

Ministerial Response Commitment:

- Implement the RA Follow-up Program, including providing new information and updating initiatives in the annual RA Follow-up Program report.
- As new and revised information becomes available, the information contained in and outputs of the Regional Assessment, which includes the GIS Tool, predictions of effects and mitigation measures will be reviewed and updated.
- IAAC, supported by NRCan, ECCC, DFO, the Government of NL, C-NLOPB, and the RA Follow-up Advisory Committee, will report on these reviews or updates in an annual RA Follow-up Program Report.

Accomplishments:

- IAAC has led the development and engagement of the Terms of Reference for the RA Follow-up Program. The Terms of Reference outlines the reporting structure for the RA Follow-up Program.

Workplan:

- The first annual RA Follow-up Program Report is due to be made public by March 31st, 2022. The outputs of the Regional Assessment, including the GIS Tool and the predictions of effects and mitigation measures, will be reviewed and reported on through the RA Follow-up Program Report.

Status: Progress Ongoing

15. Long-term Plan for the GIS Decision-support tool

Responsible Authority: IAAC, Government of Canada & Government of NL

Ministerial Response Commitment:

- The IAAC and the signatories to the Regional Assessment Agreement shall develop and publicly communicate their plans for the long-term housing, maintenance and use of the GIS decision-support tool (GIS Tool) to Indigenous groups and stakeholders.
- These plans will be publicly released as part of the first Regional Assessment Ministerial Response Progress Report.

Accomplishments:

- IAAC initiated a process of identifying and accessing any new or updated information, datasets and, studies that could be incorporated into the update of the GIS Tool. This includes information related to the existing environment modules, as well as information on potential effects.
- IAAC is exploring additional functionality of the GIS Tool to improve the user interface and user experience.
- IAAC is conducting further technical analysis of potential opportunities for more direct integration of the GIS Tool into its existing IT systems, and linkages with other, existing on-line datasets and data repositories.
- The Steering Committee has also discussed plans and potential approaches for the future hosting and maintenance of the GIS Tool, and has decided to continue to have it hosted on the current (external) server while the above analysis are on-going.
- IAAC completed the process of extending the software licenses and external hosting and maintenance arrangements for the GIS Tool to March 31, 2022.
- The first update to the GIS tool was released May 31st 2021.

Workplan:

- The GIS tool will continue to be managed and updated by IAAC.
- The RA Follow-up Advisory Committee will provide advice to the RA Steering Committee when new and emerging information is available.

- Future annual RA Follow-up Program report will communicate any changes that will be incorporated into the GIS Tool.
- The next updated version of the GIS Tool is scheduled to be released in May 2022.

Status: Completed – Ongoing Monitoring

16. Ministerial Response Progress Report

Responsible Authority: IAAC

Ministerial Response Commitment:

- All of the commitments of parties, as outlined in this Ministerial Response document, shall be tracked and publicly reported in the annual Ministerial Response Progress Report as part of the RA Follow-up Program. This report is to be released before the end of March each year.

Accomplishments:

- The first Ministerial Response Progress Report was made public on July 15th 2021.
- All parties named in the Ministerial Response have contributed to reporting on their progress on commitments.
- As outlined in the Terms of Reference for the RA Follow-up Program, the Ministerial Response Progress Report will be integrated into the annual RA Follow-up Program Report (due to be made public by the end of March of 2022).

Status: Completed – Fully Met

17. Reviews and Reports

Responsible Authority: IAAC

Ministerial Response Commitment:

- The outputs of the Regional Assessment—including the GIS Tool, predictions of effects and mitigation measures—shall be reviewed and updated as part of the RA Follow-up Program and will be reported on annually. All relevant information will also be considered in the context of the periodic review of the Ministerial Regulation.
- All of the commitments of parties, as outlined in the Ministerial Response, shall be tracked and publicly reported in the annual Ministerial Response Progress Report. This report will be released before the end of March each year.

- The RA Follow-up Program will detail requirements for the maintenance and further development of the GIS Tool, including its associated datasets and analytical functionality.

Accomplishments:

- The Terms of Reference for the RA Follow-up Program indicate that:
 - The outputs of the Regional Assessment—including the GIS Tool will be reviewed and updated as part of the RA Follow-up Program and will be reported on annually.
 - All relevant information, including advice received from the RA Follow-up Advisory Committee will be considered in the context of the periodic review of the Ministerial Regulation.
- All the commitments of the parties in the Ministerial Response are reported on in the Ministerial Response Progress Report (see Annex 1 for a summary of the status of commitments).
- The Ministerial Response Progress Report details the requirements for maintenance and further development of the GIS Tool. Please see “Commitment 15 - Long-term Plan for the GIS Decision-support tool” for more information.

Status: Completed - Ongoing Monitoring

18. Incorporating Diverse Perspectives

Responsible Authority: IAAC

Ministerial Response Commitment:

- The participants in the RA Follow-up Program should reflect a diversity of perspectives. Governance of any oversight or advisory body that participates in the RA Follow-up Program will be defined through its development.

Accomplishments:

- Perspectives of Indigenous groups, the public and stakeholders were sought for the draft Terms of Reference for the RA Follow-up Program in the fall 2020.

Workplan:

- The RA Follow-up Advisory Committee will be put in place in the spring of 2021 and will include a diversity of perspectives through the inclusion of representatives from Indigenous groups, the oil and gas industry, the fishing industry, environmental non-government organizations, academic interest groups, and the public.

- Diverse perspectives will also be sought and incorporated through engagement processes as part of the RA Follow-up Program. Public comment periods will be held for reviewing and providing comments on key documents.

Status: Progress Ongoing

19. Use of Studies and Scientific Reviews

Responsible Authority: DFO & ECCC

Ministerial Response Commitment:

- Certain studies and reviews, such as research on Atlantic salmon, will be considered for appropriate action as detailed in the RA Follow-up Program. These include on-going or planned studies or scientific reviews identified in the Regional Assessment Committee Report and any other appropriate study or scientific review (or their outcomes).
- This work will be done in accordance with government policies for scientific data. This process will also respect the needs of research scientists to publish novel data and analyses in scientific peer-reviewed literature.
- The RA Final Report identified four planned or ongoing studies.
 1. Proposed Environmental Studies Research Fund (ESRF) studies relevant to the Regional Assessment, including on Atlantic salmon presence and timing in the Study Area.
 2. On-going ECCC – CWS species-specific predictive modelling for seabirds.
 3. On-going DFO marine mammals species distribution modelling.
 4. Any on-going or upcoming Indigenous Knowledge studies completed for offshore oil and gas exploratory drilling.

Accomplishments:

- The RA Steering Committee will continue to identify and incorporate new or updated information and seek the advice of the RA Follow-up Advisory Committee. The RA Follow-up Advisory Committee can provide advice to the RA Steering Committee when an update to the GIS Tool may be required.
- The outcomes of these studies are scheduled to be reviewed by the RA Follow-up Advisory Committee and the RA Steering Committee for consideration in the next GIS Tool update scheduled in May 2022.

**Workplan:**

- Once available, the outcomes of these studies are scheduled to be reviewed by the RA Follow-up Advisory Committee and the Steering Committee and determine how these will be considered as part of the next GIS Tool update in May 2022.
 1. ESRF research relevant to the Regional Assessment
 - For research on Atlantic salmon, please see work plan for “Commitment 21 - Atlantic Salmon”.
 2. ECCC – CWS species-specific predictive modelling for seabirds
 - ECCC-CWS will update maps of seabird densities for the Atlas of Seabirds at Sea in Eastern Canada (by March 2022).
 - ECCC-CWS will incorporate industry survey data into the Eastern Canada Seabirds at Sea database to fill temporal-spatial data gaps and work with partners outside of ECCC to compile all existing seabird telemetry data passing through the study area (by March 2023).
 - ECCC-CWS will provide seasonal maps of important areas for a suite of marine bird species which will include: predictive density maps of seabirds from at-sea surveys and kernel density and habitat suitability maps from tracking data (by March 2023).
 - ECCC-CWS will work with Indigenous groups to enhance capacity for marine bird monitoring and research through grant and contribution agreements (G&C agreements).
 - 3 new G&C agreements are planned for 2021-22 (with NunatuKavut Community Council, Qalipu First Nation and Miawpukek First Nation), leading to meaningful engagement with members of Indigenous groups in Newfoundland and Labrador regarding seabird conservation, including Leach’s Storm-Petrels.
 3. DFO marine mammals species distribution modelling
 - No updates on this research initiative are available at the time of posting of this first Ministerial Response Progress Report.

4. Any on-going or upcoming Indigenous Knowledge studies completed for offshore oil and gas exploratory drilling
 - A new project will be undertaken through the ESRF titled “[Laying the Groundwork: Enhancing Cross Cultural Understanding through Two-Eyed Seeing](#)”.
 - The purpose of this Project is to promote the understanding of Indigenous knowledge and appropriate use of Indigenous knowledge in decision-making on offshore oil and gas projects in Atlantic Canada. Fundamental to this is the need to build a common and consistent understanding of Indigenous knowledge concepts within the oil and gas industry. This project will use the knowledge system approach to enhance cross-cultural understanding, focusing on what is Indigenous knowledge, the relationship between the Indigenous and Western knowledge systems and ways both can be used for the benefit of all, using the concept of Two-Eyed Seeing.
 - The outcomes of this study will be reported on in future years and considered in the context of the RA Follow-up Program.

Status: Progress Ongoing

20. Scope of Factors for Assessment of Designated Projects

Responsible Authority: IAAC

Ministerial Response Commitment:

- Where a proponent does not meet the requirements outlined in the Ministerial Regulation, their project would be subject to an impact assessment under the *Impact Assessment Act*.
- The impact assessment of a designated project must take into account the factors specified in subsection 22(1) of the *Impact Assessment Act*.
- In the planning phase of the impact assessment process, the proponent has the opportunity to provide information and views in its project description(s) and response to the summary of issues. This information provided helps the IAAC determine if and how specific factors (paragraphs 22(1)(a) to (f), (h) to (l), (s) and (t)) should be considered in the assessment.

Workplan:

- It will be important to ensure the effective and efficient impact assessment of designated projects while respecting the joint-management regime for the regulation of offshore activities. IAAC, with the support of the federal authorities, the C-NLOPB and other jurisdictions, considers the information and the views of the proponent—as well as information and views from other participants in the process—in setting the scope of the factors to be addressed by the proponent in its impact statement. The scope of the factors is reflected in the tailored impact statement guidelines issued to the proponent at the end of the planning phase.
- These measures are consistent with the goals and requirements of *the Impact Assessment Act* and the requirements of the Ministerial Regulation and will continue to be monitored through the RA Follow-up Program.

Status: Completed – Ongoing Monitoring

21. Atlantic Salmon

Responsible Authority: DFO

Ministerial Response Commitment:

- DFO will continue to collaborate with partners in research plans, including from data collection through to participation in assessment processes on Atlantic salmon. It will continue to explore opportunities for enhanced collaboration.

Accomplishments:

- DFO continues to advance research on Atlantic salmon in Atlantic Canada and the NL offshore area.
- A network of acoustic receivers have been put in place in key areas to collect information on salmon migratory pathways; this work has involved multiple external groups as well as DFO. In collaboration with the Atlantic salmon Federation, acoustic receiver arrays have been deployed annually across the Strait of Belle Isle as well as a 30km line extending offshore from Port Hope-Simpson, Labrador. Acoustic tagging of Atlantic salmon smolt and kelt has been conducted on Campbellton River and Western Arm Brook in recent years and salmon from both rivers were detected in these arrays. Smolt counting facilities have been installed on five rivers in NL which provide estimates of at-sea mortality for salmon by comparing the smolt count in one year to the number of returning small salmon the following year. Since 2018, smolts have been tagged with passive integrated transponder (PIT) on three of these rivers (Western Arm Brook, Campbellton River and Garnish River) as part of a pilot study to improve DFO's understanding of what factors may influence survival while salmon are at sea.

- Genetic analysis of salmon stocks contributing to West Greenland, Labrador, and St. Pierre and Miquelon fisheries is conducted annually to inform national and international stock assessments (including the International Council for the Exploration of the Sea).

Workplan:

- A 5-year collaborative research project involving 51 confirmed collaborators, funded through the ESRF will begin in spring 2021 to study Atlantic salmon in the Eastern Canadian offshore regions including the timing, duration and the effects of environmental variability and climate change. An MOU between ESRF and DFO was signed in December 2020 approving the research project.
- This large-scale project involving both acoustic and satellite tagging and tracking of salmon will provide new information on Atlantic salmon migratory patterns at sea.
- Smolt-counting facilities will continue to be operated annually and pit-tagging of smolts will continue at these facilities.
- Genetic analysis of mixed-stock fisheries will continue annually.

Status: Progress Ongoing

22. Leach's Storm-petrels and Other Relevant Species

Responsible Authority: ECCC

Ministerial Response Commitment:

- ECCC to undertake additional research to better understand potential impacts of offshore activity on Leach's Storm petrels and other seabirds in respect of the following short-term priorities:
 - Improve oil spill preparedness and response with respect to effects on seabirds,
 - Increase understanding of the population dynamics of Leach's Storm-petrels in Atlantic Canada, and
 - Increase understanding of the attraction of seabirds (e.g., storm petrels and other species) to light sources offshore.

Accomplishments:

- ECCC-CWS hired a dedicated Biologist in September 2020 to oversee the Leach's Storm-Petrel Monitoring & Threat Assessment in Atlantic Canada research program.

- A 3-year G&C agreement was signed with Queen's University to evaluate the use of genomics and biochemical markers to assign stranded Leach's Storm-Petrel to colony of origin.
- A 3-year G&C agreement was signed with Birds Canada to identify priority threats and conservation strategies using an Open Standards for the Practice of Conservation framework for Leach's Storm-Petrel.
- A 3-year G&C agreement was signed with Nunatsiavut Government to continue progress made during their 2019-2020 G&C agreement to enhance capacity for marine bird monitoring and research, which includes at-sea survey training and telemetry studies to examine linkages between marine birds breeding in Nunatsiavut waters and their use of Newfoundland and Labrador offshore waters.
- A process to lead a Public Opinion Research contract is currently underway to understand public perceptions of Leach's Storm-Petrels which will inform management efforts, support community and industry (i.e., oil and gas, fishing) outreach, and increase the understanding/willingness of the public and industry to engage in conservation efforts.
- ECCC plans to purchase 110 GPS tracking devices, which, after deployment, will fill existing data gaps regarding Leach's Storm-Petrel foraging ranges in the Study Area.
- Collaboration with academic partners at Trent University and Memorial University is underway to investigate how Leach's Storm-Petrels and Atlantic Puffins respond to changes in physical alterations of light sources using experimental approaches; radar technology will also be used to assess how these two species travel through the landscape in relation to varying levels of artificial light in the environment.
- ECCC is working with an environmental consultant firm to quantify the lightscape of artificial light levels in eastern NL, including the offshore, to identify areas where birds are potentially most at risk and guide future monitoring of light attraction.
- The ESRF has solicited the first three calls for proposals which will feed into the development of a research program aimed to better understand if and how seabirds, in particular Leach's Storm-Petrels, are attracted to light generated by oil and gas activities in Atlantic offshore.

Workplan:

By March 2023, ECCC aims to have:

- Updated population status for all major Leach's Storm Petrel colonies in Atlantic Region (surveys conducted since 2013 or more recent).
- Supported ongoing annual monitoring of adult survival and reproductive success at key sites across Atlantic Region.

- All tracking data collected at key breeding sites across the Atlantic Region by ECCC-CWS and partners analyzed, identifying important foraging and over-wintering areas, and assessing threats at these sites.
- Evaluated the use of genomics and biochemical markers to assign stranded birds to colony of origin.
- Developed evidence-based mitigation measures for light attraction to reduce stranding rates of Leach's Storm-Petrels.
- A better understanding of public perceptions of Leach's Storm-Petrels and implement these findings into outreach and education/conservation efforts.
- An Open Standards for the Practice of Conservation model for Leach's Storm-Petrel in Atlantic Canada, which identifies the relative impact of priority threats, prioritizes them, develops conservation strategies and measureable outcomes.
- Meaningful engagement with members of Indigenous groups in Newfoundland and Labrador regarding seabird conservation, including Leach's Storm-Petrel.
- A map of the lightscape across eastern NL where birds may be at risk to light attraction to inform sites where systematic monitoring for stranded birds is warranted and better understand if and how seabirds, in particular Leach' Storm-Petrels, are attracted to light generated by oil and gas activities in Atlantic offshore.

Status: Progress Ongoing

23. Data Accessibility

Responsible Authority: DFO

Ministerial Response Commitment:

- Commercial fisheries data should be made available by DFO in a more timely, accessible and useful manner.

Accomplishments:

- DFO leads a working group through the Marine Spatial Planning (MSP) initiative, to make data publicly available through a web-based mapping application.

Workplan:

- DFO is developing interactive maps of marine data and continues to publish information and data to the Open Government platform and develop an online MSP portal. Some data from DFO's partners may be subject to access restrictions.

- Anticipated timeline for developing interactive maps is 2022 (clarifying data governance may be required to make data publicly accessible).

Status: Progress Ongoing

24. Commercial Fisheries Data

Responsible Authority: DFO

Ministerial Response Commitment:

- DFO will ensure, subject to privacy restrictions and policies on authorized access and use of geospatial data, that information on the distribution of commercial fishery activities will become more readily available to government authorities involved in managing marine authorities (and possibly to other groups).
- This will happen through the ongoing work led by the department to implement MSP in the Newfoundland-Labrador Shelves Bioregion and build upon work completed through the Canada-Newfoundland and Labrador Committee on Oceans Management (CNLCOM) and the Regional Oversight Committee on Oceans Management (ROCOM). The Marine Planning and Conservation Program is actively exploring means of sharing fisheries and other information among organizations participating in MSP.

Accomplishments:

- DFO leads a working group through the MSP initiative, to make data publicly available through a web-based mapping application.

Workplan:

- MSP will use commercial fisheries data to create data products that will be available in applications such as interactive maps. Some data from DFO's partners may be subject to access restrictions.
- Anticipated timeline for developing interactive maps is 2022 (clarifying data governance may be required to make data publicly accessible).
- DFO is also working with the C-NLOPB and other organizations to optimize the efficiency of sharing available fisheries data held by DFO in advance of the development of data-sharing platforms.

Status: Progress Ongoing

25. Knowledge Sharing Protocol

Responsible Authority: DFO

Ministerial Response Commitment:

- DFO, with the support of NRCan, the Government of NL and the C-NLOPB, will develop and implement a protocol for gathering, documenting and sharing information and knowledge to better understand key fishing activities, areas and times on a regional scale. This protocol will be developed through the ongoing efforts to implement MSP in the Newfoundland-Labrador Shelves Bioregion.

Accomplishments:

- DFO leads MSP in the Newfoundland-Labrador Shelves Bioregion and has established Engagement and Data Working Groups through the CNLCOM to make data publicly available through this web-based mapping application.
- An Atlantic-wide marine atlas connected to a national MSP platform is under development. An internal DFO technical committee has been established to advance this initiative.
- DFO currently shares publicly available information on its website and provides data on requests that meet conditions under the *Privacy Act*.

Workplan:

- DFO is working on developing a protocol to streamline the data sharing process that requires signed agreements by all parties impacted in order to share data that does not meet *Privacy Act* standards.

Status: Progress Ongoing

26. Information Gathering and Sharing Protocol

Responsible Authority: DFO

Ministerial Response Commitment:

- DFO, with support from ECCC, NRCan, the Government of NL, C-NLOPB and IAAC, shall work together with Indigenous groups and industry to develop and implement a protocol for gathering, documenting and sharing information and knowledge about key environmental components and sensitivities in the Study Area.
- DFO intends to achieve this commitment through the implementation of the MSP Initiative.

Accomplishments:

- DFO leads the MSP process in the Newfoundland-Labrador Shelves Bioregion and has established Engagement and Data Working Groups through the C-NLCOM, to gather and include key environmental information which will be made available through this mapping application.
- The MSP Initiative is underway in the Newfoundland-Labrador Shelves Bioregion. MSP is being led by DFO and involves collaboration with key partners and engagement of key stakeholders.

Workplan:

- Through MSP, progress on governance arrangements in the Newfoundland-Labrador Shelves Bioregion are advancing. Most notably, two working groups (Data & Engagement) have been formed under the C-NLCOM and have begun to engage with key partners and stakeholders on information collection and sharing relevant to MSP.
- MSP implementation will include a data sharing protocol for gathering, documenting and sharing information and knowledge about key environmental components and sensitivities in the Newfoundland-Labrador Shelves Bioregion that includes the Regional Assessment Study Area.
- DFO requires signed agreements by all parties impacted in order to share data that does not meet *Privacy Act* standards. DFO is working on developing a protocol to streamline the data sharing process that includes data products such as interactive maps.

Status: Progress Ongoing

27. Accessibility of Marine Mammals and Sea Turtles Data

Responsible Authority: DFO

Ministerial Response Commitment:

- DFO is committed to Open Data initiatives and will continue efforts to make its data on marine mammals and sea turtles sightings publicly available.

Accomplishments:

- DFO continues to advance the Open Data initiative. Validation of sightings data is a long-term goal but is an essential requirement before these data can be freely available.

Status: Progress Ongoing

28. Standards for Marine Mammals Observers

Responsible Authority: DFO

Ministerial Response Commitment:

- DFO will produce a document establishing standards for marine mammal observers. These standards will help the industry to be better equipped to perform marine mammal observations.

Accomplishments:

- DFO has initiated internal discussions in regards to roles and responsibilities for this commitment. The department already possesses knowledge and information that could be leveraged.

Workplan:

- A three-year timeframe is expected to be required to meet this commitment.

Status: Progress Ongoing

29. Surveys of Stranded Birds

Responsible Authority: ECCC

Ministerial Response Commitment:

- ECCC will develop guidance for protocols for systematic surveys of stranded birds on offshore platforms and vessels by March 2021.
- Work with industry to implement site-specific protocols (developed by industry in collaboration with ECCC).
- The C-NLOPB commits to working with ECCC in the application of this protocol.

Accomplishments:

- ECCC-CWS received a draft protocol from one proponent in November 2020 and provided guidance.
- ECCC-CWS met with C-NLOPB and proponents to communicate expectations in January 2021.

- ECCC-CWS provided guidance to proponents for stranded bird monitoring including context and/or rationale for monitoring, standards to be met (e.g., spatial coverage, frequency) and key data to collect.

Workplan:

- ECCC-CWS will continue to work with proponents to develop site-specific survey protocols to support ongoing operations.
- Proponents will continue to implement stranded bird survey protocols during operations.
- ECCC-CWS will develop a database to improve data transfer procedures by March 2022.
- ECCC-CWS will assess stranded bird survey data from proponents and will identify and communicate needs for improvements/adaptations to proponents as necessary (ongoing).
- By March 2023, standardized monitoring protocols and efficient data transfer procedures will be fully operationalized by proponents on platforms and vessels.

Status: Progress Ongoing

30. Information Availability and Data Gaps

Responsible Authority: C-NLOPB

Ministerial Response Commitment:

- C-NLOPB commits to continue considering the following in future licensing decisions: information availability, data gaps and associated environmental risks as part of the scheduled land tenure process for the Canada-Newfoundland and Labrador offshore.

Accomplishments:

- The C-NLOPB carefully considers information on commercial fisheries in planning, assessing and authorizing petroleum industry activities.
- C-NLOPB staff regularly and actively engage with DFO to obtain the most current fishery information available for these purposes. C-NLOPB is also an active participant in the ongoing MSP initiative being led by DFO, which seeks to enhance the efficient sharing of information on important ocean activities, including commercial fisheries, among regulators.
- The C-NLOPB regularly monitors information availability, data gaps and associated environmental risks. These will be considered for all land tenure decisions.

Workplan:

- During the call for nominations and call for bids process under the Scheduled Land Tenure System, C-NLOPB staff assess the overall environmental risks, information availability and any data gaps for the specific area as part of the land tenure decision-making process.

Status: Completed – Ongoing Monitoring

31. Special Areas Initiative

Responsible Authority: DFO & ECCC

Ministerial Response Commitment:

- DFO and ECCC commit to considering the outcomes of the RA Follow-up Program in the special areas initiatives.
- DFO and ECCC continue to advance science required to determine whether additional mitigation or follow-up is warranted for future exploratory activity in marine OECCMs including DFO marine refuges.
- Implement additional foundational work to ensure information is available to inform special area identification where ECCC and DFO data gaps exist.

Accomplishments:

- DFO, ECCC and Parks Canada Agency (PCA) continue to identify candidate areas for protection based on best available scientific data, as well as a variety of other factors (e.g., traditional and local knowledge; overlap with Treaties/Self-Government Agreements; jurisdiction; partners' views; type of activity(ies) posing a risk; etc.).
- Sites that are advanced as potential future federal MPAs or marine OECCMs must adhere to the Government's new federal marine protection standards, as announced in April 2019 in response to recommendations from the National Advisory Panel on MPA Standards. The MPA protection standard prohibits oil and gas exploration and exploitation, mining, dumping and bottom trawling in new federal MPAs. The marine OECCM protection standard applies a case-by-case, risk-based approach to all activities to ensure that their potential risks to the OECCM, including marine refuges, have been effectively avoided or mitigated.
- DFO, ECCC and PCA continue to work to clarify and operationalize federal MPA and federal marine OECCM protection standards announced on April 25, 2019. Work is underway to develop updated Marine OECCM Guidance that builds on the 2016 interim DFO guidance, continues to align with 2016 science advice provided by the Canadian Science Advisory Secretariat (CSAS), aligns with the 2018 Convention on Biological Diversity's voluntary OECCM guidance, and implements the new marine OECCM protection standard. The updated OECCM Guidance is expected to be completed in 2021.

Workplan:

- DFO commits to making the additional guidance on mitigating effects to corals and sponges available for incorporation into the RA Follow-up Program as soon as the guidance has been developed and released.
- ECCC to engage DFO and PCA to ensure existing ECCC-CWS information is available to inform decisions related to protected area establishment.
- Foundational work to collect information is well underway; however, future activities to support this commitment may require resources to support MPA and marine OECM establishment.

Status: Progress Ongoing

32. Availability of Spill Imagery

Responsible Authority: C-NLOPB & DFO

Ministerial Response Commitment:

- The C-NLOPB will work with DFO to consider how proponents could make associated imagery around the nature and extent of an offshore spill available to Indigenous and stakeholder groups while upholding confidentiality restrictions.

Accomplishments:

- The C-NLOPB met with DFO (Canadian Coast Guard) in the first quarter of 2021 to discuss a path forward for spill imagery to be shared with Indigenous and stakeholder groups in the event of a spill offshore of Newfoundland and Labrador in the future.

Status: Progress Ongoing

33. Guidance on Mitigating Effects to Corals and Sponges

Responsible Authority: DFO

Ministerial Response Commitment:

- DFO commits to making additional guidance on mitigating effects on corals and sponges available for incorporation into the RA Follow-up Program as soon as the guidance has been developed and released.

- DFO is developing guidance to minimize potential significant impacts of exploratory drilling on corals and sponges offshore Newfoundland and Labrador.
- NRCan, along with the C-NLOPB and the Government of NL will support the development of specific guidance on effects mitigation to corals and sponges.

Accomplishments:

- A DFO CSAS scientific peer review process was conducted in January 2020 and is in the process of being completed. The scientific advice will help inform the Department's guidance, along with other information sources (i.e. international best management practices, industry input, relevant policies, socio-economic considerations).

Workplan:

- DFO is working in collaboration with the C-NLOPB and stakeholders to develop standard operational guidance to minimize impacts on cold water corals/sponges from impacts from exploration drilling. This is intended to increase clarity on measures needed for drilling to take place in marine refuges (e.g. to meet the Federal Government's marine OECM protection standard) as well as outside of these, and will support achieving related RA commitments.

Status: Progress Ongoing

34. Updates to Seismic Sound Mitigation or Standards

Responsible Authority: DFO

Ministerial Response Commitment:

- DFO commits to make any new or amended mitigation requirements or standards applicable to exploratory drilling – that result from any revisions to the Statement of Canadian Practice with respect to the Mitigation of Seismic Sound in the Marine Environment – available to be included in future updates to the Ministerial Regulation.

Accomplishments:

- The Statement of Canadian Practice (SOCP) with respect to the Mitigation of Seismic Sound in the Marine Environment specifies the minimum mitigation requirements that must be met during the planning and conduct of marine seismic surveys to minimize impacts on marine life.
- In 2019, DFO led a scientific peer review of the mitigation measures in the Statement. The [proceedings](#) and [research document](#) associated with this process are available online.

- The [Science Advisory Report](#), published in 2020, noted that there is sufficient new scientific and technical information to support an update to the mitigation measures.
- Based on this recent science review and recommendations, DFO is leading a process to update the Statement in consultation with partners and stakeholders.

Workplan:

- Any new or amended mitigation requirements applicable to exploratory drilling will be made available for consideration and inclusion in future updates to the Ministerial Regulation.

Status: Progress Ongoing

35. Baseline Data on Contaminants Levels

Responsible Authority: DFO

Ministerial Response Commitment:

- DFO will review previous research projects, including external research projects funded by the department. It will also provide information about projects related to polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs) and total petroleum hydrocarbons (TPHs) in the Study Area to stakeholders through departmental Open Data initiatives.

Accomplishments:

- In reviewing external research that it has funded (through the National Contaminants Advisory Group) pertaining to contaminants levels in the Study Area, DFO has yet to find relevant projects.

Workplan:

- DFO will continue to review other internal and external funded DFO research.
- A two-year timeframe is expected to be required to meet this commitment.

Status: Progress Ongoing

36. Land Tenure Decisions

Responsible Authority: C-NLOPB

Ministerial Response Commitment:

- The C-NLOPB has committed to considering the information and analysis from the Regional Assessment and the outcomes of the RA Follow-up Program in its land tenure decisions on a go-forward basis, including prior to Fundamental Decisions by governments.

Accomplishments:

- The C-NLOPB carefully considers information on commercial fisheries in planning, assessing and authorizing petroleum industry activities. C-NLOPB staff regularly and actively engage with DFO to obtain the most current fishery information available for these purposes.
- The C-NLOPB is also an active participant in the ongoing MSP initiative being led by DFO, which seeks to enhance the efficient sharing of information on important ocean activities, including commercial fisheries, among regulators.
- During the call for nominations and call for bids process under the Scheduled Land Tenure System, C-NLOPB staff assess the overall environmental risks, information availability and data gaps for the specific area as part of the land tenure decision-making process. Information and analysis from the Regional Assessment and the outcomes of the RA Follow-up Program will also be considered within this assessment.
- Inclusion of the information and analysis of the Regional Assessment and outcomes of the RA Follow-up Program in land tenure decisions is being monitored regularly.

Status: Completed – Ongoing Monitoring

37. Strategic Environmental Assessments

Responsible Authority: C-NLOPB

Ministerial Response Commitment:

- The C-NLOPB will use the GIS Tool for a variety of purposes on a go-forward basis, including for any updates the C-NLOPB makes to the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) for Eastern Newfoundland and to inform the C-NLOPB licensing processes.
- The C-NLOPB commits to utilizing the Regional Assessment and GIS Tool as part of future SEA updates (and to inform its associated licensing processes).

Accomplishments:

- There are currently no new SEAs or updates to existing SEAs in the RA Study Area. If further SEAs are completed, they will be conducted in a manner consistent with the

Ministerial Response. Additionally, the GIS Tool will be valuable in informing Land Tenure Decisions.

Status: Progress Ongoing

38. Exploratory Drilling Scenarios

Responsible Authority: Government of Canada, Government of NL & C-NLOPB

Ministerial Response Commitment:

- To prepare a work plan for further development of exploratory drilling scenarios (updates of these scenarios, the timing of the work to be completed, and the lead party) and to develop and approve exploratory drilling scenarios.

Accomplishments:

- The Governments of Canada and NL have reviewed the Regional Assessment Committee's low, medium and high exploratory drilling scenarios (Module 15 [GIS Tool](#)). Taking into consideration the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on offshore operations and the information currently available on planned industry activities, the Steering Committee has determined that the anticipated number of wells to be drilled on an annual basis between 2021 and 2023, as well as the spatial distribution of those wells, do not exceed the RA Committee's exploratory drilling scenarios. At this time, it is not possible to evaluate any potential changes beyond 2023, as no new information is available on planned exploratory drilling past this date.

Workplan:

- Over the next year, the Governments of Canada and NL, with C-NLOPB support, will identify timing, thresholds and considerations that would trigger the need to update exploratory drilling scenarios in the study area. This could include situations where the number of wells planned to be drilled in a given year exceed the maximum number contemplated in the RA Committee's exploratory drilling scenarios. Other considerations could include changes in spatial distribution of planned well drilling, beyond what was already considered by the RA Committee. At this time, based on planned industry activity, it is not expected that the drilling scenarios will require an update before 2024.

Status: Progress Ongoing

39. Cumulative Effects

Responsible Authority: Government of Canada, Government of NL & C-NLOPB

Ministerial Response Commitment:

- IAAC, with the support of the federal departments and the Government of NL, commits to considering cumulative effects of offshore-related activities in the RA Follow-up Program.
- The MSP initiative may be used as a vehicle to promote collection of information that could be used to assess and manage potential cumulative effects in the Canada-Newfoundland and Labrador offshore area.

Accomplishments:

- IAAC and the Steering Committee continue to engage in work to update information in the GIS Tool (see “Commitment 15 - Long-term Plan for the GIS Decision-support tool”)
 - This work includes gathering and incorporating updated information on oil and gas licencing and activities in the Study Area, as well as updated data on fisheries and other environmental and socioeconomic components.
- Cumulative effects, including distribution of wells within the study area may be considered in the context of future updates to exploratory drilling scenarios (see “Commitment 38 – Exploratory Drilling Scenarios”)
- Through MSP, progress on governance arrangements in the Newfoundland and Labrador Shelves Bioregion are advancing. Most notably, two working groups (Data & Engagement) have been formed under the CNLCOM to engage with key partners and stakeholders on information collection and sharing relevant to MSP.

Workplan:

- Through the RA Follow-up Program, IAAC and the Steering Committee will continue to gather and incorporate new and updated environmental information into the RA GIS Tool.
- C-NLOPB will provide information on recent, on-going, planned and potential offshore oil and gas activities in the Study Area to the RA Follow-up Program.
- The Steering Committee and RA Follow-up Advisory Committee will review this information and arrange potential workshop(s) to review and discuss.
 - With the objective to identify and highlight any areas, times or other situations where cumulative effects may be of concern.
- The outcomes of these discussions will result in input and advice being provided to C-NLOPB (and others as relevant) regarding any key areas of concern regarding cumulative effects.
- C-NLOPB considers this information and any associated advice in its decisions that year regarding calls for bids, nominations, sector identification, and licensing decisions.

Status: Progress Ongoing

40. Benefits Plans

Responsible Authority: C-NLOPB

Ministerial Response Commitment:

- The C-NLOPB will consider that proponents make benefits plans for exploratory drilling programs publicly available. Consistent with the Committee's recommendation, this could include a requirement to share information pertaining to local benefits commitments, as per Section 45 of the Accord Acts.

Accomplishments:

- The C-NLOPB has considered whether proponents should make benefits plans for exploratory drilling programs publicly available and is currently in the process of updating the Canada-Newfoundland and Labrador Benefits Plan Guidelines. One of the proposed updates reflects current practices and expectations for the content of Exploration Benefits Plans.
- The proposed updated Guidelines state that Benefits Plans submitted for proposed exploratory drilling programs in the Regional Assessment Study Area will be made publicly available (with allowances for any commercially sensitive information to be redacted as appropriate prior to release).
- The updated Guidelines are currently undergoing a review by NRCan and NL Department of Industry, Energy and Technology.

Workplan:

- The C-NLOPB intends to publish the updated draft Guidelines for industry and public comment when input has been received from governments, with the updated Guidelines to be finalized in 2021 after the external consultation process.

Status: Progress Ongoing

41. Diversity Plans

Responsible Authority: C-NLOPB

Ministerial Response Commitment:

- The C-NLOPB to consider whether Diversity Plans should be a requirement for exploratory drilling programs, which could then be made publicly available.

Accomplishments:

- The C-NLOPB has considered whether Diversity Plans should be a requirement for exploratory drilling programs and whether these should be made publicly available. The C-NLOPB is currently in the process of updating the Canada-Newfoundland and Labrador Benefits Plan Guidelines.
- One of the proposed updates reflects current practices and expectations for the content of Exploration Benefits Plans. Additionally, the proposed updated Guidelines state that Benefits Plans submitted for proposed exploratory drilling programs in the Regional Assessment Study must include a Diversity Plan.
- Proponents will be encouraged to consult with Board staff on the content of an Exploration Diversity Plan.
- The updated Guidelines are currently undergoing a review by NRCan and NL Department of Industry, Energy and Technology.

Workplan:

- The C-NLOPB intends to publish the new draft Guidelines for industry and public comment in when input has been received from governments, with the updated Guidelines to be finalized after the external consultation process.

Status: Progress Ongoing

42. Greenhouse Gas Emissions

Responsible Authority: ECCC & IAAC

Ministerial Response Commitment:

- ECCC will work with the C-NLOPB, the Government of NL and NRCan to carry out a sector analysis of Greenhouse Gas (GHG) emissions from offshore exploratory drilling. This analysis would follow the analytical approach and guidance provided in the most up-to-date version of the [Strategic Assessment of Climate Change \(published in October 2020\)](#).
- This analysis would be completed by fall 2021 to inform future amendments to the Ministerial Regulation to support mitigation as necessary.
- The commitment requires the completion of a sector analysis of GHG emissions from offshore exploratory drilling with the objective of providing further information, analysis and



advice on the extent to which the GHG emissions associated with potential exploratory drilling activity in the defined RA study area will hinder or contribute to the Government of Canada's ability to meet its environmental obligations and commitments in respect of climate change.

Accomplishments

- ECCC established a Working Group in fall 2020, which includes NRCan, IAAC, C-NLOPB and the Government of NL, participating as members.
- ECCC continues to make progress on the sector GHG analysis, in collaboration with the working group, focusing on the following tasks:
 - Completed
 - Establishing the scenarios of future offshore exploratory drilling activities
 - GHG quantification of the scenarios based on future offshore exploratory drilling activities
 - Analysis of the sector's GHG emissions in the context of Canada's emission targets and forecasts, including Canada's commitments under the Paris Agreement, the goal for Canada to achieve net-zero emissions by 2050, and Canada's 2030 emissions targets
 - Analysis of GHG mitigation measures for offshore exploratory drilling activities
 - Ongoing
 - Drafting of the sector analysis report of GHG emissions from offshore exploratory drilling, and Working Group review

Workplan:

- Publication of the draft report for public comment is anticipated in summer 2021.
- Publication of the final report is anticipated in fall 2021.

Status: Progress Ongoing

Annex 1 – Summary of Progress on Commitments

Commitment status dashboard for the commitments outlined in the Ministerial Response.

Status	Number of Commitments
Completed – Fully Met	10
Completed - Ongoing Monitoring	8
Progress Ongoing	24

Table 1: The table above provides an overview of the status of the 42 commitments made in the Ministerial Response for the given reporting period.

Summary table of the Ministers commitments outlined in the Ministerial Response to the recommendations of the Regional Assessment of Offshore Oil and Gas Exploratory Drilling East of Newfoundland and Labrador

Commitment	Status
Committee Recommendations in Relation to the Regulation	
1. Mitigation and Follow-up Measures	Completed – Fully Met
2. Trained Seabird Observers	Completed - Ongoing Monitoring
3. Fisheries Communications Plans	Completed – Fully Met
4. Pre-drilling Notifications	Completed – Ongoing Monitoring
5. Migratory Bird Mitigation	Completed – Fully Met
6. Seabird Monitoring	Completed – Fully Met
7. Training on Seabird Strandings	Completed – Fully Met
8. Activities in Marine Refuges and Closure Areas	Completed – Fully Met
9. Consultation in Regulatory Development	Completed – Fully Met
10. Notification Requirements	Completed – Fully Met
11. Application of Exclusion	Completed – Fully Met



12. Review of Ministerial Regulation	Progress Ongoing
13. Adequate and Appropriate Modeling	Completed – Ongoing Monitoring
Committee Recommendations for the Regional Assessment Follow-up Program	
14. Annual Follow-up Program Report	Progress Ongoing
15. Long-term plan for the GIS Decision-support tool	Completed – Ongoing Monitoring
16. Ministerial Response Progress Report	Completed – Fully Met
17. Reviews and Reports	Completed - Ongoing Monitoring
18. Incorporating Diverse Perspectives	Progress Ongoing
19. Use of Studies and Scientific Reviews	Progress Ongoing
Committee Recommendations for Specific Departments or Agencies	
20. Scope of Factors for Assessment of Designated Projects	Completed – Ongoing Monitoring
21. Atlantic Salmon	Progress Ongoing
22. Leach's Storm-petrels and other Relevant Species	Progress Ongoing
23. Data Accessibility	Progress Ongoing
24. Commercial Fisheries Data	Progress Ongoing
25. Knowledge Sharing Protocol	Progress Ongoing
26. Information Gathering and Sharing Protocol	Progress Ongoing
27. Accessibility of Marine Mammals and Sea Turtles Data	Progress Ongoing
28. Standards for Marine Mammals Observers	Progress Ongoing
29. Surveys of Stranded Birds	Progress Ongoing
30. Information Availability and Data Gaps	Completed – Ongoing Monitoring
31. Special Areas Initiatives	Progress Ongoing



32. Availability of Spill Imagery	Progress Ongoing
33. Guidance on Mitigating Effects to Corals and Sponges	Progress Ongoing
34. Updates to Seismic Sound Mitigation or Standards	Progress Ongoing
35. Baseline Data on Contaminants Levels	Progress Ongoing
36. Land Tenure Decisions	Completed – Ongoing Monitoring
37. Strategic Environmental Assessments	Progress Ongoing
38. Exploratory Drilling Scenarios	Progress Ongoing
39. Cumulative Effects	Progress Ongoing
40. Benefits Plans	Progress Ongoing
41. Diversity Plans	Progress Ongoing
42. Greenhouse Gas Emissions	Progress Ongoing

Table 2: The table above provides a summary of the commitments. In future years, this table will be embedded in the RA Follow-up Program Report and will provide any updates on progress made towards achieving the commitments outlined in the Ministerial Response.