



MINISTRY OF MINERAL RESOURCES
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

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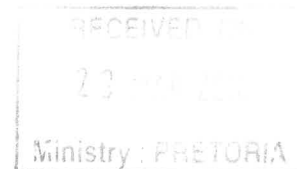
Memorandum from the Parliamentary Office

Minister

National Assembly question for written reply: Question 516

444 DDG: MR

Date: 22 March 2013



Recommended / ~~Not Recommended~~


Adv. T. Mokoena

Director General: Department of Mineral Resources

22 03 2013



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Reply

(1) The requirements for the granting of a reconnaissance permit are prescribed by section 75(1) of the Mineral and Petroleum Resources Development Act, 2002 (MPRDA). Amongst others, the Minister is required to issue a reconnaissance permit provided:

- the applicant has access to financial resources and has the technical ability to conduct the proposed reconnaissance operations;
- the estimated expenditure is compatible with intended reconnaissance operations, and
- the reconnaissance will not result in unacceptable pollution, ecological degradation or damage to the environment

In making its decision to grant the reconnaissance permit to Petroleum Geo-Services, the Department took into consideration the afore-mentioned legislative provisions and the applicant was found to have satisfied such provisions in that:

- it proved that it has access to the required financial provisions to undertake the proposed seismic surveys, and the expenditure estimation was found to be compatible with the proposed reconnaissance operations, and
- has the requisite technical expertise to commission the surveys

In addition, the Environmental Management Plan developed by an independent environmental consultant concluded that the majority of



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potential environmental impacts associated with the seismic survey were of very low significance after mitigation.

(2) The department has not commissioned any specific study on the effects of blasting on non-migratory species, however, before any seismic surveys are permitted, whether through a Reconnaissance Permit or an Exploration right, the applicant is required to identify and assess any potential impacts of the proposed activity on the environment. The environment in this case includes migratory and non-migratory whale species. The environmental impact assessment commissioned for PGS' reconnaissance permit, supported by a marine faunal specialist study, which largely covered the Eastern Cape coastline revealed the following

- The potential impact of seismic survey noise on both resident and migratory cetaceans includes physiological injury, behavioural avoidance of seismic survey areas, masking of environmental sounds and communication, and indirect impacts due to effects on prey
- The assessment of each potential impact on non-migratory species revealed that the impacts before mitigation range from medium to very low significance without mitigation and from low to very low significance with implementation of mitigation measures
- In addition, the hearing of toothed whales, which are largely resident whales, is centred at frequencies of between 10 and 100 kHz, suggesting that these may react to seismic shots at long ranges, but that hearing damage from seismic shots is only likely to occur at close range.



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PGS's Environmental Management Plan is a public document and can be made available.

(3) The Department does not have any plans to commission any study related to the subject matter. However, the Department, through the Petroleum Agency SA, is in the process of collating numerous studies conducted in other jurisdictions on the effects of sound from seismic surveys on marine mammals. It is envisaged that the learnings to be derived from the studies will further provide guidance on the granting of seismic surveys.

(4) The Department is satisfied that the granting of rights or permits involving seismic surveys offshore, subject to the implementation of robust mitigation and management measures to protect non-migratory whale species and other aquatic life, are a reasonable safeguard mechanism. Furthermore, monitoring measures, which include, amongst others, the following, are part of the terms and conditions for the granting of permits or rights:

- Independent Marine Mammal Observers are to be on-board throughout the survey to observe and record responses of marine fauna to seismic surveys.
- PAM technology to be fitted on vessels to detect animals through their vocalisation.
- Shutting down of airguns where whales or any marine fauna are observed within the mitigation zone i.e. 500m around the vessel.

Accordingly, the Department does not necessarily have a compelling reason to halt the issuing of exploratory permits unless credible



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evidence is presented that points to the fact that the current prescribed mitigation and management measures, together with monitoring measures are not yielding the desired results.

Approved/Not Approved

Mr SG Mantashe,
Minister of Mineral Resources

Date Submitted: 24/05/2018