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Ministry of Sustainable Resource Management
Ministry of Energy and Mines

PRE-TENURE PLANS OPEN MUSKWA-KECHIKA TO GAS EXPLORATION

VICTORIA – Two pre-tenure plans in the Muskwa-Kechika management area will allow exploration of extensive natural gas deposits in areas with high potential, Stan Hagen, Minister of Sustainable Resource Management, announced today.

Recent information indicates that natural gas values are highest in the eastern part of the management area, with a potential value of more than \$16 billion if fully developed. The plans apply to the Halfway-Graham and the southern portion of the Muskwa-West, southwest of Fort Nelson.

“Certainty on the land base is a critical component of our commitment to revitalize the economy,” said Hagen. “These plans will provide that certainty by setting out the ground rules to allow gas exploration while protecting sensitive resources and values in an area with outstanding economic potential.”

“Exploration in this region will contribute to government’s goal of generating \$24 billion in mining and energy investment over six years,” said Richard Neufeld, Minister of Energy and Mines.

“These pre-tenure plans send a positive message to the industry and have the support of the local contracting industry,” said Bob Fedderly, president of the Northern Society of Oilfield Contractors and Service Firms. “The plans achieve a balanced approach, protecting environmental values while allowing for development.”

The plans also have the approval and support of the 15-member Muskwa-Kechika advisory board, which is made up of First Nations, conservation interests, resource developers, licensees and communities.

Tenure sales in the southern portion of the Halfway-Graham area will not occur until January 2004 at the earliest. This will allow the Halfway River band to complete studies of traditional use sites prior to significant development activity taking place.

“The April 2003 Muskwa-Kechika pre-tenure plan truly adopts a result-based management framework,” said Shira Mulloy, stewardship manager of the Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers. “The plan does an excellent job in incorporating views from a diverse set of stakeholders and generating a useable plan to guide oil and gas activity in the Muskwa-Kechika.”

The pre-tenure plans establish a results-based framework for the sustainable management of oil and gas activities anywhere in the Muskwa-Kechika management area. They establish objectives for ecosystem diversity, wildlife habitat, soil and water, First Nations interests, commercial and recreational activities and wilderness. Monitoring plan outcomes, including provincial revenues from gas development, is a key part of the plan.

In the Halfway-Graham area, the plan has strategies to address plains bison, bull trout and caribou areas, historical trails and designated access routes and commercial forest resources. Values addressed specifically in the Muskwa-West area pre-tenure plan include terrain stability, preserving the view from rivers, protection of forested wetlands and maintenance of commercial forest resources

A number of other pre-tenure plans will be completed by March 2004, under a revised timetable for pre-tenure plans based on the new information about gas potential. Additional information about pre-tenure plans can be found on the Ministry of Sustainable Resource Management Web site at srmwww.gov.bc.ca/rmd/ecdev/mog/ptp/index.htm online.

Other planning is also under way in the Muskwa-Kechika management area, including managing wildlife, recreation and parks, and forest objectives.

Visit the province's Web site at <http://www.gov.bc.ca/> for online information and services.

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