

MINUTE ITEM

This Calendar Item No. C42 was approved as
Minute Item No. 42 by the California State Lands
Commission by a vote of 3 to 0 at its
1-30-02 meeting.

**CALENDAR ITEM
C42**

A 35

01/30/02
PRC 8376 W 40654
K. Walker
J. Planck

S 18

**AUTHORIZE ISSUANCE OF A PERMIT TO SCIENCE APPLICATIONS
INTERNATIONAL CORPORATION (SAIC) TO CONDUCT AN OFFSHORE
GEOLOGICAL SURVEY ON STATE TIDE AND SUBMERGED LANDS
AT EACH SITE OF THE FORMER CHEVRON 4H PLATFORMS,
SANTA BARBARA COUNTY**

APPLICANT:

Science Applications International Corporation (SAIC)
816 State Street, Suite 500
Santa Barbara, CA 93101

AREA, TYPE LAND AND LOCATION:

State tide and submerged lands offshore of Santa Barbara County

LAND USE:

Drill core holes to characterize the structure and contents of the shell mounds
remaining at the sites of four removed oil platforms, Hope, Heidi, Hazel and
Hilda.

TERM OF AUTHORIZATION:

One year, January 1, 2002 to December 31, 2002.

BACKGROUND:

Chevron U.S.A. Inc. applied for the removal of four oil drilling and production
platforms off the Santa Barbara coast in 1992, and the California State Lands
Commission (Commission), acting as Lead Agency, prepared and circulated a
Mitigated Negative Declaration in May of 1994. The Commission adopted the
document and approved removal of the platforms. The four platforms were

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removed in the summer of 1996, with debris clearance, except for the "shell mounds," being completed during October and November of 1996.

During the life of the platforms "shell mounds" built up under each one. These mounds were developed mainly from the periodic cleaning of sea life from the platform legs and the natural sloughing of organisms from the structures over the years. The mounds also consist of inter-layered drilling fluids (muds) and drill cuttings which were deposited prior to the Commission ban on offshore discharge of muds and cuttings. The shells have chemically bonded to each other so that the surface of the mounds is now consolidated and rough. One of the conditions established for the removal project was that these mounds be made "trawlable." In early 1997, several tests trawls were made at each platform site, all of which were unsuccessful.

Chevron has filed an application with the Commission to amend its previously approved 4H Abandonment Plan (Plan) to address the requirement that the lease area be trawlable. The application specifies a range of potential modifications to the Plan. Chevron has also filed an application with the Coastal Commission to amend its Coastal Development Permit. The staffs of the two Commissions agree that it is premature to designate any one of the possible amendments to the Plans as the "Project" as defined under the provisions of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) pending preparation of the CEQA document.

On September 17, 2001, the Commission authorized the staff to retain a third party consultant at Chevron's expense to begin the preparation of an Environmental Impact Report/Environmental Assessment (RIR/EA) that will analyze all alternatives provided in Chevron's application. The alternatives range from providing mitigation to affected fishermen to the removal of all of the mounds. The consultant will review existing data, including the "Shell Mounds Environmental Review, Final Technical Report" (previously prepared in February 2001, regarding the feasibility of removing the mounds) and any additional data submitted by Chevron. The consultant will also conduct additional testing of the shell mounds to address their composition as characterized in the Report. This testing and the interpretation of all results will meet the published standards of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the Regional Water Quality Control Board. In accordance with the Commission authorization, staff awarded the consulting contract to Science Applications International Corporation (SAIC).

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PROPOSED PROJECT:

Drilling and analyzing cores taken from each of the four shell mounds remaining on the sites of the four removed oil platforms is a component of the environmental review to be conducted by SAIC.

SAIC will collect sediment cores from the 4H shell mounds using methods and equipment that are comparable to those used by de Wit (2001) previously authorized by the Commission. This approach used a pneumatic vibracore to collect whole cores that penetrated through the various strata of the shell mounds and into the underlying bottom sediments.

PREREQUISITE CONDITIONS, FEES AND EXPENSES:

As the information from the cores is being gathered at the Commission's direction, no fees will be charged.

STATUTORY AND OTHER REFERENCES:

Title 14, California Code of Regulations, section 15306

OTHER PERTINENT INFORMATION:

1. Pursuant to the Commission's delegation of authority and the State CEQA Guidelines (Title 14, California Code of Regulations, section 15061), the staff has determined that this activity is exempt from the requirements of CEQA as a categorically exempt project. The project is exempt under Class 6, Information Collection, established for projects to gather information where minimal or no disturbance of State lands is involved, Title 2, California Code of Regulations, section 2905 (e)(3).

Authority: Public Resources Code section 21084 and Title 14, California Code of Regulations, section 15300, and, Title 2, California Code of Regulations, section 2905

EXHIBIT:

- A. Project Location and Site Map

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RECOMMENDED ACTION:

IT IS RECOMMENDED THAT THE COMMISSION:

CEQA FINDING:

FIND THAT THE ACTIVITY IS EXEMPT FROM THE REQUIREMENTS OF CEQA PURSUANT TO TITLE 14, CALIFORNIA CODE OF REGULATIONS, SECTION 15061 AS A CATEGORICALLY EXEMPT PROJECT, CLASS 6, INFORMATION COLLECTION, TITLE 2, CALIFORNIA CODE OF REGULATIONS, SECTION 2905(e)(3).

AUTHORIZATION:

AUTHORIZE ISSUANCE OF A PERMIT TO SCIENCE APPLICATIONS INTERNATIONAL CORPORATION (SAIC) TO CONDUCT AN OFFSHORE GEOLOGICAL SURVEY ON THE STATE TIDE AND SUBMERGED LANDS AT EACH SITE OF THE FORMER CHEVRON 4H PLATFORMS, OFFSHORE OF SANTA BARBARA COUNTY, DURING THE PERIOD JANUARY 1, 2002 THROUGH DECEMBER 31, 2002.

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EXHIBIT A

