

To assist the authority further, DOE and DFO are to form an advisory committee to recommend and approve studies necessary to allow biological information to be integrated effectively into such matters as the route selection process. The advisory committee is to provide a forum for consultation with northern residents, industry, and government specialists on relevant research and development (R&D) and marine planning activities.

3. Environmental Protection

Although a number of the operating requirements outlined above involve assessment procedures, these are limited in scope in comparison to the Federal Environmental Assessment and Review Process (EARP) which has since 1973 provided a means of screening federal projects to determine whether environmental effects are significant enough to warrant a review by an independent panel. The sponsor must prepare a detailed Environmental Impact Statement in accordance with guidelines issued by the panel. The panel reviews the statement and obtains comments from interested persons through public hearings. The panel assigned to that project reports to the minister who can release the report to the public.

Since all oil and gas activities are carried out on public lands, the EARP panel is significant in the planning, design and implementation of major projects. EARP panels have, for instance, reviewed proposals for offshore drilling in Davis Strait and Lancaster Sound. A drilling approval was rejected in the latter case on the recommendation of the EARP panel. As mentioned, the Beaufort Sea Region developers have filed a joint Environmental Impact Statement on which hearings will commence in the spring of 1983.

It is expected that this review will provide a regional socio-economic and environmental impact assessment with recommendations on whether environmental impacts can be kept within acceptable limits and how benefits can be maximized for alternative levels of production and related modes of transportation. This represents one important source of the information necessary for government examination of such alternatives and ultimately whether an approval should be given.

The fact that this comprehensive environmental and socio-economic assessment is taking place has not prevented other agencies from completing their own reviews. Proponents submit this type of evidence during the public interest phase of the NEB hearings. The tendency is for the same material to be presented by the same parties using the same arguments. In the Committee's view such repetition only frustrates the process and does not contribute to protection of the environment.

The authority of the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development over the sale, lease or other arrangement for holding onshore lands and the planning of their uses provides another means of controlling the environmental impacts of development north of 60°.

The new Canada Oil and Gas Act has provided for changes which introduce the possibility of using it for environmental management and a number of other things. However, in the North the way we are proceeding is to use the Territorial Lands Act and its regulations as the principal means for regulating the use of land. (Mr. N. Faulkner, DIAND, Issue 31:37, 22-6-1982)