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INTENSE ACTIVITY FOR FUGRO GEOS IN GoM

The need for increased understanding and awareness of the importance of the oceans around the U.S, following establishment, by Congress, of the Commission on Ocean Policy, and the Bush Administration's response to the Commission's work, has led to heavy demands on the expertise offered by the Houston office of the world's leading metocean company, Fugro GEOS.

NEWS RELEASE

Fugro GEOS is experiencing increased activity in the Gulf of Mexico as a result of the cooperation between the U.S. Minerals Management Service (MMS) and offshore oil and gas producers. These organisations are engaged on a pioneering monitoring programme to improve the U.S.A's understanding of powerful ocean currents that have the potential to affect deep water operations across the Gulf. All deepwater operations are subject to the Minerals Management Service (MMS) Notice to Lessees (NTL) 2005-GO2 requiring real-time measurement and dissemination of Acoustic Doppler Current Profiler (ADCP) data.

The Background

"President Bush's statement on the importance of building a Global Earth Observation Network including Integrated Oceans Observation at the Earth Observation Summit in July 2001 was key to starting this particular ball rolling," explains Jan van Smirren, Regional Director, Fugro GEOS.

"Congress played a vital role when they established the U.S. Commission on Ocean Policy to help create greater understanding of the importance of the ocean, coasts and Great Lakes to the U.S.A. Chaired by retired Admiral James Watkins, the Commission began work in September 2001 and in September 2004 published a thorough and expansive report: '*An Ocean Blueprint for the 21st Century*'.

"The Bush Administration's constructive response, '*U.S. Ocean Action Plan',* followed; and this, coupled with the NTL aimed at all operators in the Gulf of Mexico, lies at the heart of all this frenetic activity," says van Smirren.

"The NTL from the US MMS, issued initially in November 2004 and updated in January, set out plans to establish and implement an ocean current monitoring and data-sharing program in the Gulf of Mexico. Under the NTL, deepwater oil and gas platform operators will collect ocean current data from deepwater drilling and production sites, and publish it on the Internet. Several months ago, initial feedback indicated that more than forty operating sites would collect data on a daily basis. Over the past months, MMS has also engaged industry in discussions

on how this information may best be integrated into the IOOS currently under development.

“The NTL applies to floating production facilities and drilling rigs in water depths greater than 1,312 feet (400m), and is aimed at ensuring that the current data are gathered and reported in a consistent manner. The clients with whom we have been working to meet the requirements are operating in water depths ranging from 1,400ft (425m) to 9,000ft (2,750m). Under the terms of the NTL we are also working with a number of clients on their requirements for planned future floating production facilities.”

The Fugro GEOS solution

To meet the requirements of the NTL, Fugro GEOS has developed **Ocean VISION**, an ADCP Data Acquisition and Management service, which can work in conjunction with both a Fugro GEOS data acquisition suite or an operator’s existing measurement system. “The development of Ocean VISION has been ongoing over the past two years. However, speed was very much of the essence to include last minute changes to ensure that the system would meet the MMS data needs and all-important 31 March 2005 date,” explains van Smirren.

Ocean VISION is an innovative web-based service, enabling users onshore to view offshore conditions in near real-time. Data are transferred from the offshore data acquisition system using Fugro GEOS’ RTADCP program. This provides a simple interface to set up the file transfer (using File Transfer Protocol, FTP). For speed, consistency and accessibility, data are retained in the native binary format from RD Instruments’ Broadband ADCPs. Data can then be transferred automatically to the MMS nominated website at 12-hourly intervals, as specified by the NTL.

Data received at the Fugro GEOS FTP server are immediately uploaded into the Ocean VISION database. Data are then made available to clients in a web-based application, using Microsoft’s Internet Explorer, together with Adobe’s SVG viewer to provide interactive graphics.

“We believe Ocean VISION is the only service that is able to display data from multiple ADCPs in an integrated profile, allowing users to be fully aware of current flow throughout the water column,” explains Jan van Smirren.

Information on Ocean VISION is available from all Fugro offices worldwide and the Fugro booth at OTC (1341). “We expect a great deal of interest in Ocean VISION at OTC,” adds van Smirren.

“Naturally, since the publication of the NTL we have been busy not just developing Ocean VISION and ensuring all our Ocean VISION systems were live by 31 March, but also providing many of our clients with additional ADCPs,” he says. “During the first quarter of 2005, we have

had over twenty ADCPs (Acoustic Doppler Current Profilers) deployed in the Gulf of Mexico for ten Fugro GEOS clients. A further five real-time current monitoring systems involving up to eight ADCPs are on order for deployment in the near future."

The majority of the systems installed offshore have included a combination of 38kHz and 75kHz RigADCP systems. These rig based current monitoring systems measure from near surface over a maximum water depth range of 3,600ft (1,100m) and 2,000ft (600m) respectively. In addition, Fugro GEOS has also provided more than five bed-mounted ADCP monitoring systems for operations in waters greater than 3,600ft (1,100m). Many of these systems have also been provided with real-time acoustic data telemetry.

At the time of increase in the Gulf of Mexico current monitoring activity, Fugro GEOS already owned the world's largest fleet of 38kHz ADCPs. The company has since more than doubled the number of units that it owns to ensure that it can meet the needs of all clients now and in the future.

Fugro GEOS has also had three vessels operating Vessel Mounted ADCP (VMADCP) current monitoring systems active within the Gulf of Mexico during the first quarter. The vessels assist with particularly current-sensitive drilling and offshore construction operations by mapping the current conditions and monitoring the location and movement of the strong band of currents relative to work sites. A combination of 75kHz and 300kHz (maximum range 460ft, 140m) have been used to map currents in this way, with the 300kHz unit providing greater detail over the near-surface layer. As part of this service Fugro GEOS is also providing clients with near real-time data analysis services on a 24/7 basis, to ensure that the current data are provided in clearly understandable and usable formats typically within an hour of collection.

"The last quarter has included a number of specific challenges, not least of which has been the logistics of preparing, mobilizing, installing and operating such a large number of systems" explains van Smirren. "However, our highly motivated, experienced and dedicated staff has ensured that we have met and continue to meet those challenges head-on."

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