



Friday, April 3, 2020

President Donald J. Trump  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Ave NW  
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President,

The IAGC recognizes and empathizes with those impacted by the global pandemic 'COVID-19.' This unprecedented event has resulted in a significant toll on human health. Further, many sectors of global industry have been severely and detrimentally impacted. In particular, the global energy sector has seen dramatic reductions in the price of oil, exacerbated in part by geopolitical tensions between those countries within the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) and non-OPEC nations. Domestically, the impact of COVID-19 is being felt widely throughout the supply chain, as necessary travel restrictions are making crew changes, re-provisioning and other routine elements of offshore survey work challenging. Furthermore, falls of at least 50% in West Texas and Brent Crude futures have created great uncertainty in the marketplace, and the IAGC is concerned about the knock-on impacts within the whole of the value chain.

IAGC members also operate in a heavily regulated environment and often must schedule geophysical & exploration (G&E) activities many months in advance and accomplish these tasks within very specific timelines. We are concerned that this time of uncertainty will lead to the delays of new leasing activities and the expiration of Federal permits that have sometimes taken years to acquire. This is a critical time for our industry as we are under threat from multiple fronts. We ask for your assistance in providing regulatory relief and certainty, including the extension of federal permits and authorizations, and help with securing financial stability to allow our segment of the industry to survive these challenging times. The importance of ensuring stability in the G&E industry to maintain the critical supply chain and infrastructure to replace current energy reserves and to fulfil future demands cannot be emphasized enough.

Founded in 1971, the Houston-based IAGC is the global trade association for the geophysical and exploration industry, the cornerstone of the energy economy. Our membership includes onshore and offshore survey operators and acquisition companies, data and processing providers, exploration and production companies, equipment and software manufacturers, and industry suppliers and service providers. IAGC member companies play an integral role in the successful exploration and development of offshore hydrocarbon resources through the acquisition and processing of geophysical data. Geophysical surveys are undertaken to assist a broad range of clients in understanding the subsurface of the ocean in order to make decisions about resource development, the safe location of infrastructure and decisions relating to the delineation of exclusive economic zones. All aspects of our Country's \$500b domestic onshore and offshore hydrocarbon industry begins with the work of our members companies and the inability of our members conduct their activities could delay and reduce future domestic production for years to come.

### **Ensuring Personnel Movement**

To impede the spread of COVID-19 in the United States, various levels of government have imposed, among other things, travel restrictions, mandatory directions for citizens to remain home and business closures. However, exceptions have been made for personnel working in 'critical' industries. The exploration industry maintains work crews, both offshore and onshore, consisting of employees of many nationalities, making it imperative that exceptions are sufficiently broad and clearly defined and easily understood to ensure adherence to any screening measures adopted by countries. We appreciate

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the U.S. State Department's recognition of the G&E industry as critical and your Administration's work with us to allow our operations to continue during these challenging times.

### **Maintaining Licensing, Workplans & Regulatory Certainty**

Exploration is essential to maintaining a stable energy industry. The industry favors stable and predictable fiscal and regulatory environments that include regular licensing rounds on predictable timeframes. The present uncertainty could cause delays in licensing rounds and decisions to reduce expenditure on workflows, including exploration commitments. We urge the Federal government, where practicable, to maintain expected timelines for licensing rounds, including all review periods and award announcements. Further, we would like to highlight the importance of maintaining contractual timelines in relation to workflow commitments within awarded license blocks, including all relevant commitments to acquire seismic data, either through the licensing of multiclient data, or via the acquisition of novel data in the field. This will ensure that supplies remain stable, not just in relation to short-term production, but in the medium and longer terms, where the negative impact of any delays to exploration will be incurred.

Where the Federal Government may agree to extend existing leases or lease performance timelines, we urge requisite extensions to the licensing and confidentiality periods for geophysical data.

Finally, many regulatory agencies and personnel are strained with limited capability to process authorization and permit requests or maintain existing authorizations and permits. The limited work capabilities of regulators and unknown nature of the current timeline for resolution of the issues facing the G&E industry mean instability in operations and planning. We urge regulators and policy makers to extend existing authorizations and permits, requisite with the length of the hardship, from all federal agencies for geophysical survey and exploration activities to ensure minimal regulatory disruption.

### **Financial Stability**

Geophysical companies have invested 10s of millions (USD) in the creation of non-exclusive Geophysical Data throughout the United States that have dramatically improved the success rate in finding and developing new oil and gas supplies. These data (and their derivative products) are carried on the collective balance sheets of geophysical companies at a net book value in the millions(USD), representing a huge unrecovered investment. For this reason, it is necessary to recognize the vast Intellectual Property value associated with the data and ensure the viability of exploration companies during these challenging times.

In the near-term, exploration companies are likely to see losses mount as production companies curtail budgets, possibly even moving to cancel previous agreements. We appreciate the Administration's support and effort in extending the periods over which losses can be carried forward and further, for an increase to the percentage of taxable income available for the deduction of losses.

Near-term liquidity and access to capital at reasonable interest rates to refinance existing commitments will enhance exploration companies' ability to sustain operations. We support the Federal government's efforts in making insured, government backed loans available at low interest rates for short term liquidity requirements.

Finally, the level of taxation on exploration companies and their employees will impact financial decisions in the coming months. We urge your continued support for reductions in payroll or wage taxes to benefit employees while also considering the tax rates paid by corporations. Afterall, corporations are made up of people and those individuals are directly impacted by the current instability in the global economy.

These measures would assist companies to focus resources on maintaining their employees and the intellectual capital invested in individuals.

**Conclusions**

As the world faces the challenges in dealing with the novel corona virus 'COVID-19' along with geopolitical challenges from an oversupply of oil on the world market, the fundamentals of the energy industry are weakening. Policy decisions today will have lasting impacts on the economy for months, if not years, to come. The exploration industry provides the key to unlocking energy resources that will allow for rebuilding economies when the COVID-19 virus has run its course, however, in order to rebuild, there must be a viable energy industry when that time comes. Energy is the bedrock of today's civilization, and supports the transportation, farming, medical, and manufacturing industries that are all essential to meet today's challenges, and none are possible without a stable and consistent supply of energy which starts with geophysical and exploration activities.

Thank you for your attention. We would be pleased to answer any questions or provide any clarification you may have.

Sincerely,



Nikki Martin  
IAGC  
President

CC: The Honorable David Bernhardt, Secretary, U.S. Department of Interior  
The Honorable Wilbur Ross, Secretary, U.S. Department of Commerce  
The Honorable Mary Neumayr, Chair, Council on Environmental Quality