

Prion 3D Marine Seismic Survey

Bass Strait



Geo Coral, image courtesy of Shearwater Geoservices

Project Update | September 2021

Project Summary

Beach Energy is planning to undertake a three-dimensional (3D) marine seismic survey (the Prion Survey) to enable assessment of the natural gas reservoirs in Commonwealth retention licenses T/RL2, T/RL4 and T/RL5. The project will operate under an Environment Plan (EP) that has been accepted by the National Offshore Petroleum Safety and Environmental Management Authority (NOPSEMA). See [this link](#).

Location

The Prion Survey will be carried out in Commonwealth waters in Bass Strait approximately 73 km east of King Island, 57 km north of Stanley in Tasmania and 105 km south of Wonthaggi at the closest points. See map page 3.

Timing

The Prion Survey is expected to start toward the end of October 2021 after the survey vessel completes a different project nearby. It will take approximately 50 days to complete, subject to weather conditions and any whale sightings that may require the survey to stand by temporarily.

How

The **Geo Coral** seismic survey vessel (108m long) will tow an acoustic source and hydrophones fixed to 12 streamers 8 km long and 1 km wide. The acoustic source will transmit sound waves into the geological structures beneath the seabed and sound energy reflected back will be recorded by the hydrophones. Survey data will be analysed to identify subsurface gas reservoirs.

Questions and Answers

What's in an Environment Plan?

The EP includes: a detailed description of the marine environment and survey activities; an assessment of relevant scientific studies; a study of underwater sound levels and potential impacts to marine fauna by acoustic scientists; an evaluation of the activity impacts and risks; environmental performance outcomes and control measures; implementation strategy; and reporting requirements.

The EP has demonstrated how the activities will be conducted to ensure that potential impacts and any residual risks will be reduced to "As Low As Reasonably Practicable" (ALARP) and are of an acceptable level. The EP can be viewed at [this link](#).

What about impacts to whales?

The EP describes all marine fauna, including different whale species that may be present in the survey area at various times of the year. Impacts and risks will be minimised by using the lowest acoustic source possible for the survey requirements, and mitigation measures including avoiding certain times of the year when vulnerable species may be present, use of marine mammal observers on each vessel, aerial observation and shut-down procedures for whale sightings.

What about impacts to commercial fishing?

Commercial fishing activities in the survey area were assessed and Beach consulted with scallop, octopus, trawl and shark fishing associations.

Stakeholder feedback from the scallop sector was considered and the survey area in the south-west corner reduced. Although the Prion Survey area has not previously been a commercial scallop fishing area, in consultation with the scallop sector, Beach is conducting a scallop biomass assessment and a 'before and after' study of potential new scallop beds in a small part of the south-west corner of the survey area. Beach has a fair compensation procedure in the event of a direct economic loss to a fisher due to the survey.

How will you ensure that you operate safely?

Safety takes precedence in everything we do. Beach has over 60 years' experience in the oil and gas industry and our marine exploration team have extensive local and international experience

in conducting marine seismic surveys. We have stringent procedures for selecting and managing specialist contractors to carry out our marine activities to ensure they will keep our operations safe and operate in accordance with Australian Maritime Standards, regulated by the Australian Maritime Safety Authority (AMSA).

Will a safety exclusion zone operate?

The survey vessel will tow equipment 8 km long and 1 km wide, travel around 4-5 knots and have limited manoeuvrability. To avoid safety and entanglement risks, a Notice to Mariners will be issued by the Australian Hydrographic Office requesting that vessels do not approach closer than 11 km (6 nautical miles) of the survey vessel. The survey vessel will be accompanied by two support vessels that will observe and communicate with other vessels.

Why is a 3D seismic survey required here?

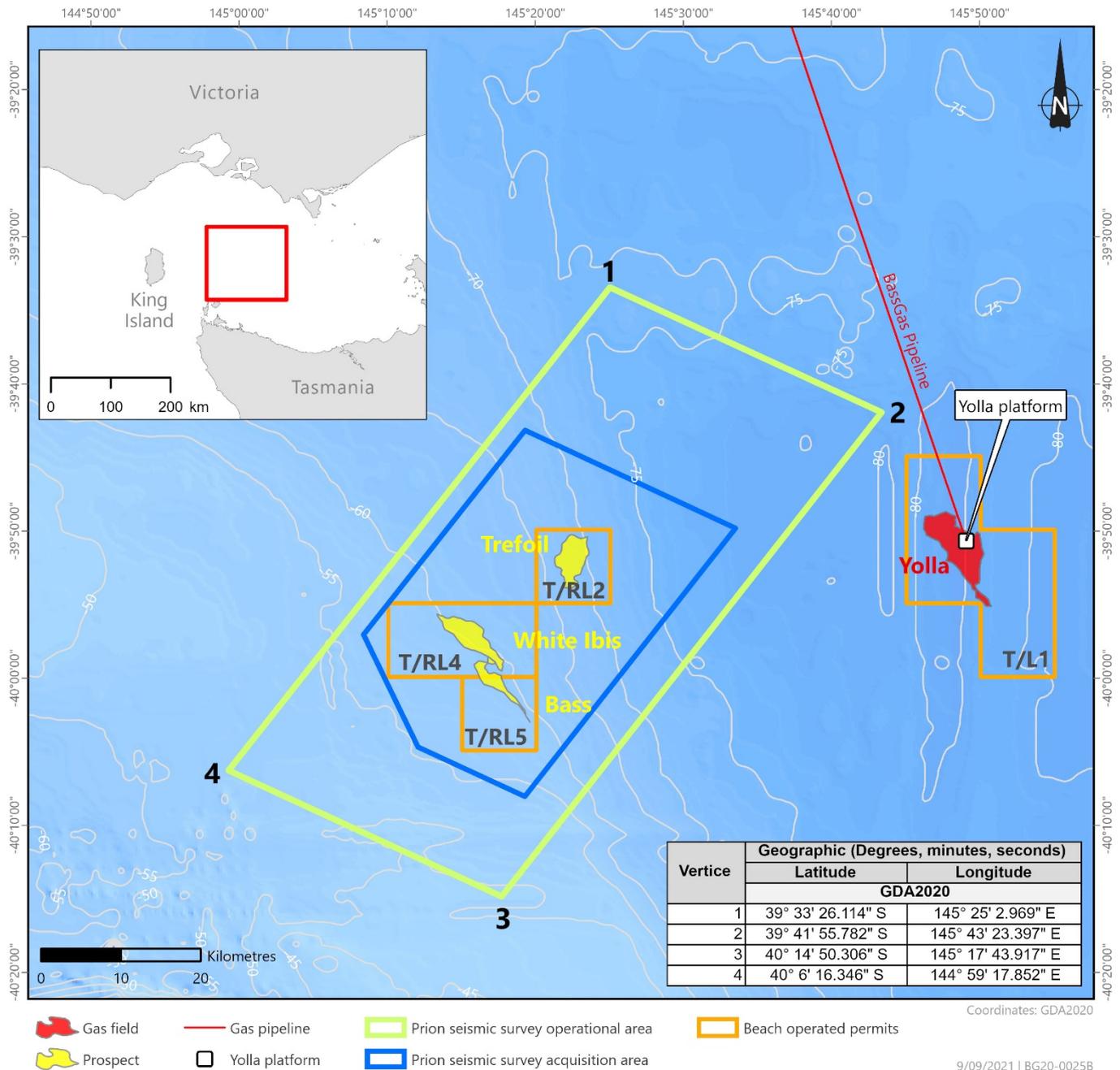
3D seismic data enables geophysicists to develop a detailed map of the subsea geological structures, used to identify correct drilling locations, and to engineer the correct drilling methodology.

Beach holds offshore exploration permits and is required to complete exploration activities within timeframes set by the Commonwealth National Offshore Permit Titles Administrator (NOPTA). Beach also has existing production permits and offshore gas facilities in Bass Strait that extract natural gas, process it at Beach's Lang Lang gas plant for supply to the east coast gas market.

Why do we still need natural gas?

Natural gas has a wide variety of uses in our daily lives, including generating electricity with up to 50% lower emissions than coal, for residential heating, hot water and BBQs. Gas is a common ingredient in the production of fertilisers, plastics, fabrics and pharmaceuticals. In the industrial sector, gas is the primary heat source for the manufacturing of glass, steel, cement, bricks, ceramics, tiles, paper and food production. Gas is an important partner for renewable energy to ensure stability of affordable energy supply whilst our economy transitions to a greater percentage from renewables.

Prion Survey Map



Consultation

Beach values stakeholder consultation and feedback. Since December 2020, Beach has consulted with relevant stakeholders, considered and responded to all stakeholder feedback, concerns and objections.

Beach will continue to consult with stakeholders before, during and after the Prion Survey. Records of consultation will continue to be communicated to NOPSEMA as required by legislation.

We welcome your questions and feedback

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