



**UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY  
REGION 10**

1200 Sixth Avenue, Suite 900  
Seattle, Washington 98101-3140

Reply To  
Attn Of: AWT-107

March 1, 2010

Edward S. Itta, Mayor  
North Slope Borough  
P.O. Box 69  
Barrow, Alaska 99723

Re: Proposed Air Permit to Shell Offshore Inc. for oil and gas exploration on the Beaufort Sea outer continental shelf – Request to Extend the Public Comment Period

Dear Mayor Itta:

Thank you for your February 24, 2010 letter requesting that the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) extend the public comment period an additional 15 days on our preliminary decision to issue an air quality permit to Shell Offshore Inc. (Shell) for its Beaufort Sea Exploration Program. Your request is based on the fact that the proposed Beaufort permit is distinct from and subject to different statutory and regulatory guidelines than the proposed permit for Shell's Chukchi Sea Exploration Program, adding difficulty to your technical review. In addition, your letter requests a review of the administrative record for the proposed permit, and an extension of the comment period would facilitate this review. The published comment period for this proposed permit began on February 17, 2010 and is scheduled to close on March 22, 2010.

EPA is denying your request to extend the public comment period. We understand and appreciate your concerns and the points you raise. While we acknowledge that there are differences between Shell's two proposed permits for the Beaufort Sea and the Chukchi Sea, there are also substantial parts that are the same since they both cover the same drilling vessel operating in a similar manner, with similar controls on that equipment. We have carefully evaluated your concerns and the competing interests which we must balance, and we believe it is in the overall best interest to retain the existing comment period. The comment period will close as scheduled on March 22, 2010. Written comments must be postmarked no later than March 22, 2010. We encourage all interested people to participate in the permit decision making process during the comment period. We will carefully consider all comments submitted during the comment period, before we make a final decision on the permit.

Per your request, enclosed is the administrative record for the proposed permit on CD.

I welcome the opportunity to continue working with residents throughout the North Slope Borough to continue improving our public involvement process to reflect the local communities' needs and I look forward to working with you in this regard.

Sincerely,

/s/

Rick Albright, Director  
Office of Air, Waste and Toxics

Enclosures

Cc: (with enclosures)

Tanya Sanerib, Crag Law

Cc: (without enclosures)

Dan Forster, Director, NSB Planning

Taqulik Hepa, Director, NSB Wildlife

Karla Kolash, Special Assistant, NSB Mayor

Andy Mack, Special Assistant, NSB Mayor

Bessie O'Rourke, NSB Attorney

Jonny Jemming, Assistant NSB Attorney