






<b>CONTROLLED DOCUMENT</b> <b>Title: NOBLIGE-1 DRILLING PROGRAM</b> <b>ENVIRONMENTAL PLAN BRIDGING DOCUMENT</b> <b>SUMMARY</b>	 <b>woodside</b>
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Controlled Ref No: DC0000AH5297379	Revision: 0
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Woodside Management System Sub-processes MUST obtain concurrence endorsement from BopCom. The date of the BopCom meeting where endorsement is granted should be indicated below.

<input type="checkbox"/> BopCom Endorsement	Meeting date when endorsement granted:
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REVISION HISTORY				
Revision	Description	Date	Prepared by	Approved by
0	For Issue	01/12/2009	C. Chambers	D. Robb

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## Noblige-1 Drilling Program Environmental Plan Bridging Document Summary

This summary of the Noblige-1 Drilling Program Environment Plan Bridging Document has been submitted to comply with Regulation 11(7)(8) of the *Petroleum (Submerged Lands) (Management of Environment) Regulations 1999*.

### 1. Introduction

Woodside Energy Ltd (Woodside) proposes to undertake drilling activities on the North West Shelf (NWS) using the 'Jake Bates' semi-submersible drill rig, operated by Transocean. The drilling of the Noblige-1 exploration well is planned to commence in December 2009 and continue through until February 2010. The well is located in permit area WA-404-P.

The well is part of the overall drilling activities for the NWS and as such, the environmental risks and management thereof are described in the NWS Drilling Environmental Plan. The Noblige-1 Drilling Program Environment Plan serves as a bridging document to the NWS Environmental Plan and describes the well specific details such as location, rig to be used, fluid systems, cuttings columns and cuttings disposal method. The NWS Environment Plan describes the environmental context, risk assessment and mitigations, and is used by Woodside for all drilling activities on the NWS.

### 2. Description of the Action

The Noblige-1 exploration well is situated in permit area WA-404-P, located approximately 302km north-west of Karratha, 156 km north-west of the Montebello Conservation Park and 191 km north-west of Barrow Island. Table 2-1 summarises the well details including surface coordinates, water depth, permit area and timing for the proposed well.

**Table 2-1. Well Co-ordinates, Water Depth and Timing (GDA 94, MGA zone 51)**

Well	Water Depth (m LAT)	Easting (Longitude)	Northing (Latitude)	Permit Area	Timing
Noblige-1	1315 m	219 890 m E (114° 19' 58.65" S)	7 852 903 m N (19° 23' 54.89" S)	WA-404-P	Q4 2009 / Q1 2010

### 3. Description of the Receiving Environment

#### **Physical Environment**

The water depth on the continental shelf of the NWS area ranges between 50 and 1,500 m, although most of the area lies between 50 and 500 m water depth. Two significant banks are present on the gently inclined shelf, the Rankin Bank and the Glomar Shoal. The seabed is generally characterised by deep (>5 m) soft, silty sediments which become softer and finer with increasing depth.

General wind patterns in the region are monsoonal, with a marked seasonal pattern. Wind direction is predominantly from the south-east and north-east during April to September with an average wind of speed 5 – 6 knots. During October to March the prevailing wind direction is from the south-west, west and north-west and the average wind speeds are less than 10 knots. Tropical cyclones occur in the area, typically three to four times per year, most commonly between December and April. Swells of up to 2 m can be expected year round, with April being the calmest month, and January and June the roughest. Wave direction predominantly follows wind direction (east south-east in winter, west south-west in summer), except during cyclone or storm conditions.

#### **Biological Environment**

Sampling of the benthic zone has consistently shown that the soft sediments of NWS support a low abundance, high diversity invertebrate fauna population, largely comprising burrowing polychaete worms (Phylum Annelida) and crustaceans (Subphylum Crustacea). Echinoderms, bivalves and molluscs also contribute significantly to the faunal composition of the area.

Five species of turtle listed under the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 (*EPBC Act*) are known to occur in the region; Flatback, Leatherly, Green, Hawksbill and Loggerhead. Individuals of all five species may be expected to pass through the region on their way to and from nesting beaches on the mainland and adjacent islands, however, while at sea the density (concentration) of animals is low.

A number of whale species may be encountered in the region including pygmy blue, sperm and humpback whales. The humpback whale is listed as Vulnerable under the *EPBC Act* and the population migrates across the North West Marine Region (NWMR) during the annual migration. During June, July and early August the whales follow a northward route across the NWMR, that appears to follow the edge of the continental shelf to the calving grounds off the Kimberley Coast. Cow-calf pairings tend to occur in the area from September to October. Research undertaken by the Centre for Whale Research indicates that cow-calf pairings generally remain in close proximity to the shore during the southern migration following a relatively narrow route that passes close to the Dampier Archipelago and Montebello Islands.

Dwarf minke whales and pygmy blue whales have been recorded in open water sites in the Scott Reef region. This indicates that these whales would also be occurring within the broader NWMR. In addition it is likely that sperm, blue and beaked whales may occur in the region at certain times of the year.

Surveys off the NWS indicate that seabird distribution is generally very patchy except near islands where shelter and anomalies in surface water concentrate food seasonally. Most of the birds encountered offshore forage in flocks of 20 to more than 200 individuals, often of different species and are commonly associated with schools of pelagic fish, such as tuna. Foraging groups typically comprise Sooty Terns, Wedge-tailed Shearwaters and the occasional Frigatebird.

## **Socio-Economic Environment**

The WA-404-P permit area is beyond the range of nearshore fisheries (eg. prawn fisheries) that operate between the North West Cape and Port Hedland. Given the distance from shore, there are no known recreational fisheries in the vicinity of any of the permit area. Several commercial fisheries do, however, occur in the permit area, including the NWS Slope Trawl Fishery and the Southern Bluefin Tuna Fishery. The NWS Slope Trawl Fishery typically operates in water depths of 200 to 500 m, much shallower than the 1,315 m water depth of the drilling activities. Fishing effort in the Southern Bluefin Tuna Fishery is focused in the Great Australian Bight and little effort occurs on the NWS.

There are no tourism activities in the vicinity of the permit area.

## **4. Environmental Hazards**

An environmental risk assessment was conducted to identify potential environmental risks from Program related activities. The risk assessment process indicated that the potential impacts arising from Program related activities can be categorised as either having a low or medium risk level. There were no impacts identified above a medium risk level.

A number of whale species may be encountered in the region, including Pygmy, Blue, Sperm and Humpback Whales. To ensure minimal impact on whales in the area, support vessels will maintain a 300 m separation distance, where safe to do so, from any whales sighted, as per Part 8 of the EPBC Regulations 2000. Vertical Seismic Profiling survey procedures (in accordance with *EPBC Act* Policy Statement 2.1) will be in place and adhered to for the short duration that profiling activities are undertaken.

The risk of a major hydrocarbon spill during routine drilling activities is low. The NWS EP outlines a number of worst case spill scenarios relevant to the Program related activities that may be undertaken. Considering the mitigation measures in place during all activities to prevent spills from occurring, the magnitude of the spill scenarios modelled, distance from offshore sensitive environments (e.g. coral reefs) and the probabilities of hydrocarbons contacting shorelines for expected offshore activities, it can be concluded that a significant hydrocarbon spill to ocean during Program related activities and impact to sensitive environmental receptors is unlikely.

A series of comprehensive environmental management controls will be maintained by Woodside and the relevant contractors to ensure that no significant environmental effects are realised from the drilling operation. Potential spills will be managed according to the oil spill arrangements and procedures outlined in the approved Western Australia and Dampier Sub-Basin Oil Spill Contingency Plan (ERP-3210).

## **5. Summary of Management Approach**

Woodside's environmental management strategies and procedures to be used during Program related activities include responsibilities, training and inductions, reporting frameworks, mitigation and response activities and monitoring and auditing procedures. Commitments associated with these will be used to reduce environmental risk to As Low As Reasonably Practicable (ALARP).

The key management objectives and commitments to be applied to all Program related activities are summarised in Table 5-1 below. These are consistent with Woodside Corporate and Program specific objectives, standards and criteria. Note that this is not a comprehensive list of all commitments outlined in the NWS EP.

**Table 5-1: Management Objectives and Criteria for NWS Program Related Activities**

Objectives	Criteria
Minimise disturbance to benthic habitat community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Anchoring procedures and anchor management plan in place and adhered to.</li> <li>• Incident reports for accidental anchor drag or rig drag off location.</li> </ul>
Minimise localised reduction in water quality, smothering of benthic fauna, and decreased light attenuation due to increased turbidity.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Non-toxic to slightly toxic water based fluids used.</li> <li>• Documented authorisation from DMP on approval of drilling fluids proposed for use.</li> <li>• Evidence of evaluation of drilling waste management options.</li> </ul>
Minimise potential acute and chronic toxicity effect on marine organisms, effects to water quality and indirect effects to marine fauna both in the water column and on the seabed.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Waste water discharges to meet legislative requirements.</li> <li>• Non-toxic to slightly toxic water based fluids used.</li> <li>• Environmental Discharge Report.</li> <li>• Audit of procedures to ensure compliance with legislative and EP requirements.</li> </ul>
Minimise impact on the marine environment from waste disposal.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• D&amp;C Waste Management Plan in place, detailing wastes generated and disposal requirements.</li> <li>• All sewage and putrescible wastes to be managed and disposed of in accordance with MARPOL 73/78.</li> <li>• Audit of waste log.</li> <li>• Audit of procedures to ensure compliance with legislative and EP requirements.</li> </ul>
Minimise the risk of introduction and establishment of Invasive Marine Species (IMS) in sensitive and shallow water environments.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ballast exchange recorded in the rigs and vessel logs.</li> <li>• IMS Risk Assessments completed and documented, for vessels, rigs and immersible equipment planning to enter and operate within nearshore waters around Australia.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Noise:</b> Minimise potential physiological effects or disruption to behaviour patterns of marine fauna due to sound energy associated with the rig, support vessel and helicopter operations.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The interaction of the support vessels and helicopters with cetaceans will be consistent with Part 8 of the EPBC Regulations 2000 which requires vessels to maintain a 300 m stand off distance to cetaceans and helicopters shall not operate lower than 1650 ft or within the horizontal radius of 500 m of a known cetacean.</li> </ul>

Objectives	Criteria
<p><b>Vertical Seismic Profiling (VSP):</b> Minimise potential physiological effects or disruption to behaviour patterns of marine fauna due to sound energy associated with discharge of compressed air chambers.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• VSP operations will be carried out in accordance with EPBC Act Policy Statement 2.1.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Recording of Marine Mammals:</b> Add to the data on marine mammals in the North West Shelf area</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sightings of marine mammals will be recorded and reports sent to the DEWHA periodically.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Artificial Lighting:</b> Minimise potential attraction / disturbance to marine life.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Impacts from artificial lighting will be minimal due to the Program activities being temporary in nature and remote from light sensitive receptors, in particular turtle nesting sites.</li> </ul>
<p>Minimise atmospheric emissions.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rig and vessel preventative maintenance system.</li> <li>• Use of low sulphur fuel, where it is available, to minimise emissions from combustible sources.</li> <li>• Compliance with MARPOL 73/78 Annex VI requirements.</li> </ul>
<p>Minimise potential chronic / acute toxicity effect on marine organisms.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Oil Spill Contingency Plans in place.</li> <li>• Refuelling procedures and Job Hazard Analyses in place – including spill mitigation measures, where appropriate.</li> <li>• Spill reporting procedures in place.</li> <li>• Spill drill reports.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Cyclone response:</b> Minimise the impact on benthic habitats and reduced potential occurrence of hydrocarbon spills.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Compliance with Woodside’s Cyclone Response Procedures and the drilling contractor’s Cyclone Emergency Response Plan.</li> <li>• Secure the well by isolating any significant hydrocarbon zones and disconnecting from the well, preventing communication of any hydrocarbon fluids in the well to the surface.</li> </ul>
<p>Minimise potential impact on socio-economic values</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Adherence to standard maritime safety procedures (Auscoast Warnings via AMSA where appropriate, radio contact, display of appropriate navigational beacons and lights).</li> <li>• Compliance with AMSA administered marine safety regulations and marine notification requirements.</li> <li>• Stakeholder Consultation undertaken, as required.</li> </ul>

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Objectives	Criteria
Woodside and contractor personnel understand and comply with the environmental objectives, standards and commitments within this EP.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All Woodside and contractor personnel undertake an environmental induction.</li> <li>• Induction attendance recorded.</li> <li>• Copy of EP on board rigs.</li> </ul>
HSE Management system covers applicable requirements of this EP.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review of HSE management system undertaken.</li> </ul>
Environmental inspections to be carried out according to the requirements of the EP.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Completed environmental commitments audits.</li> <li>• Campaign Action Register.</li> </ul>
All environmental incidents are reported in accordance with the requirements of this EP, Woodside and legislative requirements.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Environmental incidents recorded and reported according to the requirements of the EP, Woodside Standard Event Reporting and Investigation and legislative requirements.</li> </ul>
A review of the operation conducted at the end of the program.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review of the environmental performance of the operation conducted at the end of Program activities.</li> </ul>

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## 6. Consultation

Woodside has an extensive history undertaking drilling and completions activities on the North West Shelf. Over this time, Woodside has developed a sound understanding of potential stakeholder concerns that may arise during Program related activities and has implemented appropriate management strategies in the NWS EP to address key environmental aspects.

To ensure Woodside's understanding of potential stakeholder concerns remains current, stakeholder consultation for Program related activities will include the following:

- Consultation, as appropriate, with key stakeholders during the preparation of the Program specific EP Bridging Document to identify and manage specific environmental issues.
- Distribution of a fact sheet to a broader stakeholder group prior to the commencement of the activity.

## 7. Contact Details

For further information about the NWS Program related activities, please contact:

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