

State of Alaska FY2005 Governor's Operating Budget

Department of Law Oil, Gas and Mining Component Budget Summary

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Component: Oil, Gas and Mining

Contribution to Department's Mission

The Oil, Gas and Mining section provides advice and representation to various departments and agencies of state government to assist them in the performance of their functions.

Core Services

The Oil, Gas, and Mining section is responsible for in-house Department of Law services in oil, gas, and mining-related disputes including:

- legal representation to state agencies for the investigation, defense, and prosecution of claims concerning the state's oil and gas royalty and taxation programs;
- monitoring and protesting tariffs charged for transportation of oil and gas production through pipelines; and
- legal advice to state agencies concerning the development of state oil, gas, and mineral resources.

Department attorneys must frequently rely on economists, engineers, and other experts to address these highly technical oil and gas issues. Moreover, due to the complexity, length, and magnitude of major tax, royalty, tariff, and antitrust cases, outside counsel must, sometimes used to help in these disputes.

Most of the state's operating revenues are derived from oil and gas corporate income taxes, production taxes, and royalties on Alaska North Slope ("ANS") crude oil. The value of that crude for production tax and royalty purposes is largely determined by the price that ANS commands in its destination markets, less the costs of transporting it to those markets. The transportation costs, in turn, consist primarily of the tariffs charged by the Trans-Alaska Pipeline System ("TAPS") and the producers' tanker costs. Accurately determining ANS destination values, allowable transportation costs, and corporate income ensures the integrity of the state's fiscal system.

The Oil, Gas & Mining component allocation funds legal services related to these and other oil and gas development issues. These services include tariff monitoring and disputes with the owners of TAPS and other oil pipelines in Alaska, and the assessment and collection of unpaid royalties and taxes from oil and gas producers. The contracts with outside counsel and expert consultants on large or complex oil and gas cases are also funded by this allocation, as are the legal services related to lease sales, drafting and interpreting oil and gas statutes and regulations, pipeline right-of-way issues, and oil and gas conservation.

FY2005 Resources Allocated to Achieve Results		
FY2005 Component Budget: \$4,421,800	Personnel:	
	Full time	27
	Part time	1
	Total	28

Key Component Challenges

OIL PIPELINE-RELATED MATTERS

The state has expended substantial resources to monitor compliance with the 1985 TAPS settlement. The department performs this function by reviewing and challenging tariff filings by the owners of the pipelines operating in the state. This vigilance can earn the state millions of dollars annually. As production of oil continues to decline in Alaska, this monitoring is becoming more and more important because transportation costs through TAPS are a major component of total transportation costs to destination markets.

During FY2005 it is highly likely that the Oil, Gas & Mining section will engage in both substantial litigation and negotiation efforts in relation to the methodology adopted in 1985 and 1986 (the TSM) for determining the tariff rates on the Trans Alaska Pipeline (TAPS). This methodology expires by its own terms during the time period January 1, 2009 to December 31, 2011. However, in response to protests by certain shippers, the Regulatory Commission of Alaska (RCA) has rejected the TSM for determining TAPS intrastate tariffs. The matter is now on appeal to the Superior Court. The RCA's rejection of the methodology creates a significant impetus for the affected parties to try to negotiate a mutually acceptable replacement tariff methodology before the TSM expires. The use of the TSM methodology for establishing interstate TAPS tariff rates has not yet been challenged before the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC). If the methodology is challenged before the FERC, the state is contractually obligated to defend it before the FERC.

The department also will finance an annual audit of Alyeska Pipeline Services Company and the major owner companies to determine if certain operating and capital costs are properly included in the TAPS tariff. Information revealed during the audit forms the basis for future tariff protests. Litigation may result if Alyeska and the owners fail to respond adequately to the state's requests for information.

Another case that has not been resolved involves a dispute among TAPS shippers and the state over the effects on tariffs caused by quality bank adjustments, which are adjustments made to compensate for the different qualities of crude oil and refinery return streams flowing through TAPS. A lengthy administrative hearing in this case was recently concluded. The parties are in the process of completing post-hearing briefs, and final resolution is expected sometime during FY 2005.

The Oil, Gas & Mining section will continue to monitor the tariffs of the so-called North Slope feeder pipelines that transport oil from remote fields to TAPS.

Finally, the section will be involved in on-going regulatory proceedings before the RCA relating to the expansion of the pipeline transportation system in the Cook Inlet area. This expansion is occasioned by the development of several new fields and a gas storage facility.

GAS PIPELINE-RELATED ISSUES

The department, in conjunction with implementing the Stranded Gas Development Act, will also provide legal assistance to the Departments of Revenue and Natural Resources, among others, in support of the Alaska North Slope natural gas development project. The project currently favored by the administration is a pipeline that would transport Alyeska's North Slope gas down the Alaska highway to mid-North America. The section's legal assistance is likely to include (1) assisting the Departments of Revenue and Natural Resources in crafting proposals for changes to the state's tax and royalty regimes in response to producer requests for greater fiscal certainty; (2) drafting legislative or regulatory language necessary to implement any changes to the state's fiscal regime or other state laws that will improve the viability of the project; and (3) assisting DNR and other agencies with their various permitting responsibilities related to the project.

In addition, if the producers file an application for a certificate of public convenience and necessity with the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, this department will be responsible for representing the state's interests in the project before that agency. Both in-house and outside counsel will be used in this endeavor. Energy legislation currently before the U.S. Congress could influence whether the producers will proceed with a pipeline project during FY 2005, and the timing of design and permitting work.

The section must provide legal support to the Alaska Natural Gas Development Authority created by citizen's initiative in the November 2002 statewide election. This initiative is primarily focused on a proposed project to market Alaska's North Slope gas as LNG somewhere in the Pacific Rim. The challenge is to ensure that the efforts undertaken to promote this proposed project do not jeopardize the proposed Alaska Highway project.

TAX CASES

This department is pursuing millions of dollars in past-due taxes and interest that are owed by oil and gas producers to the state. In some cases, thousands of documents have to be examined and many potential witnesses must be interviewed or deposed in order to prepare for hearing. These hearings can last for weeks. At this time, one major tax case is in the early stages.

ROYALTY CASES

Royalty disputes regularly arise between the oil and gas producers and the state. Although the department handles most of these disputes in-house, assistance from outside counsel and experts is sometimes necessary. For example, both the state and its lessees have reopened negotiations over the previously settled Alaska North Slope royalty disputes based on changes in marketplace value and transportation costs. The department will require assistance from some of the outside attorneys and experts originally involved in the royalty dispute to resolve these reopeners.

MINING

The challenges include ongoing litigation regarding mineral royalties, mining rights, and rights regarding surface occupancy of mining claims. Department attorneys also assist the division in complying with federal statutes regulating surface mining, including legal review for the use of reclamation funds, and drafting agreement with operators to insure compliance with state and federal reclamation requirements. The department also advises and assists the Department of Natural Resources' Division of Mining in drafting bonding agreements, permits, leases, best interest findings, proposed legislation, and regulations.

Significant Changes in Results to be Delivered in FY2005

The Oil, Gas and Mining section's legal assistance will improve the efficiency of our client agencies' effort to spur new resource development thereby increasing public revenue and other benefits from that development.

The business climate for resource development will improve with fair and efficient resolution of litigation pertaining to:

- (1) regulatory barriers to resource development; and
- (2) developers' tax and royalty obligations to the State of Alaska.

Major Component Accomplishments in 2003

- The section drafted and testified in favor of a wide range of legislative proposals to accelerate oil and gas development in the state. These proposals included amendments to the Stranded Gas Act, targeted tax incentives and streamlined permitting.
- The department, with the Departments of Revenue and Natural Resources, collected approximately \$23 million (including interest) in back taxes and royalties owed by oil and gas companies.
- The department negotiated a settlement with BP in which the parties agreed to a methodology for setting pipeline tariff rates for the North Star Pipeline, a feeder line to TAPS.
- The department engaged the TAPS carriers in negotiations on a methodology to replace the TSM for determining TAPS tariff rates.
- The section provided legal support for the implementation of the Stranded Gas Act including drafting a proposed fiscal contract for the hoped-for North Slope gas project.

Statutory and Regulatory Authority

AS 44.23.020

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**Oil, Gas and Mining
Component Financial Summary**

All dollars shown in thousands

	FY2003 Actuals	FY2004 Authorized	FY2005 Governor
Non-Formula Program:			
Component Expenditures:			
71000 Personal Services	1,911.9	2,317.4	2,319.4
72000 Travel	79.2	90.5	90.5
73000 Contractual	267.7	2,417.7	1,957.7
74000 Supplies	30.8	54.2	54.2
75000 Equipment	27.1	0.0	0.0
76000 Land/Buildings	0.0	0.0	0.0
77000 Grants, Claims	0.0	0.0	0.0
78000 Miscellaneous	0.0	0.0	0.0
Expenditure Totals	2,316.7	4,879.8	4,421.8
Funding Sources:			
1004 General Fund Receipts	0.0	3,402.8	2,944.8
1007 Inter-Agency Receipts	2,316.7	0.0	0.0
1105 Alaska Permanent Fund Corporation Receipts	0.0	1,477.0	1,477.0
Funding Totals	2,316.7	4,879.8	4,421.8

Estimated Revenue Collections

Description	Master Revenue Account	FY2003 Actuals	FY2004 Authorized	FY2005 Governor
Unrestricted Revenues				
None.		0.0	0.0	0.0
Unrestricted Total		0.0	0.0	0.0
Restricted Revenues				
Interagency Receipts	51015	2,316.7	0.0	0.0
Permanent Fund Earnings Reserve Account	51373	0.0	1,477.0	1,477.0
Restricted Total		2,316.7	1,477.0	1,477.0
Total Estimated Revenues		2,316.7	1,477.0	1,477.0

Summary of Component Budget Changes From FY2004 Authorized to FY2005 Governor				
<i>All dollars shown in thousands</i>				
	<u>General Funds</u>	<u>Federal Funds</u>	<u>Other Funds</u>	<u>Total Funds</u>
FY2004 Authorized	3,402.8	0.0	1,477.0	4,879.8
Adjustments which will continue current level of service:				
-Changes to Retirement and Other Personal Services Rates	142.0	0.0	0.0	142.0
-Oil & Gas Litigation Sec 11(b) Ch 1 SLA 2003 P 5 L 22 (SCS CSHB 100 FIN)	-600.0	0.0	0.0	-600.0
FY2005 Governor	2,944.8	0.0	1,477.0	4,421.8

**Oil, Gas and Mining
Personal Services Information**

Authorized Positions		Personal Services Costs		
	FY2004 Authorized	FY2005 Governor		
Full-time	32	27	Annual Salaries	1,704,928
Part-time	0	1	Premium Pay	0
Nonpermanent	0	0	Annual Benefits	661,858
			<i>Less 2.00% Vacancy Factor</i>	(47,386)
			Lump Sum Premium Pay	0
Totals	32	28	Total Personal Services	2,319,400

Position Classification Summary

Job Class Title	Anchorage	Fairbanks	Juneau	Others	Total
Accounting Clerk II	0	0	1	0	1
Analyst/Programmer IV	1	0	0	0	1
Assoc Attorney I	0	0	1	0	1
Assoc Attorney II	2	0	0	0	2
Attorney III	0	0	1	0	1
Attorney IV	6	0	2	0	8
Attorney V	2	0	2	0	4
Attorney VI	1	0	0	0	1
Data Processing Mgr I	0	0	1	0	1
Law Office Assistant I	2	0	1	0	3
Law Office Assistant II	0	0	1	0	1
Paralegal I	1	0	0	0	1
Paralegal II	1	0	1	0	2
Procurement Spec III	0	0	1	0	1
Totals	16	0	12	0	28