

Onshore petroleum exploration activity in western Newfoundland: past work, current activity, and the road ahead

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The province of Newfoundland and Labrador is home to some of the largest unexplored sedimentary basins in the world, with less than 6% of the acreage currently held under license. For the onshore jurisdiction, seeps and shows of hydrocarbons have been observed in western Newfoundland for over a century. Onshore exploration activity, which is regulated by the Newfoundland and Labrador Department of Natural Resources, Energy Branch, has slowed in recent years.

Oil exploration in western Newfoundland dates back to 1865 when hydrocarbon seeps were reported at Shoal Point in the Port au Port region. Earliest exploration drilling began in 1867 in the Parson's Pond area. Despite numerous drilling programs, both historic and modern, and the acquisition of hundreds of kilometers of seismic data, the region has seen a significant reduction in exploration activity in recent years and fewer exploration companies continue to operate.

As part of the Provincial Government's Energy Plan released in September 2007, policy actions were introduced to encourage and promote onshore and offshore exploration activity in the province. The onshore Petroleum Exploration Enhancement Program (PEEP) emerged and was allocated \$5 million, an investment that has successfully funded source rock studies, regional mapping, aeromagnetic surveys and a data scoping study. Funds remain available for new and innovative projects in onshore western Newfoundland. These funds, coupled with the availability of released well and seismic data, for which we will present an overview, provide a good foundation from which to renew interest and investigation of western Newfoundland's onshore potential.