

All gathered in

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The NPD completed its three-year seismic survey programme off northern Norway this summer, and will use the data secured to identify possible petroleum resources in these waters.

Covering the Nordland VII area off Lofoten/Vesterålen and Troms II north-west of Andøya and Senja, this work has been commissioned by the Storting (parliament).

Costing a total of NOK 410 million, the surveys aim to strengthen knowledge about opportunities for finding petroleum in these parts of the Norwegian Sea.

The decision to launch the programme was taken when the Storting debated the integrated management plan for the marine environment in the Barents Sea and off Lofoten in 2006.

Its geological results will form part of the input for renewed parliamentary consideration of this plan, which is scheduled for next year.

Survey

This summer's survey lasted for just under six weeks and was extremely successful, reports Sissel Eriksen, director for exploration at the NPD.

Data gathered over the past three years will underpin a technical assessment of petroleum potential in the two areas for submission to the Ministry of Petroleum and Energy next spring.

Both methods and sites for the surveys were planned on the basis of geological complexity and anticipated prospectivity, while their timing was tailored to input from the fishing sector.

It was important to ensure that the size of the areas surveyed pro-

vided flexibility in relation to fishing, Ms Eriksen explains. "We accordingly announced a wider area than we could expect to cover with seismic shooting."

Large parts of northern Norway enjoyed a fantastic summer this year, which benefited the survey work. It was only interrupted once by bad weather.

With fishing activity also limited, the NPD could shoot continuously over large areas – 1 258 square kilometres in Nordland VII and 805 in Troms II. That was in line with its plans.

Vessels

This season's surveys were conducted by *Geo Pacific* off Vesterålen and *Ocean Explorer* north-west of Senja. Each ship had two fishery experts on board to maintain a good dialogue with fishermen in the area.

The NPD chose to offer a compensation scheme this year to active fishermen in the two areas. A total of 124 vessels agreed not to fish when that interfered with the surveys.

However, it remained fully possible to fish within the advertised areas throughout the period as long as that did not get in the way of the work.

Ms Eriksen is pleased that so many fishermen opted for the NPD scheme, and she emphasised that these deals were very important for the success of the surveys.

Compensation embraced fishing with nets, long-line, hand lines and Danish seines, and was calculated on the basis of historical catches in the area over the past four years. Devised in consultation with the fishermen, the scheme cost about NOK 12 million. ❄