

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## Blueberry River First Nations Grants New Disturbance Cap Exemption for PETRONAS Permits

**March 20, 2025 - Buick, B.C.** — Blueberry River First Nations (Blueberry) Council has approved an exemption to the New Disturbance Cap for six PETRONAS Energy Canada Ltd. (PETRONAS) development permits that are located within the Gundy HV1C area (the Gundy). These permits form part of PETRONAS' 2025 program for its North Montney operations, and this decision relates to the 2023 Implementation Agreement between Blueberry and the Province of B.C. (the IA).

“The Gundy is an important area for the practice of Blueberry members’ Treaty Rights, and the New Disturbance Caps - a key element of the IA - are a critical mechanism to protect the land from the cumulative effects of industrial activity,” said Councillor Wayne Yahey. “This was not an easy discussion or decision for Council, but we concluded that it was important for striking the balance we all seek between economic development and protection of our traditional way of life.”

PETRONAS sought exemptions from the New Disturbance Cap for a total of eight permits in its 2025 North Montney operations. Its application was assessed by Blueberry and six of the exemptions were ultimately granted, following Blueberry’s *Exemptions and Amendments Policy*. Exemptions require proponents to provide Blueberry with extensive information about their project and the requested exemption, including the amount and type of new disturbance required, the proponent’s efforts to engage trapline holders, and restoration initiatives related to the project. That information is assessed by the Blueberry Lands Department, which prepares a report for Council, and then Council decides whether to grant the exemption (a guide for industry related to this policy can be found [here](#)). Council did not approve an exemption for two other PETRONAS permits in the Gundy area, due to outstanding concerns raised by Blueberry trapline holders.

Blueberry continues to challenge [the validity of the HV1C Gundy Complex Plan](#) (the Gundy Plan), because the plan removed the New Disturbance Caps from the whole of this critical cultural area, leaving the Gundy vulnerable to potentially unlimited development. The province also failed to obtain approval for this plan from the majority of Council, as required under a specific Band Council Resolution (BCR) related to all work with the province under the IA.

Blueberry continues to stand behind the important protections for our Treaty Rights under the IA. Only when necessary, Blueberry may oppose permit referrals, proposals and/or actions by the province that violate our Treaty Rights, such as the purported approval of the Gundy Plan. Blueberry welcomes proponents who respect the New Disturbance Caps to work with us to plan their projects and request exemptions when appropriate.

“While a mutually agreed-upon plan for the Gundy remains unresolved, Blueberry continues to review and approve oil-and-gas referrals in a timely manner, including projects in the Gundy that do not require new disturbance,” said Councillor Shelley Gauthier. “Blueberry is committed to ensuring industrial activities can continue in a way that balances environmental protection with sustainable economic development.”

Northeast B.C. is currently seeing record amounts of natural gas and liquids production, record numbers of new wells drilled, and record permits approved. Blueberry is proud to be involved in this development and the new approach to oil-and-gas referrals, which includes Treaty Rights protections, and a collaborative approach focused on understanding how to deal with a proposed project’s impact on our members’ traditional way of life.

Between January 2023 when the IA was signed and January 2025:

- 1,779 oil-and-gas applications in the northeast have been moved to decision by the British Columbia Energy Regulator (BCER).
- 1,238 of those applications were in Blueberry’s Claim Area.
  - Blueberry’s Lands Department has provided comments and suggested changes to these permit applications where necessary.
  - Blueberry has opposed only 14 of those applications (0.01% of the total number referred to Blueberry), and only one of those 14 opposed applications was not ultimately approved by the BCER.

Blueberry continues to work with all partners and stakeholders to find ways forward that balance industrial development and economic stability in northeast B.C. with the restoration and protection of our traditional lands and respect for our members’ Treaty Rights.

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