

Going backwards

Geotechnical issues downgrade production at Caribou mine

According to an October 2018 press release, “challenging hanging wall rock mass conditions” have forced Trevali Mining Corporation to slow zinc and lead production at its Caribou mine in Bathurst, New Brunswick.

A hanging wall rock mass is found in mines with steeply dipping or irregular ore zones where cut and fill mining methods are used. The ore is mined in horizontal or slightly inclined slices, and then filled with waste rock, sand or mine tailings. Trevali says it was positioned to meet its original 2018 zinc and lead production targets but made several key operational changes to ensure the safety of its employees, equipment and to maintain production in 2019 and beyond.

“It is incredibly disappointing ... however this was a necessary step in order to ensure the safety of our workforce and enhance the long-term economics of the mine,” Trevali’s president and CEO Mark Cruise said in the press release.

The company is currently undergoing a strategic review of Caribou’s mine production. Steve Stakiw, Trevali’s vice-president of investor relations and corporate communications, said in an email the company won’t be commenting on the review or the mine’s production issues until the review is finished.



Testing the waters

Can ropeless fishing gear save the whales?

The Coldwater Lobster Association in Nova Scotia recently partnered with two ocean technology companies on a pilot study to test the effectiveness of ropeless fishing gear technology.

A high number of deaths of endangered North Atlantic right whales in Canadian waters in 2018 spurred the action. North American right whales getting tangled in ropes attached to lobster traps is thought to be one of the reasons why some of the deaths occurred in 2018. This resulted in the Department of Fisheries and Oceans taking measures to protect the species, including mandating temporary closures of some Lobster Fishing Areas when right whale sightings were confirmed. Lobster fishers disagree that their fishing practices are killing right whales.

“Instead of complaining about it, we thought we should do something,” says Heather Mulock, executive director of the association, which represents 970 lobster licence holders in southwestern Nova Scotia. “Let’s test it out.”

So far, test results have been disappointing. The two companies the association partnered with in the pilot study were U.S.-based Desert Star Systems and Nova Scotia-based Ashored Innovations. Their ropeless gear technology was used on three vessels for 23 sea trials each. Mulock says separate reports on the trials have been done. The report on the Desert Star technology was finished as this magazine went to press, but the report on Ashored Innovations was not. Mulock says the Desert Star report showed the cost is prohibitive for fishers and technical challenges were also encountered in the water with its ropeless gear technology.

Weathering the storm

Mother Nature puts a halt to offshore production

November of 2018 proved to be a tough month for oil production in Newfoundland and Labrador.

On Nov. 15, Husky Energy Inc. stopped production at its White Rose field due to safety concerns as a severe winter storm hit the Jeanne d’Arc Basin where the field is located. The next day, it started the process of resuming operations “once conditions had returned to normal operating parameters,” the company said on its website. That’s when it was announced 250,000 litres of oil had leaked from a broken connector on a flow line that links the *SeaRose* floating production and storage platform (pictured) to a drilling site at the White Rose field. It’s the largest oil spill in the province’s history. The spill occurred as Husky was restarting production during the end of that major offshore storm in waves that were recorded at 8.4 metres—or 28 feet.

Production from White Rose was still shut in as this magazine went to press. The Canada-Newfoundland and Labrador Offshore Petroleum Board’s CEO Scott Tessier says the regulator will investigate the incident and see what Husky’s rationale was for trying to restart production in such rough seas. As the storm hit the region, the province’s other fields—Suncor Energy’s Terra Nova, Exxon-Mobil’s Hebron and Hibernia—also ceased production for safety reasons. As of Nov. 23, Hebron and Hibernia were back in production, while Terra Nova was still shut down. |nrm



Photo courtesy Husky Energy