FIRST OIL

KURT S. ABRAHAM,
Editor-In-Chief & Chief Forecaster



Our awards event for technical excellence reaches new highs



Fig. 1. Gulf Energy Information (GEI) Sr. V.P. for Content Lee Nichols did a good job as Master of Ceremonies, entertaining the crowd while keeping the program on pace.

We are pleased to report that our company's annual technical awards event, the Gulf Energy Excellence Awards, was another smashing success earlier this month. Held once again at the Post Oak Hotel in Houston on Oct. 15, the black-tie gala brought together close to 450 senior leaders from operators, technology providers and service companies to recognize the people, projects and technologies shaping

the global energy industry. Given the large number of categories that had to be awarded, the program flowed at a remarkably steady, brisk pace, Fig. 1.

The 2026 program drew the greatest number of nominations in its history, and awards were presented for 44 categories across the upstream, midstream and downstream sectors. “The Awards set a new record this year, with 560 nominations from across the global energy industry,” noted John Royall, President and CEO, Gulf Energy Information, Fig. 2. “That depth of competition is what gives this recognition its weight. This year’s winners (Fig. 3) represent the technologies, projects and people advancing how the industry finds, produces, transports and processes energy, more safely, more efficiently and with a lower carbon footprint.”



Fig. 2. GEI President and CEO John Royall spoke to the crowd early on in the program.



Fig. 3. One of the early winners at the Awards was QuantumPro, Inc., for Best Completion Technology. Pictured with GEI President and CEO John Royall (left) are QuantumPro's John Oliver (Business Advisor and Co-Inventor, second from left), Talgat Shokanov (center, CEO), Mo Cordes (second from right, Business Development Advisor), and Adil Mukhitov (far right, Carbon Business Advisor).

Honorees are based across Asia, the Middle East, India, Europe and North America, with recognized projects spanning from the North Sea to Australia. Specialist technology firms, a leading energy law firm and a global professional society were also honored, a clear sign that excellence in this industry is not defined by company size.

Artificial intelligence earned Best Digital Transformation honors in all three sectors, while lower-carbon work in ammonia, hydrogen and CO_2 recovery was recognized alongside advances in drilling, deepwater technology and pipeline integrity. The individual awards honored careers at every stage, from the industry's most promising engineers to its lifetime achievers. For more details on the categories and winners, please turn to the article in this issue that further describes the Awards event

In the U.S., please get out and vote. To our readers and friends in the U.S. upstream industry, we implore you to please vote in the mid-term elections, either early or on the actual Election Day, Nov. 3. There are candidates and issues across a number of states that could affect your livelihood and qualify-of-life in quite a few ways.

I know that our U.S. upstream professionals are very savvy and can recognize the difference between good and bad, productive and evil, and pro-industry and anti-oil and gas. Never has there been a clearer difference between the two political parties. When you look at some of the goofy candidates running

under the banner of the one party for Senate and House seats and governerships, it literally becomes a choice between common sense and crazy, as described by a number of political analysts.

And let's look at what could happen if the party controlling the Administration and Congress were to lose its majority in both houses of the latter. Consider all the improvements that the current Administration has made to oil and gas regulation since re-taking full control of the White House and Congress in January 2025, as follows:

Permitting and Land Access

- **Expanded leasing:** Offered over one billion acres of federal lands and waters for oil and gas drilling, including reopening federal lands and offshore areas, **Fig. 4.**
- **Drilling permits rise sharply:** Approved nearly 6,000 applications for permits to drill on federal lands, marking a 55% increase over previous levels.
- **Alaskan development:** Lifted prior restrictions by reopening the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge (ANWR) for drilling and reversing restrictions in the National Petroleum Reserve-Alaska via Executive Order 14153.
- **Streamlined reviews:** Accelerated federal permitting and National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) reviews while simplifying approval procedures under the One Big Beautiful Bill Act.

LNG and Exports

- **LNG export pause lifted:** Ended the previous administration's pause on LNG export terminal construction projects on the first day in office.
- **Record exports:** Authorized roughly 22.3 Bcfd in non-Free Trade Agreement LNG export approvals, helping the U.S. surpass 100 million metric tons of annual LNG exports.
- **Production milestones:** Positive policies have driven crude oil output to roughly 13.6 MMbpd and natural gas production to record highs (projected to pass 122.5 Bcfd).

Regulatory Rollbacks

- **Methane fee repeal:** Repealed the Inflation Reduction Act's methane fee on oil and gas operations.
- **Climate policy scrapping:** Disbanded the Interagency Working Group on the Social Cost of Greenhouse Gases, revoked prior climate-crisis executive orders, and withdrew from the Paris Climate Accord.
- **Power plant regulations:** The current Administration revoked EPA regulations that added hurdles to constructing and operating natural gas-fired power plants.



Fig. 4. BLM headquarters in Washington, D.C., site of improved federal land leasing with expanded offerings. Image: U.S. Bureau of Land Management.

This is an impressive record of pro-hydrocarbons policy actions in just 21 months since the Administration took office. But much of this could begin to disappear or at least stall, if the “common sense party” were to lose both Houses of Congress, and the “crazy party” took over. Surely, the industry cannot afford this to happen. Accordingly, this editor exhorts those of you in the U.S. to vote for candidates that will support and maintain the progress made in these last 21 months. We cannot afford the opposite to happen. I particularly say this to our brethren in Texas, Alaska, Ohio, Michigan, Kansas and Nebraska, where Senate races are running very close; in some cases, much closer than they should be. Your vote will help make a difference.

Norway stands its ground (or ice pack) while the EU blinks on Arctic strategy. Those of you, who watch Arctic oil and gas policy and activity closely, will remember that the European Union (EU) on Sept. 21 announced that it would maintain its opposition to new oil and gas drilling in the Arctic, despite Norway pressuring the EU to drop the ban. This was announced by a European Commission spokesperson.

Now, if you just got confused by the mention of the EU and the European Commission in the same paragraph, let me explain. For those of you living outside Europe, the EU is a political and economic union of 27 member states, while the European Commission is one of the main executive institutions *inside* the EU.

Anyway, the EU has been supporting a ban on new drilling in the Arctic, supposedly because of environmental concerns, including risks posed to sensitive Arctic ecosystems by industrial activities and pollution. On the other hand, Norway has been calling for a change in this position, saying it should be written into an upcoming revision of the EU's policy on the Arctic. But the EU was not budging. "The EU remains committed to the approach set out in the 2021 Joint Communication on the EU Arctic Policy," the

spokesperson for the European Commission told Reuters on Sept. 21, emphasizing that work was ongoing on the revised policy.

The document referred to by the spokesperson lays out the EU position. It says the group supports a ban on further Arctic oil and gas development and will not buy such hydrocarbons. However, Norway is Europe's biggest gas supplier. Also, Norway is not an EU member and has been pushing Brussels to drop the moratorium.

Remaining resolute, Norwegian Energy Minister Terje Aasland told Reuters last month that his country will continue developing its resources in the Barents Sea (Fig. 5), regardless of the EU's position. He also cited an unstable geopolitical and security environment as reasons why this would be in Europe's best interests.



Fig. 5. The Johan Castberg field and its namesake FPSO sit in the Barents Sea, well north of the Arctic Circle. Image: Equinor; photographer: Søren Q. Terkildsen.

But then, the EU blinked. On Oct. 19 came word that the European Union was softening its opposition to oil and gas production in polar areas, while still calling for all fossil fuels to be kept in the ground in its forthcoming Arctic strategy. A draft of the strategy, seen by Bloomberg, contains no references to a moratorium on new oil and gas drilling in the Arctic. That would be a shift in wording from the EU's 2021 position. The wording has been a proverbial volleyball of discussions between the EU and Norway.

Meanwhile, Norwegian officials awarded five oil and gas exploration licenses in the Barents Sea, (a part of the Arctic) in last year's licensing round, and opened up 38 blocks in 2026 for applications. It should be noted that Norway supplied almost a third of the EU's gas imports last year.

The industry's concern was that the EU would mandate not buying oil and gas from Norway's Arctic fields. Instead, the draft says the union will "prioritize" renewable energy sources and hydrocarbons produced outside the Arctic. The European Commission also says it will work toward an international commitment to prevent further development of Arctic oil and gas, if such activity "poses a threat to the Arctic ecosystem."

The latest draft also reiterates the EU's broader commitment to keep coal, oil and gas in the ground, including in the Arctic, in line with its climate targets. The group has set a legally binding goal of cutting net greenhouse gas emissions 90% from the 1990 level by 2040. **WO**

IN THIS ISSUE

Special focus: Advances in Drilling. First up among the articles in this month's lead section is a look beyond drilling performance by an SLB well construction director toward integrating well delivery from plan to production. Another feature from NOV's director of Geothermal examines how adapted oilfield technologies are advancing the next generation of geothermal drilling. A third article from the founder of SC DrillTech looks at a systems approach to solids control, all the way from formation to waste. In a fourth feature, Maxell Europe's senior manager for business development discusses the role of high-temperature, rechargeable solid-state batteries in building reliable power systems for next-generation downhole tools. Finally, senior managers from AKM-AI and Ascent Resources – Utica LLC discuss a re-thinking of the role of weight-on-bit in extended laterals. They ask the question, "What if your WOB looks right, but the weight reaching the bit isn't?"

Completion technology. In this feature, technology directors from STEP Energy Services and Caterpillar discuss how Canadian completions are evolving beyond the use of diesel in everyday operations. As completion methods evolve to meet modern demands, technology diversification serves as the most effective framework to preserve reliability, promote maximum uptime and protect long-term operator profitability.

AI/Offshore technology. An ABS author explains how the concept of floating data centers will eventually result in more uptime for offshore operations. He says the challenge isn't putting a data center on water. It's delivering hyperscale-level availability in a maritime environment. With the right expertise and engineering approach, transitioning land-based data center infrastructure to a marine environment can support safer, more secure and sustainable operations.

EDITORIAL@WORLDOIL.COM