

Scientists help uncover new oilfields

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University of Liverpool scientists are working to understand the nature of oil and gas reservoirs within deeply buried submarine channels.

A global consortium of 11 major oil companies has awarded Stephen Flint and David Hodgson of school's the Department of Earth and Ocean Sciences \$1.7 million to study how sand is transported through and deposited in deep-sea submarine channels.

Scientists will study ancient channel systems in the Karoo area of South Africa, which are now exposed above sea level.

Submarine channels transport sediments such as sand, mud and silt from shallow marine waters to the deep sea, and contain much of the recently discovered oil and gas reserves outside the Middle East.

The cost of drilling a well to extract new reserves in slope channel reservoirs can exceed \$50 million, so it is crucial that exactly the right position is targeted, researchers said.

Only sand-filled channels can produce oil, so scientists at the university will work on predicting which channels contain sand and which are filled with mud and silt, based on analysis of the characteristics and settings of the Karoo systems.

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