



*The Pike a 1980s built Halter Marine 180 footer, a ship type still used in many places of the world for moving jack-ups.  
Picture: Fergus Mack.*

and the Operations Manuals of these objects always specify the environmental criteria under which it can take place. Wave heights of more than one metre are normally unacceptable. In addition the warranty surveyors will normally only give towing approval if the weather conditions for the whole tow were acceptable.

In addition to the problems of ocean towing created by the configuration and the low freeboard of jack-ups, which is really a whole subject on its own, there are numerous operational difficulties which those moving jack-ups routinely faced.

Oilfields in benign shallow water environments such as the Arabian and Mexican Gulfs consist of numerous individual wells each with its own small unmanned platform complete with helideck. Pipelines are run on the seabed from each of the small platforms to a large central platform where the oil from the field is processed and then pumped onwards to the shore. Much of the work in these areas is related to work-overs where the rig has to make a close approach to the platform, jack up until it is above it, and then slide the drilling package out on the cantilever so that the well can be re-entered.

Jack-ups are often required to work in shallow waters, most extremely off the coast of the Indian subcontinent, in 'drying heights'. In these areas the location was approached on a rising tide and the work completed before the tide fell to the point where the vessels carrying out the move would go aground. Off the coast of Saudi Arabia there are complete oilfields consisting of fifty-odd small platforms all in water depths varying between a maximum of 10 meters and a minimum of two or three meters. Jack-ups which are specially selected for their minimal draft are deployed in these fields and they are put in position and supplied by support vessels with similarly low drafts.

Commonly a small anchor-handler will be attached to each of the corners of the jack-up and the platform approached with a single ship at the bow and two others being towed along on the aft corners. The derrick of course is at the centre of the aft end of the unit, usually on a