ConocoPhillips (NYSE: COP) today announced its 2016 operating plan. Key highlights from the plan include:

- $7.7 billion capital budget;
- 1 to 3 percent production growth, adjusted for asset sales; and
- $7.7 billion of operating costs.

Chairman and Chief Executive Officer Ryan Lance commented, “We’re setting an operating plan for 2016 that recognizes the current environment, which remains challenging. We are significantly reducing capital and operating costs, while maintaining our commitment to safety and asset integrity. We also retain the flexibility to adjust capital spending in response to market factors. Our plan highlights the actions we accelerated over the past year to position our company for low and volatile prices. As we enter 2016, ConocoPhillips has greater capital flexibility, a more competitive cost structure, a streamlined portfolio and the ability to deliver profitable growth from a high-quality resource base. These advantages, coupled with our strong balance sheet, give us the ability to maintain a compelling dividend and close the gap on cash flow neutrality across a range of prices.”

The company also announced it expects to close approximately $2.3 billion of non-core asset sales. This number includes approximately $0.6 billion from transactions that closed through the first three quarters. The remaining $1.7 billion represents transactions with definitive agreements in place that are expected to close in the fourth quarter of 2015 or the first quarter of 2016. Production from these assets, of which 80 percent is natural gas, accounts for more than 70 thousand barrels of oil equivalent per day (MBOED) of 2015 production. The company continues to pursue ongoing, non-core asset sales across the portfolio.

2016 Capital Budget Allocation

The 2016 capital budget of $7.7 billion represents a 55 percent reduction compared with 2014 capital spending and a 25 percent reduction compared with expected 2015 capital spending. This includes funding for base maintenance and corporate expenditures, development drilling programs, major projects, and exploration and appraisal spending. Reductions compared with expected 2015 capital spending of $10.2 billion come primarily from lower major project spending, deflation capture and efficiency improvements.

By category, capital is allocated with approximately $1.2 billion, or 16 percent, to base maintenance and corporate expenditures; $3.0 billion, or 39 percent, to development drilling programs; $2.1 billion, or 27 percent, to major projects; and $1.4 billion, or 18 percent, to exploration and appraisal. By region, the breakdown is as follows:

Lower 48
Approximately $2.6 billion, or 34 percent, is allocated to the Lower 48. This is a reduction of about 30 percent compared with 2015 expected spending, primarily reflecting improved efficiencies, lower average rig count and lower infrastructure spending in the unconventionals, and deflation. Capital spending in 2016 will focus predominantly on the unconventionals where the company plans to maintain current activity levels with 13 rigs across the Eagle Ford, Bakken and Permian, with ongoing flexibility to ramp up or down activity in these plays. Other spending will target exploration and appraisal activity in the Gulf of Mexico, base maintenance and conventional drilling program.

Canada
Approximately $0.8 billion, or 10 percent, is planned for Canada. This reduction of approximately 30 percent compared with 2015 expected spending is primarily due to the roll off of spending at Surmont 2. 2016 capital will focus on development drilling and appraisal in the unconventionals, continued ramp up at Surmont 2 and two exploration wells offshore Nova Scotia.

Alaska
Approximately $1.3 billion, or 17 percent, is allocated to Alaska. This reduction of about 5 percent compared with 2015 expected spending is predominantly the result of reduced major project spending in the region following the startup of CD5 and Drill Site 2S in 2015. Capital in 2016 will mostly target development drilling, base maintenance and the progression of several major projects.

Europe
Approximately $1.3 billion, or 17 percent, is allocated to Europe. This reduction of approximately 15 percent compared with 2015 expected spending is primarily the result of reduced conventional drilling and lower major project spending across the region. Capital in 2016 will focus on major projects across the region, development drilling in the Greater Ekofisk Area and base maintenance.

Asia Pacific and Middle East
Approximately $1.4 billion, or 18 percent, is allocated to Asia Pacific and Middle East. This reduction of roughly 30 percent compared with 2015 expected spending is largely the result of reduced major project spending at the Australia Pacific LNG (APLNG) Project. The 2016 capital budget includes approximately $0.6 billion of capital at APLNG to achieve the startup of Train 2 and complete deferred activity from 2015. The remainder of the 2016 capital will primarily fund major projects in Malaysia and China, as well as development drilling around legacy assets.

Other
Approximately $0.3 billion, or 4 percent, is allocated toward other 2016 activity, including corporate programs.

2016 Production Outlook

The company’s full-year 2015 production guidance remains unchanged at 1,585 to 1,595 MBOED, excluding dispositions. Full-year 2015 production associated with $2.3 billion of divestitures is approximately 70 MBOED. Adjusted for these volumes, 2015 production guidance would be 1,515 to 1,525 MBOED. This is the new baseline from which the company expects to grow 1 to 3 percent in 2016. All guidance excludes Libya.

Production growth in 2016 will come primarily from the startup of APLNG in Australia, continued ramp up of oil sands production in Canada and recent project startups in Alaska. Growth from these areas will be partially offset by decline in Europe and Lower 48.

2016 Operating Costs Outlook

2016 operating costs are expected to be $7.7 billion, compared with $10.5 billion in 2014. When adjusted for $0.8 billion of special items, operating costs are improved by $2 billion compared with 2014 adjusted operating costs of $9.7 billion and $0.5 billion below expected 2015 adjusted operating costs of $8.2 billion. Reductions are primarily the result of sustainable internal cost reduction efforts, efficiency gains, deflation capture and market impacts, partially offset by increased costs associated with higher production. 2016 operating costs include $0.4 billion associated with deepwater exploration where the company is pursuing a phased exit. Other expense guidance items will be provided in early 2016.

“Our 2016 operating plan achieves a balance between exercising flexibility to manage through the current oil and gas price downturn, and retaining optionality for medium- and long-term growth,” added Lance. “We have a unique combination of a resilient portfolio and financial flexibility to manage through the current price cycle, while preserving value and continuing to deliver on our commitments to shareholders.”

ConocoPhillips will host a conference call today at 10 a.m. EST to discuss the details of its 2016 operating plan. The call will include a review of capital, production, operating costs and financial priorities. To listen to the call and view related presentation materials, go to www.conocophillips.com/investor.

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About ConocoPhillips

ConocoPhillips is the world’s largest independent E&P company based on production and proved reserves. Headquartered in Houston, Texas, ConocoPhillips had operations and activities in 25 countries, $31 billion in annualized revenue, $106 billion of total assets, and approximately 17,800 employees as of Sept. 30, 2015. Production, excluding Libya, averaged 1,586 MBOED for the nine months ended Sept. 30, 2015, and proved reserves were 8.9 billion BOE as of Dec. 31, 2014. For more information, go to www.conocophillips.com.

CAUTIONARY STATEMENT FOR THE PURPOSES OF THE "SAFE HARBOR" PROVISIONS OF THE PRIVATE SECURITIES LITIGATION REFORM ACT OF 1995

This news release contains forward-looking statements. Forward-looking statements relate to future events and anticipated results of operations, business strategies, and other aspects of our operations or operating results. In many cases you can identify forward-looking statements by terminology such as "anticipate," "estimate," "believe," "continue," "could," "intend," "may," "plan," "potential," "predict," "should," "will," "expect," "objective," "projection," "forecast," "goal," "guidance," "outlook," "effort," "target" and other similar words. However, the absence of these words does not mean that the statements are not forward-looking. Where, in any forward-looking statement, the company expresses an expectation or belief as to future results, such expectation or belief is expressed in good faith and believed to have a reasonable basis. However, there can be no assurance that such expectation or belief will result or be achieved. The actual results of operations can and will be affected by a variety of risks and other matters including, but not limited to, changes in commodity prices; changes in expected levels of oil and gas reserves or production; operating hazards, drilling risks, unsuccessful exploratory activities; difficulties in developing new products and manufacturing processes; unexpected cost increases; international monetary conditions; potential liability for remedial actions under existing or future environmental regulations; potential liability resulting from pending or future litigation; limited access to capital or significantly higher cost of capital related to illiquidity or uncertainty in the domestic or international financial markets; and general domestic and international economic and political conditions; as well as changes in tax, environmental and other laws applicable to our business. Other factors that could cause actual results to differ materially from those described in the forward-looking statements include other economic, business, competitive and/or regulatory factors affecting our business generally as set forth in our filings with the Securities and Exchange Commission. Unless legally required, ConocoPhillips undertakes no obligation to update publicly any forward-looking statements, whether as a result of new information, future events or otherwise.

Use of Non-GAAP Financial Information – This news release includes the term operating costs. This is a non-GAAP financial measure. This term is included to help facilitate comparisons of company operating performance across periods and with peer companies. Operating costs represent controllable costs and include production and operating expenses, selling, general and administrative expenses and exploration expenses excluding dry holes and leasehold impairments.

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