# STATE OF NEW MEXICO ENERGY, MINERALS AND NATURAL RESOURCES DEPARTMENT OIL CONSERVATION DIVISION

# APPLICATION LCX ENERGY, LLC FOR COMPULSORY POOLING, EDDY COUNTY, NEW MEXICO.

CASE NO. 1393

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# DEVON ENERGY CORPORATION'S RESPONSE TO MOTION TO QUASH

LCX Energy LLC drilled the 1725 Federal Com Well No. 61 ("the Well") without either contacting Devon Energy Corporation, which owns 120-acres of oil and gas leases in the well spacing unit, or giving Devon the opportunity to participate in the well. This is not the first time LCX has drilled without even contacting other owners in the spacing unit dedicated to the well.

When Devon learned of the Well, it requested data from LCX but none was provided. To obtain a well Proposal and cost estimate on the Well, Devon had to file a compulsory pooling application and Devon further has had to obtained a subpoena from the Division for well information. Devon seeks information that LCX obtained by drilling the Well on the spacing unit in which Devon owns an interest. Unless the LCX well is a dry hole, Devon will pay its share of the drilling costs either directly or by having its share of these costs withheld out of production once pooling occurs. If the well is a dry hole, LCX took this risk by drilling before contacting the other owners in the spacing unit and giving them an opportunity to share the costs and otherwise participate in the decisions concerning the development of this spacing unit.

After Devon filed its pooling application, LCX filed its own compulsory pooling application seeking an order pooling the same spacing unit for the Well and imposing a 200% charge for the risk it assumed in drilling the well.

Compulsory pooling is an exercise of the police power of the state to take a constitutionally protected property interest of one owner and give it to another to operate. The Oil and Gas Act sets specific preconditions that must be met by an applicant before the state will invoke its compulsory pooling authority. One of those preconditions is that the interest owners in the spacing unit "have not agreed to pool their interests." In the past, the Oil Conservation Division required at a minimum a good faith effort to reach voluntary agreement before taking the interest of an owner with a pooling order. If the party proposing to drill a well can locate the other interest owners in a spacing unit but fails to offer them the opportunity to participate in the well prior to drilling, the drilling party is deemed to have assumend the risk of drilling and no risk penalty is imposed on the interests of the owners who were not contacted about the well until after it was drilled. *See*, Order No. R-9581-A where BHP Minerals was allowed to charge only 10% for the risk associated with the completion of a well where it had drilled to total depth

and delayed completion having failed to provide another interest owner in the well an opportunity to participate in the well prior to drilling.<sup>1</sup>

In this case, LCX made no effort to reach a voluntary agreement for the development of this acreage until the well was drilled. Since that time, no good faith discussions have occurred. LCX did not contact Devon until three weeks after spudding the well and did not send a well proposal or AFE until two weeks after the well had been drilled, logged and tested. There were no good faith negotiations prior to drilling. Devon did not have an opportunity to propose an alternative well location nor file its own application seeking an order approving an alternative location for the well. Instead LCX drilled the well, logged the well and tested the well before it contacted Devon.

LCX appears to believe that there are no consequence to its decisions to unilaterally develop properties ignoring the rights of other interest owners in the dedicated spacing units. If LCX is correct, all operators should drill first and come to the Division at a later time later.

With this Motion to Quash, LCX is trying to prevent Devon from reviewing data on the well. It now offers Devon a chance to join in the well by paying its share of the well costs but it will not share the well data. It now wants to negotiate. With the data it now possesses on the well, LCX can predict the producing capability of the well. It now knows if the well it is trying to sell to Devon is a good well or a dry hole. In these circumstances, unless LCX is required to share information on the well, no good faith negotiations can occur.

In its Motion to Quash, LCX over simplifies the issues raised by Devon's application. To clarify these issues for LCX, contemporaneously with the filing of this response, Devon has filed an amended Pre-Hearing Statement in Case No. 13628.

- 1. In its Pre-Hearing Statement, Devon seeks an order rescinding the Application for Permit to Drill previously approved for LCX because recent actions by LCX raise questions concerning whether or not LCX has adequate experience in operating wells in New Mexico and in compliance with the Rules and Regulations of the Oil Conservation Division and, therefore, whether or not is a prudent operator. Devon believes LCX should not be allowed to operate a well into which Devon interests are pooled. Devon intends to show that LCX has established a pattern of drilling first and contacting affected owners later. Devon therefore seeks to be designated operator of the well.
- 2. Devon also intends to challenge the 200% risk charge sought by LCX. Devon seeks and order declaring that the 200% risk penalty is inappropriate after LCX has unilaterally assumed the risk by drilling. LCX seems to believe that good

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> Order No. R-9581-A provides:

<sup>&</sup>lt;u>FINDING:</u> Because BHP did not provide Mrs. Locke with an authorization for expenditure and give her the opportunity to participate in the well, it assumed all risk of drilling; a risk penalty of 10 percent as the completion operations mechanical risk properly reflects the risk in this particular situation."

faith negotiations with other interest owners in a spacing unit consist of drilling first, gathering and keeping tight data on the well, and then contacting others who own interest in the affected spacing unit. Its actions are inconsistent with the Oil and Gas Act, Division policy and prior Orders of the Division and Commission.

The data Devon seeks from LCX is relevant to these issues. It will lead to the discovery of evidence that will show that in drilling the well in the W/2 of Section 6, LCX was either ignorant of the Division rules and policy -- or ignored them. Devon believes that the information it seeks will show whether or not the well was drilled at a prudent location and if it has been imprudently drilled.

#### **RESPONSES TO LCX's OBJECTIONS:**

#### ITEMS 2 and 3:

In Item 2, Devon seeks copies of well logs and completion reports from the Well and in Item 3 it seeks pressure information from the Well. LCX objects to these items asserting that the subpoena seeks the disclosure of proprietary and confidential business and privileged trade secret information. LCX further objects asserting the information is not reasonably calculated to lead to the discovery of admissible evidence.

Regardless of the outcome of the hearing on these consolidated applications, the acreage will be pooled and Devon or LCX will be designated operator of the well. The Oil and Gas Act provides that "All operations for the pooled oil and gas, or both, which are conducted on any portion of the unit shall be deemed for all purposes to have been conducted upon each tract within the unit by the owner or owners of such tract." NMSA 1978, § 70-2-17.C. Pursuant to this statute, the drilling, logging and testing was conducted by LCX was by and for Devon as well as for itself. Unless the well is a dry hole, Devon will be required to pay its share of the costs incurred in conducting this activity. Therefore, the information obtained by drilling on this spacing unit is not proprietary and confidential business and privileged trade secret information between LCX and Devon. This information was obtained for both of them.

The Division recently found that the trade secret privilege is available only 'if the allowance of the privilege will not tend to conceal fraud or otherwise work injustice." Rule 11-508 NMRA 2004.<sup>2</sup> Certainly it is unjust to allow one owner in a spacing unit to obtain information without contacting other owners in the dedicated well spacing unit and then use that information against the other interest owner in negotiations for the development of that acreage. The well data must be provided to Devon. Furthermore, since Devon is challenging the 200% risk charge, the information is relevant to the issues

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> By Order No. R-12343-A, the Division rejected the assertion of a trade secret privilege by Chesapeake against Kaiser-Francis Oil Company where Kaiser-Francis owned the lease to the tract on which the well was located and has the right to explore for minerals and conduct geological investigations." Finding 16, Order No. R-12343-A. Here, Devon owns the mineral lease on the acreage dedicated to the Well and, pursuant to other provisions of Order No. R-12343-A, has the right to explore for minerals and conduct geological investigations on this land.

which the Division must decide. LCX must share the information acquired from drilling with the other owners in the spacing unit.

# **ITEM 5:**

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Item 4 seeks monthly production reports for all other Wolfcamp wells drilled and/or operated by LCX in southeastern New Mexico. LCX objects because the requested information is unduly burdensome or expensive, taking into account the needs of the case. LCX also objects for the reason that the data sought is not reasonably calculated to lead to discoverable evidence.

Information reported to the Oil Conservation Division on Form C-105 appears to show that LCX may be the operator of as many as twenty-one Wolfcamp wells in New Mexico. However, it also seems to indicate that LCX has only reported production from five of these wells and only produced them since 2004. On the other hand, in a case where a party's ability to prudently operate wells is at issue, the data sought by Item 4 is relevant and – if few wells are being produced – not unduly burdensome. Furthermore, no production has been reported since October 2005. Devon seeks the production of this information.

### ITEMS 6 and 7:

Items 6 and 7 seek the geological and engineering data used by LCX to select the location for the Well. LCX objects to these items asserting that the subpoena seeks the disclosure of proprietary and confidential business and privileged trade secret information. LCX further objects asserting the information is not reasonably calculated to lead to the discovery of admissible evidence.

In these consolidated cases, LCX made no effort to reach a voluntary agreement for the development of this acreage or the location of the Well until after the well was drilled. There were no good faith negotiations prior to drilling and Devon did not have an opportunity to propose an alternative well location nor to file its own application seeking an order approving an alternative location for the well. Furthermore, unless the well is a dry hole, Devon will be required to pay its share of the costs incurred in conducting this activity. Therefore, the information obtained by drilling on this spacing unit is not proprietary and confidential business nor privileged trade secret information between LCX and Devon, this information was obtained for both of them. Since the ability of LCX to prudently operate the well is an issue in this case, this information is relevant and should be produced.

#### <u>ITEM 9:</u>

Item 9 seeks documents concerning the ownership of interests in the acreage dedicated to the Well. LCX objects on the grounds that this information is protected by the attorney work-product privilege and is unreasonably cumulative or duplicative or obtainable from other sources.

If the information sought by this subpoena item was prepared for the drilling of the well on this tract and the costs of preparation will be billed to the other interest owners in the spacing unit, including Devon, it is deemed to have been prepared for all owners of interest in the tract. It is relevant because Devon believes that it will show that LCX was aware of Devon's interest in this spacing unit long before it drilled and that it willfully failed to advise Devon of the proposed development of this acreage until after the well was drilled.

The data sought by Devon Energy Corporation is relevant to the issues that will be properly before the Commission when these consolidated cases are heard. Devon needs this information to prepare its case. The operations that produced this data are presumed for all purposes to have been conducted by the owners of each tract in the spacing unit. Devon is being asked to pay these costs. If it does not, LCX will ask that Devon be pooled and Devon's share of the costs be withheld out of production. Either way, Devon will pay its share of the operations that resulted in the development of this information. Therefore, Devon does not seek the disclosure of proprietary and confidential business and privileged trade secret. The data was obtained for Devon as well as for LCX. Under the recent decision of the Division in Order R-12343-A this data must be produced for to do otherwise would work and injustice on Devon.

The Division should tell LCX that there are consequences of drilling without first entering into good faith negotiations with other owners in a spacing unit. It should require LCX to produce all information sought by the Devon subpoena and, if the case then has to go to hearing, no risk penalty should apply to any pooled interest in the spacing unit.

Respectfully submitted,

HOLLAND & HART, LLP By: William **R** Carr

Post Office Box 2088 110 North Guadalupe Street Santa Fe, New Mexico 87501

ATTORNEY FOR DEVON ENERGY CORPORATION

## **CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE**

I hereby certify that a copy of this Response to Motion to Quash was served upon the following counsel of record this 26th day of January, 2006 by U. S. Mail and by Facsimile:

J. Scott Hall, Esq. Miller Stratvert P.A. Post Office Box 1986 Santa Fe, New Mexico 87504 Phone: (505) 989-9857 Fax: (505) 989-9857 Attorney for LCX Energy, LLC

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James Bruce, Esq. Post Office Box 1056 Santa Fe, New Mexico 87504 Phone: (505) 982-2043 Fax: (505) 982-2151 Attorney for Parallel Petroleum Corporation and Capstone Oil & Gas Company, LP

William F.

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DISTRICT II P.O. Drawer DD, Artesia, NM 88211-0719

DISTRICT III 1000 Rio Brazos Rd., Astac, NM 87410

DISTRICT IV 2040 South Pachaco, Santa Fe, NM 87505

#### State of New Mexico Energy, Minerals & Natural Resources Department

Form C-102 Revised August 15, 2000 Submit to Appropriate District Office State Lease - 4 Copies Fee Lease - 3 Copies

#### OIL CONSERVATION DIVISION 2040 South Pacheco Santa Fe, NM 87505

□ AMENDED REPORT

#### WELL LOCATION AND ACREAGE DEDICATION PLAT Pool Code Pool Name API Number COTTONWOOD CREEK-WOLFCAMP 75250 Property Name Well Number **Property** Code 1725 FED COM 61 Operator Name Elevation OGRID No. LCX ENERGY, LLC 3633' 218885 Surface Location Section Township Lot Idn Feet from the North/South line Feet from the East/West line UL or lot No. Range County 760 EDDY 17 S 660 NORTH WEST D 6 25 E - Bottom Hole Location If Different From Surface UL or lot No. Section Township Range Lot Idn Feet from the North/South line Feet from the East/West line County 17 S 25 E 660 SOUTH 760 WEST EDDY 6 М Joint or Infill Consolidation Code Order No. Dedicated Acres 320 NO ALLOWABLE WILL BE ASSIGNED TO THIS COMPLETION UNTIL ALL INTERESTS HAVE BEEN CONSOLIDATED OR A NON-STANDARD UNIT HAS BEEN APPROVED BY THE DIVISION NOTE: OPERATOR CERTIFICATION Plane Coordinates shown hereon are Transverse Mercator Grid and Conform to the "New Mexico Coordinate System", New Mexico East Zone, North American Datum of 1983. Distances shown hereon are I hereby certify the the information 3633.4' 3631.3 contained herein is true and complete to the $\frac{Plane^{I} Coordinate}{X = 480,658.6} \\ Y = {}_{1}680,399.1$ mean horizontal surface values. best knowledge and belief. 760 3628.6 3633.9 sulla. Signature Joe T 🖉 Janica Printed Name Agent Title 07/21/05 Date AND THE PARTY OF THE PARTY . بيدور المعرف المامان في . SURVEYOR CERTIFICATION 6 I hereby certify that the well location shown on this plat was plotted from field notes of actual surveys made by me or under my E upervison and that the same is true and orrect to the best of my belief. : : July 8, 2005 Date Surveyed JSR Signature & Seal of Professional Surveyor 760' bΒL W.O. Num. 2005-0527 12185 Certificate No. MACON McDONALD

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110 N. 4. Location o	f Well (Footage, Sec.	200, Midland, TX 79701 , T., R., M., or Survey Descriptio V FWL Sec. 6, T17S, I	(432) 687-		code)	10. Field Cot	tonwo y or Pa	ood Creek; V	
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110 N. 4. Location o SL: 66	f Well <i>(Footage, Sec.</i> 50' FNL & 760	., T., R., M., or Survey Descriptio FWL Sec. 6, T17S, I	(432) 687- n) R25E	1575 TURE C		10. Field Cot 11. Count Edd	tonwo y or Pa ly Cou	ood Creek; W rish, State unty, NM	Volfcamp

11/11/05 Ran 202 jts. of 5 1/2" 17# P 110 BTC & LTC csg. to 8618'. Cement as follows: Pump w/lead 20 bbls FW, 750 sx. 50/50 POZ H plus additives mix at 11.9 ppg. yield 2.46 mix wtr. 14.16 GPS. Tail with 300 sx. "C" plus additives mix at 14.5 ppg. yield 3.97 mix wtr. 17.44 GPS displace w/198.9 bbls FW. Bumped plug w/1480 psi @ 10:15 a.m. plug held. Circulate 43 sx. cement to pit. ND BOP set slips w/65K on slips. NU 7 1/6" tbg. head & test to 1500 psi. Clean pits RD. WO completion.

<ol> <li>I hereby certify that the foregoing is true and correct Name (Printed/Typed)</li> </ol>			
Sharon Hindman	Title Regu	latory Agent	
Signature Sharon Andman	Date 11/16	5/2005	······································
THIS SPACE FOR FEDER	AL OR STAT	É OFFICE USE	and the first of the second of the
Approved by	Title		Date
Conditions of approval, if any, are attached. Approval of this notice does not wan certify that the applicant holds legal or equitable title to those rights in the subjec which would entitle the applicant to conduct operations thereon.	rant or t lease Office	······	<b>.</b>
Title 18 U.S.C. Section 1001 and Title 43 U.S.C. Section 1212, make it a crime for a States any false, fictitious or fraudulent statements or representations as to any matter	ny person knowi within its jurisdi	ngly and willfully to make to	any department or agency of the United