HINKLE, HENSLEY, SHANOR & MARTIN, L.L.P.



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WRITER:

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 September 19, 2008
 Image: September 19, 2008

 Hand-delivered
 Image: September 19, 2008

 Richard Ezeanyim
 Image: September 2008

 New Mexico Oil Conservation Division
 Image: September 2008

 1220 South St. Francis Drive
 Image: September 2008

 Santa Fe, NM 87505
 Image: September 2008

Re: Case No. 14136 and 14178 / Mesquite SWD, Inc. OGRID 161968 / Exxon State No. 8 (30-015-22055)

Dear Mr. Ezeanyim:

During out Pre-Hearing Conference on Monday, you mentioned you had not received the attachments to Mesquite's Motion to Quash. I have attached a copy of the motion and all exhibits for your records.

Very truly yours,

Nut

Kelcey C. Nichols

cc: Sonny Swazo Clay Wilson David and Anita Perini Cindy Perini Kay Havenor, Ph.D.

> PO BOX IO ROSWELL, NEW MEXICO 88202 (505) 622-6510 FAX (505) 623-9332

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PO BOX 3580 MIDLAND, TEXAS 79702 (432) 683-4691 FAX (432) 683-6518 PO 80X 2068 SANTA FE, NEW MEXICO 87504 (505) 982-4554 FAX (505) 982-8623 919 CONGRESS, SUITE 1150 AUSTIN, TEXAS 78701 (512) 476-7137 FAX (512) 476-7146 APPLICATION OF THE NEW MEXICO OIL CONSERVATION DIVISION, THROUGH THE ENFORCEMENT AND COMPLIANCE MANAGER, FOR A COMPLIANCE ORDER AGAINST MESQUITE SAVED 5 INCL, 1 (SUSPENDING MESQUITE'S AUTHORITY TO INJECT INTO THE EXXON STATE NO. 8 UNDER ORDER SWD-180 UNTIL MESQUITE SHOWS THAT THE INJECTED FLUIDS ARE NOT ESCAPING TO UNAUTHORIZED INJECTION ZONES; REQUIRING COMPLIANCE WITH ORDER NO. SWD-180 AND RULE 19.15.9.703 NMAC AND REQUEST FOR EXPEDITED HEARING; EDDY COUNTY, NEW MEXICO

Case No. 14136

IN THE MATTER OF MESQUITE SWD, INC.'S APPLICATION NO. PKVR0817936301 TO AMEND PERMIT SWD-180

Case No. 14178

REPLY TO OIL CONSERVATION DIVISION'S RESPONSE IN OPPOSITION TO MESQUITE SWD, INC.'S MOTION TO QUASH EMERGENCY ORDER NO. E-37

Mesquite SWD, Inc. ("Mesquite") hereby responds to the New Mexico Oil Conservation Division's ("NMOCD's) Response in Opposition to Mesquite SWD, Inc.'s Motion to Quash Emergency Order No. E-37 ("Response"). In support of its Reply, Mesquite states:

I. Introduction

The NMOCD issued Emergency Order No. E-37 on May 9, 2008, shutting in the Exxon State No. 8 well due its operation in alleged violation of "Order No. SWD-180 and 19.15.9.703 A & B NMAC." **Emergency Order No. E-37**, ¶ 6. However, Emergency Order No. ER-37 disregarded the NMOCD amendment to Order No. SWD-180 in 1977, whereby an approved Application to Drill ("APD") authorized the Exxon State No. 8 to be drilled to a depth of 700 feet. Because amended Order No. SWD-180 allows the Exxon State No. 8 to dispose of salt water at a depth not to exceed 700 feet, no legal basis supports Emergency Order No. E-37.

The Response attempts to create a *post hoc* valid legal basis for the improvidently entered Emergency Order No. E-37. Yet nowhere does Emergency Order No. E-37 mention, let alone

discuss, any inactivity or lapse in the operation of the Exxon State No. 8 that would terminate the authority for the Exxon State No. 8 to inject salt water.

II. Legal standard

A legal order that lacks a valid legal basis should be quashed. See, State v. Heinsen, 2005-NMSC-35, ¶s 2, 4-5, 138 N.M. 441, 444-445 (affirming the quash of a order granting an appeal based on a non-appealable, non-final order); Charles P. Young, Co. v. Anaya, 119 N.M. 449, 451; 891 P.2d 1203, 1205 (1995) (affirming the quash of improperly issued subpoenas). The NMOCD bears the burden of showing that Mesquite has violated a specific rule of law or administrative regulation that supports Emergency Order No. E-37. See, 19.15.14.1227(B) NMAC (The NMOCD may seek a compliance proceeding "for violation of... any rule or order" issued pursuant to the Oil and Gas Act.); 19.15.14.1227(C)(2) NMAC ("The division initiates an administrative compliance proceeding by filing a written application with the division clerk... identifying the Provisions of the Oil and Gas Act, NMSA 1978, Sections 70-2-1 through 70-2-38, or the provision of the rule or order issued pursuant to the act, allegedly violated."). Just as a defendant in a civil action must be informed of the plaintiff's claims, so must the NMOCD inform an operator subject to an NMOCD emergency order of the specific rule or law that supports the order. See, NMSA 1978 § 70-2-23 (The NMOCD is required to give a party reasonable notice before holding a hearing or issuing an order.); 19.15.14.1227(C)(2) NMAC; Johnson v. State Oil Conservation Comm'n, 1999-NMSC-021, ¶17, 127 N.M. 120, 124 (voiding an order entered by the Oil Conservation Commission for failure to provide adequate notice under the agency rules); Rule 1-008 NMRA 2008 (A complaint must set forth a short and plain statement of the claim.); Valles v. Silverman, 2004-NMCA-19, ¶ 18, 135 N.M. 91, 97 (N.M. Ct. App. 2003) (A party is entitled to know the basis of the claim against it.).

Due process and the NMOCD rules require: (1) that the NMOCD provide Mesquite with sufficient notice of the alleged violations that support Emergency Order No. E-37, and (2) that a valid legal basis supports Emergency Order No. E-37. *See*, NMSA 1978 § 70-2-23; *Johnson*, 1999-NMSC-021, ¶17, 127 N.M. at 124.

II. Argument

A. The NMOCD's Post Hoc Attempt to Support Emergency Order No. E-37 Is Invalid.

The NMOCD bears the burden of demonstrating that a valid legal basis supports Emergency Order No. E-37. See, 19.15.14.1227(B) NMAC; 19.15.14.1227(C)(2) NMAC. The NMOCD stated in Emergency Order No. E-37 that Mesquite violated rules 19.15.9.703(A) & (B) NMAC. Emergency Order No. 37, ¶ 6. More than three months later, in response to Mesquite's Motion to Quash, the NMOCD now states that Mesquite violated a completely different rule, 19.15.9.705(C) NMAC, and that the Exxon State No. 8 well was shut-in due to inactivity. See, Response, Section I, p. 2. New Mexico law prohibits the NMOCD from changing the legal basis of its emergency order five days before the scheduled hearing on Emergency Order No. E-37. See, NMSA 1978 § 70-2-23. To allow the NMOCD to assert this post hoc argument against Mesquite now would violate Mesquite's due process rights because Mesquite has not been provided with adequate notice of this alleged violation. See, NMSA 1978 § 70-2-23; Johnson, 1999-NMSC-021, ¶17, 127 N.M. at 124.

Furthermore, the NMOCD's allegations regarding inactivity of the Exxon State No. 8 between 1994 thorough 1997, and March 2005 through March 2006 are inaccurate. The wells surrounding the Exxon State No. 8, including the Exxon State No. 3, use the Exxon State No. 8 as a salt water disposal well. Mesquite has attached production well records from the Exxon State No. 3, which used the Exxon State No. 8 as a salt water production well between 1994 through 1997. *See*, Ex. A. Mesquite has also attached production receipts from Plains

Marketing, LP, for April, May and July of 2005. *See*, Ex. B. Plains Marketing, LP, could not produce oil without using the Exxon State No. 8 to dispose of its salt water. A notice for a mechanical integrity test on the Exxon State No. 8, and a Form C-115 for April 2006 further show that the Exxon State No. 8 was active between March 2005 through March 2006. *See*, Ex.

3 and Ex. D.

Additionally, the NMOCD's contention that the Exxon State No. 8's authority to inject salt water automatically terminated conflicts with the NMOCD's rules. The NMOCD rules prohibit a new operator from commencing operations "until the division approves the application for change of operator." **19.15.3.100(E)(2) NMAC.** As a practical matter, some period of inactivity will occur when a salt water disposal well is sold and the operators change because the new operator must wait for approval from the NMOCD before operating the well. *See, id.* Mr. Clay Wilson purchased the Exxon State No. 8 salt water disposal well and filed a Change of Operator, Form C-105A, with the NMOCD on December 1, 2005. *See*, **Ex. E, Form C-104A.** The NMOCD did not approve this Change of Operator form until April 25, 2006. *See, id.* The NMOCD rules prohibited Mr. Wilson from operating the Exxon State No. 8 before the NMOCD approved Mr. Wilson as a new operator. *See,* **19.15.3.100(E)(2) NMAC.** Thus, Mr. Wilson cannot be penalized for any inactivity of that occurred between December 1, 2005 and April 25, 2006 as the NMOCD rules prohibited him from operating the well. *See, id.*

The NMOCD's actions further undermine its *post hoc* argument. Emergency Order No. E-37 expressly recognizes the Exxon State No. 8's authority to inject at a depth of up to 600 feet under Order No. SWD-180. **Emergency Order No. E-37**, ¶ **2.** Presumably, if the Exxon State No. 8's authority to inject automatically terminated *ispo facto*, all injection authority would terminate, not just the authority to inject to from 601 to 700 feet. Additionally, the NMOCD has

visited the Exxon State No. 8 annually and never before raised the issue of inactivity, just as it does not raise this issue in Emergency Order No. E-37. The NMOCD's allegation that the Exxon State No. 8's authority to inject automatically terminated is nothing more than a misplaced attempt to gin up a valid legal basis for Emergency Order No. E-37. Notably, the NMOCD has failed to produce any information showing that the Exxon State No. 8's authority to inject automatically terminated. In contrast, the NMOCD's records show that the NMOCD continued to approve forms and orders, including Mr. Wilson's Change of Operator form, years after the alleged lapse.

The NMOCD's *post hoc* legal theory is unsupported by the New Mexico law and the NMOCD's rules. Moreover, the NMOCD failed to provide proper notice of its allegations to Mesquite in direct contravention of the NMOCD rules and due process requirements. *See*, NMSA 1978 § 70-2-23; 19.15.14.1227(B) NMAC; 19.15.14.1227(C)(2) NMAC; *Johnson*, 1999-NMSC-021, ¶17, 127 N.M. at 124.

B. The Approved Application for Permit to Drill, which Amended Order No. SWD-180, Did Not Expire.

The Commission approved Mr. Rains' Application for Permit to Drill the Exxon State No. 8 on February 15, 2008. **Ex. A to Motion to Quash.** The Approved Application for Permit to Drill ("APD") bears a stamp stating that "Approval valid for 90 days unless drilling commenced, expires 5-18-77." *Id.* Mr. Rains submitted a Application to Drill for the Exxon State No. 8, on May 24, 1977, stating he proposed to commence drilling the well on May 23, 1977 to a depth of 700 feet. *Id.* Under New Mexico law, any activities made in preparation of drilling are sufficient for the commencement of drilling. *See, Johnson v. Yates Petroleum, Corp.*, 1999-NMCA-66, ¶11, 127 N.M. 355, 358 ("[A]ny activities in preparation for, or incidental to, drilling a well are sufficient" to constitute the commencement of drilling operations.); *see also*, Williams & Meyers, Oil and Gas Law § 618 (2007) ("[I]n general it appears that the courts have been ready to find the commencement of operations (or the pursuit of drilling operations) where only the most modest preparations for drilling have been made.") Thus, because Mr. Rains prepared to commence drilling on May 23, 2007 and made preparations in advance of that date, the approval did not expire on May 18, 1977. *See, Yates Petroleum*,

Corp., 1999-NMCA-66, ¶11, 127 N.M. at 358.

The Commission's continued approval and understanding that amended Order No. SWD-180 allowed Mr. Rains to drill to 700 feet is shown by its subsequent approval of sundry notices and acceptance of the well completion report. After approving the sundry notice allowing Mr. Rains to commence drilling on May 26, 1977, the Commission approved two additional sundry notices with the knowledge that the Exxon State No. 8 would be drilled to a depth of 700 feet. See, Exs. F and G, Sundry Notices. Then, on November 28, 1977, the Commission approved a sundry notice stating that the Exxon State No. 8 had been "drilled to depth of 694" feet. Ex. E to Motion to Quash. The Commission also accepted the Well Completion Report showing that the Exxon State No. 8 had been completed to a dept of 694 feet. See, id. In contrast, the NMOCD has offered no evidence in support if its theory that the approval granted under Mr. Rains' APD expired. The current Rule 1101 provides that, if the NMOCD denies an APD, the Form C-101 will be returned to the "applicant with the cause for rejection stated thereon." 19.15.13.1101(C) NMAC. Although this rule has likely changed since 1977, if the approval of Mr. Rains' APD had expired, the NMOCD records would show that Mr. Rains was prohibited from drilling the Exxon State No. 8 to 700 feet. The reverse is true: the NMOCD records show approval after approval allowing Mr. Rains to drill and complete the Exxon State No. 8 to a depth of 700 feet. Consequently, the NMOCD has failed to support its position that the approval of the APD lapsed or was otherwise revoked.

C. The NMOCD Response Misstates and Misunderstands the Results of the Tracer Survey.

The tracer survey conducted on the Exxon State No. 8 shows that the bottom depth of the logging tool was 690 feet, four feet short of the bottom of the Exxon State No. 8. The logger's comment that he observed injection fluid going past the total depth must be read in the context of the depth observable to the logger: 690 feet. Contrary to the NMOCD's assertion, the logger could not observe fluid moving past 694 feet *because he could only observe to 690 feet*. Sediment and cavings from the well accumulate in the bottom of the hole naturally and stop the descent of the logging tool. Although this material prevents the logging tool from reaching the bottom of the hole, the material is permeable and gravity will cause water to flow toward the bottom of the hole. Notably, Mr. Rains' driller's log shows that Mr. Rains stopped drilling after penetrating ten feet of vuggy dolomite. *See, Application, Attachment 3, Expert report Regarding Assessment of the Geological Structure and Stratigraphy and Hydrogeological Setting of the Mesquite Exxon State No. 8 Salt Water Disposal and Other Wells, p. 18-19. Mr. Rains likely encountered a dense dolomite that resisted penetration. <i>See, id.*

The NMOCD's conclusions are based on a misunderstanding of the tracing test and do not provide a legal basis for Emergency Order No. E-37.

III. Conclusion

For the reasons stated herein, Mesquite requests that that the Division Examiner enter an order quashing Emergency Order No. E-37 and allow the Exxon State No. 8 to operate pursuant to Order SWD No. 180, as amended and modified by the NMOCD on February 18, 1977.

Respectfully submitted,

HINKLE, HENSLEY, SHANOR & MARTIN, LLP

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Thomas M. Hnasko Kelcey C. Nichols Post Office Box 2068 Santa Fe, NM 87504-2068 505.982.4554

Attorneys for Applicant Mesquite SWD, Inc.

CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE

I hereby certify that on this on this 15th day of September, 2008, I hand-delivered a true and correct copy of the foregoing and *Reply to Oil Conservation Division's Response in Opposition to Mesquite SWD, Inc.'s Motion to Quash Emergency No. Order E-37* to:

Mr. Sonny Swazo, Esq. Oil Conservation Division 1220 South St. Francis Drive Santa Fe, NM 87505

Kay C Michel

Kelcey C. Nichols

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NEW MEXICO ENERGY, MINERALS and NATURAL RESOURCES DEPARTMENT

BILL RICHARDSON Governor Joanna Prukop Cabinet Secretary Mark E. Fesmire, P.E. Director Oil Conservation Division

228017

	Underground Injection Control Program
Prote	cting Our Underground Sources of Drinking Waters" -
C	626-0843

26-3:d-2005

BLUE COLLAR OIL & GAS LLC P.O. BOX 1075 ARTESIA NM 88210-

16,

Dear Sirs:

Our records indicate that the following well(s) are due for the type of mechanical integrity test indicated. If the required test is a pressure test, please have the necessary equipment on location and ready to commence the test at the specified time. For all types of tests, please have a representative on location to operate any valves or other equipment as necessary. Your representative should meet our inspector at the meeting place indicated below for the entire inspection group.

_	Scheduled Inspect	ons / MITs	
	Meeting Place for this Inspection Gre	up: Well indicated	
Scheduled Date: 9/27/2005 2:30:00) PM		
UL S-T-R	API Well No.	Well No.	Type Iusp/MIT
Property Name: EXXON STATE			
O 15 218 27E	30-015-22055-00-00	008	Pressure Test

If you have any questions or need to reschedule any test, please cal Mr. Gerry Guye at 505-748-1283 at the Artesia district office between 7:00 am and 4:00 pm, at least two weeks prior to the indicated schedule date.

Sincerely Artesia OCD District Office

Instructions In Preparation for MIT Test(s) All injection wells must be shut in. If the following instructions are not followed: "Bradenhead" Ensure company field representative has a copy of these instructions. If your notification letter indicates "Bradenhead" under the title "Type Insp/MIT" then the following applies: Bradenhead test: 1. Requires that injection pump be running at the time of the test and an operable pressure gauge or vacuum gauge installed on the tubing so that the injection pressure may be observed. 2. Casing & Bradenhead valves must be shut-in 24 hours prior to test. ****** THIS TEST DOES NOT REQUIRE A PUMP TRUCK! ** PLEASE MAKE SURE YOU HAVE ENOUGH WATER TO RUN THE INJECTION PUMP(S) FOR THE DURATION OF THE TEST(S) ** TEST(S) CANNOT BE PERFORMED IF THE CONDITIONS OF ITEMS # 1 & 2 ARE NOT MET. ** A company representative must be on location during the test(s) to operate valves and equipment. IF YOUR WELL(S) FAILS THE TEST(S); IF WE ARE UNABLE TO CONDUCT THE TEST(S); **OR IF A REPRESENTATIVE DOES NOT MEET US:** You will be required to shut in all injection wells scheduled for testing innacdiately! "Pressure test" Ensure company field representative has a copy of these instructions. Figure notification letter indicates "Pressure test" under the title "Type Insp/MIT" then the following applies: **Pressure Test:** 1. Requires, in addition to the above, a pump truck capable of holding a minimum of 300 psi on the casing for a period of at least 30 minutes. 2. A chart recorder is required with a 1000 psi capability, a 60 minute clock, and must have been calibrated within 12 months. Documentation of this calibration must accompany the recorder. ** THIS TEST DOES REQUIRE A PUMP TRUCK! ** PLEASE MAKE SURE YOU HAVE ENOUGH WATER TO RUN THE INJECTION PUMP(S) FOR THE DURATION OF THE TEST(S) ** TEST(S) CANNOT BE PERFORMED UNLESS ALL CONDITIONS ARE MET. ** A company representative must be on location during the test(s) to operate valves and equipment. IF YOUR WELL(S) FAILS THE TEST(S); IF WE ARE UNABLE TO CONDUCT THE TEST(S); **OR IF A REPRESENTATIVE DOES NOT MEET US:**

You will be required to shut in all injection wells scheduled for testing immediately

		Phone Number	Pho	7, 19 7,0	Date 7/C	Date			Printed Name & Title	d Nan	Printe		19		Signature
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22 23 21 G Ollon Transporter O hend at Ogrid D end of 4 month	20 Volume (Bbis/mcf)	19 Oll on hand at beginning of month	18 Gas BTU or Oll APt Gravity	17 Point of Disposition	<u></u>	d Prod- Prod-	14 MCP Gas Produced	13 Barrels of water produced	12 Barrels of Oll/condan- sate produced	N M B O O 3	10 Pressure	9 Volume	- m 0 0 0 m	Z Property No. end Name Weii No. & ULL-8-T-R Meii No.	Prop West
GAS, AND WATER		SPOSITION OF OIL,	DISPOSITI				TION	PRODUCTION			INJECTION	ž			
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Form C-115 First Page Instruction on Reverse Side 1 Amended Report	- 11			ico DIVISION 105 Y REPORT) Department) I V I S I REPORT	Mexico Sucuressi DN D 3429 187805	State of New Mexico Versis & Natural Resources P. O. Box 6429 Santa Fe, NM 87505 OR 18 MONTHLY	State of New Mexico Energy, Minarais & Natural Resources Department OIL CONSERVATION DIVISI P. O. Box 6429 Santa Fe, NM 87505 OPERATOR ' 8 MONTHLY REPORT	OIL .					District 1 P. O. Box 1980, Hebbe, NM 88241-1980 District 11 P. O. Drever DO, Attevia, NA 88211-0718 P. District 111 District 111 1000 Rto Brazos, Azieo, NM 84710	District.1 P. O. Box 1880, Hotes, NIX 88241- District.11 P. O. Drewer DO, Attende, NAA 8821 District.111 District.111 1000 Rid Brazos, Azieo, NM 84710

EXHIBIT

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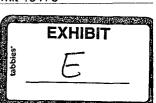
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<u>District II</u> [30] W. Grand Aster, Artesia, NM 88210 Photo:(505).748=1283.Fax:(505).748=9720.

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Form C-104A Permit 19175



Change of Operator

State of New Mexico

Energy, Minerals and Natural Resources

Oil Conservation Division

1220 S. St Francis Dr. Santa Fe, NM 87505

Previous Opera	tor Information	New Operator Information					
		Effective Date:	12/1/2005				
OGRID:	228017	OGRID:	161968				
Name:	BLUE COLLAR OIL & GAS LLC	Name:	MESQUITE SWD, INC				
Address:	PO Box 1075	Address:	PO Box 1479				
Address:	· · · · ·	Address:					
City, State, Zip:	Artesia, NM 88210	_City, State, Zip:	Carlsbad , NM 88221				

I hereby certify that the rules of the Oil Conservation Division have been complied with and that the information on this form and the certified list of wells is true to the best of my knowledge and belief.

	Operator	New Ope	
Signature:	×Wemin work	Signature	Chay Unen
	× Dennis abods	Printed Name:	CLAY L WILSON
Title:	NMANAGING Member- Bue Car, LL.C. +/2-1-05 Phone: K-505-390-8362	Title:	V.P.
Date:	+12-1-05 Phone: X-505-390-8362	-Date:	12-1-05 Phone: \$85-3996

NMOCD Approv	al
Electronic Signature:	Carmen Reno, District 2
Date: <u>April 25, 2006</u>	

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PULL OR ALTER CASING	CHANGE PLANS CASING TEST AND CEMENT JOB)
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18. Thereby certify that the information above is	true and complete to the best of my knowledge and bellef.	
p-G.T Rains	THE C. PERATOR	
ADDRESS IN W. a. Sierse	SUPERVISOR, DISTRICT, II	NOV 2 8 1977
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