

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

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Oil Conservation Division

APPLICATION OF THE NEW MEXICO OIL
CONSERVATION DIVISION TO AMEND RULE 104
OF THE DIVISION RULES AND REGULATIONS
TO PROVIDE FOR ADMINISTRATIVE APPROVAL OF
UNORTHODOX WELL LOCATION AND NON-STANDARD
UNIT APPLICATIONS

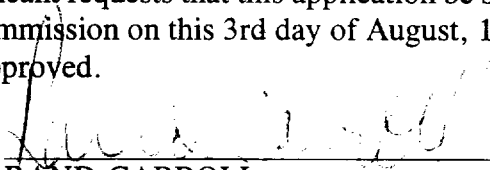
CASE: 11351

APPLICATION

COMES NOW the New Mexico Oil Conservation Division and applies to the New Mexico Oil Conservation Commission to amend Rule 104 of the Division Rules and Regulations to provide for administrative approval of unorthodox well location and non-standard unit applications and in support thereof states:

- (1) The New Mexico Oil Conservation Division has issued numerous orders approving unorthodox well location and non-standard unit applications in the State of New Mexico.
- (2) Those individual cases, many of which were conducted after notice and hearing, now constitute a substantial volume of technical information from which administrative rules and regulations can be formulated.
- (3) That the granting of this type of application has been accomplished usually without opposition and has become a matter of routine.
- (4) Based upon its experience, Applicant recommends that the Commission adopt a new Rule 104 which is attached as Exhibit "A".

WHEREFORE, Applicant requests that this application be set for hearing before the New Mexico Oil Conservation Commission on this 3rd day of August, 1995, and that after notice and hearing the application be approved.



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Exhibit "A"

RULE 104. - WELL SPACING: ACREAGE REQUIREMENTS FOR DRILLING TRACTS

(as of 3-1-91)

A. CLASSIFICATION OF WELLS: WILDCAT WELLS AND DEVELOPMENT WELLS

(1) Any well which is to be drilled a distance of one mile or more from:

(a) the outer boundary of any defined pool which has produced oil or gas from the formation to which the well is projected; and

(b) any other well which has produced oil or gas from the formation to which the proposed well is projected, shall be classified as a wildcat well.

(2) Any well which is not a wildcat well as defined above shall be classified as a development well for the nearest pool which has produced oil or gas from the formation to which the well is projected. Any such development well shall be spaced, drilled, operated, and produced in accordance with the rules and regulations in effect in such nearest pool, provided the well is completed in the formation to which it was projected.

(3) Any well classified as a development well for a given pool but which is completed in a producing horizon not included in the vertical limits of said pool shall be operated and produced in accordance with the rules and regulations in effect in the nearest pool within one mile which is producing from that horizon. If there is no designated pool for said producing horizon within one mile, the well shall be re-classified as a wildcat well.

B. ACREAGE AND WELL LOCATION REQUIREMENTS FOR WILDCATS

(1) Lea, Chaves, Eddy and Roosevelt Counties

(a) Wildcat Gas Wells. In Lea, Chaves, Eddy and Roosevelt Counties, a wildcat well which is projected as a gas well to a formation and in an area which, in the opinion of the engineer or supervisor approving the application to drill, may reasonably be presumed to be productive of gas rather than oil shall be located on a drilling tract consisting of 160 surface contiguous acres, more or less, substantially in the form of a square which is a quarter section, being a legal subdivision of the U.S. Public Land surveys, and shall be located not closer than 660 feet to any outer boundary of such tract nor closer than 330 feet to any quarter-quarter section or subdivision inner boundary. Provided, however, that any such wildcat gas well which is projected to the Wolfcamp or older

formations shall be located on a drilling tract consisting of 320 surface contiguous acres, more or less, comprising any two contiguous quarter sections of a single governmental section, being a legal subdivision of the U.S. Public Land Surveys. Any such "deep" wildcat gas well to which is dedicated more than 160 acres shall be located not closer than 660 feet to the nearest side boundary of the dedicated tract nor closer than 1980 feet to the nearest end boundary nor closer than 330 feet to any quarter-quarter section or subdivision inner boundary. (For the purpose of this rule, "side" boundary is defined as one of the outer boundaries running lengthwise to the tract's greatest overall dimensions; "end" boundary is defined as one of the outer boundaries perpendicular to a side boundary and closing the tract across its least overall dimension.)

- (b) Wildcat Oil Wells. In Lea, Chaves, Eddy, and Roosevelt Counties, a wildcat well which is not a wildcat gas well as defined above shall be located on a tract consisting of approximately 40 surface contiguous acres substantially in the form of a square which is a legal subdivision of the U.S. Public Land Surveys, or on a governmental quarter-quarter section or lot, and shall be located not closer than 330 feet to any boundary of such tract.
- (c) In the event gas production is encountered in a well which was projected as an oil well and which is located accordingly but does not conform to the above gas well location rule, it shall be necessary for the operator to bring the matter to a hearing before approval for the production of gas can be given.

(2) San Juan, Rio Arriba, and Sandoval Counties

- (a) Wildcat Gas Wells. In San Juan, Rio Arriba, and Sandoval Counties, a wildcat well which is projected to a gas-producing horizon shall be located on a designated drilling tract consisting of 160 surface contiguous acres, more or less, substantially in the form of a square which is a quarter section, being a legal subdivision of the U.S. Public Land surveys, and shall be located not closer than 790 feet to any outer boundary of the tract nor closer than ~~130 feet~~ 10 feet to any quarter-quarter section or subdivision inner boundary.

- (b) In the event oil production is encountered in a well which was projected to a gas-producing horizon and which is located accordingly but does not conform to the oil well location rule below, it shall be necessary for the operator to bring the matter to a hearing before approval for the production of oil can be given.
- (c) Wildcat Oil Wells. A wildcat well which is projected to an oil-producing horizon as recognized by the Division shall be located on a tract consisting of approximately 40 surface contiguous acres substantially in the form of a square which is a legal subdivision of the U.S. Public Land Surveys, or on a governmental quarter-quarter section or lot, and shall be located not closer than 330 feet to any boundary of such tract.
- (d) In the event gas production is encountered in a well which was projected to an oil-producing horizon and which is located accordingly but does not conform to the above gas well location rules, it shall be necessary for the operator to bring the matter to a hearing before approval for the production of gas can be given.

(3) All Counties except Lea, Chaves, Eddy, Roosevelt, San Juan, Rio Arriba and Sandoval.

- (a) Any wildcat well which is projected as an oil well in any county other than Lea, Chaves, Eddy, Roosevelt, San Juan, Rio Arriba, and Sandoval Counties shall be located on a tract consisting of approximately 40 surface contiguous acres substantially in the form of a square which is a legal subdivision of the U.S. Public Land Surveys, or on a governmental quarter-quarter section or lot and shall be located not closer than 330 feet to any boundary of such tract.
- (b) Any wildcat well which is projected as a gas well to a formation and in an area which, in the opinion of the Division representative approving the application to drill, may reasonably be presumed to be productive of gas rather than oil shall be located on a drilling tract consisting of 160 surface contiguous acres, more or less, substantially in the form of a square which is a quarter section, being a legal subdivision of the U.S. Public Land Surveys, and shall be located not closer than 660 feet to any outer boundary of such tract nor closer than 330 feet to any quarter-

quarter section or subdivision inner boundary.

C. ACREAGE AND WELL LOCATION REQUIREMENTS FOR DEVELOPMENT WELLS

(1) Oil Wells, All Counties.

- (a) Unless otherwise provided in special pool rules, each development well for a defined oil pool shall be located on a tract consisting of approximately 40 surface contiguous acres substantially in the form of a square which is a legal subdivision of the U.S. Public Land Surveys, or on a governmental quarter-quarter section or lot, and shall be located not closer than 330 feet to any boundary of such tract nor closer than 330 feet to the nearest well drilling to or capable of producing from the same pool, provided however, only tracts committed to active secondary recovery projects shall be permitted more than four wells.

(2) Lea, Chaves, Eddy and Roosevelt Counties.

- (a) Gas Wells. Unless otherwise provided in special pool rules, each development well for a defined gas pool in a formation younger than the Wolfcamp formation, or in the Wolfcamp formation which was created and defined by the Division prior to November 1, 1975, or in a Pennsylvanian age or older formation which was created and defined by the Division prior to June 1, 1964, shall be located on a designated drilling tract consisting of 160 surface contiguous acres, more or less, substantially in the form of a square which is a quarter section being a legal subdivision of the U.S. Public Land Surveys, and shall be located not closer than 660 feet to any outer boundary of such tract nor closer than 330 feet to any quarter-quarter section or subdivision inner boundary nor closer than 1320 feet to the nearest well drilling to or capable of producing from the same pool.
- (b) Unless otherwise provided in the special pool rules, each development well for a defined gas pool in the Wolfcamp formation which was created and defined by the Division after November 1, 1975, or of Pennsylvanian age or older which was created and defined by the Division after June 1, 1964, shall be located on a designated drilling tract consisting of 320 surface contiguous acres, more or less, comprising any two contiguous quarter sections of a single governmental section, being a legal

subdivision of the U.S. Public Land Surveys. Any such well having more than 160 acres dedicated to it shall be located not closer than 660 feet to the nearest side boundary of the dedicated tract nor closer than 1980 feet to the nearest end boundary nor closer than 330 feet to any quarter-quarter section or subdivision inner boundary. (For the purpose of this rule, "side" boundary and "end" boundary are as defined in Section B I(a) of this rule.)

(3) San Juan, Rio Arriba, and Sandoval Counties.

- (a) Gas Wells. Unless otherwise provided in special pool rules, each development well for a defined gas pool shall be located on a designated drilling tract consisting of 160 surface contiguous acres, more or less, substantially in the form of a square which is a quarter section, being a legal subdivision of the U.S. Public Land Surveys, and shall be located not closer than 790 feet to any outer boundary of the tract nor closer than ~~130 feet~~ 10 feet to any quarter-quarter section line or subdivision inner boundary.

(4) All Counties except Lea, Chaves, Eddy, Roosevelt, San Juan, Rio Arriba and Sandoval.

- (a) Gas Wells. Unless otherwise provided in special pool rules, each development well for a defined gas pool shall be located on a designated drilling tract consisting of 160 surface contiguous acres, more or less, substantially in the form of a square which is a quarter section, being a legal subdivision of the U.S. Public Land Surveys, and shall be located not closer than 660 feet to any outer boundary of such tract nor closer than 330 feet to any quarter-quarter section or subdivision inner boundary nor closer than 1320 feet to the nearest well drilling to or capable of producing from the same pool.

D. ACREAGE ASSIGNMENT, ~~COMPLETED WELLS~~

(1) Well Tests and Classification. It shall be the responsibility of the operator of any wildcat gas well or development gas well to which more than 40 acres has been dedicated to conduct a potential test within 30 days following completion of the well and to file the same with the Division within 10 days following completion of the tests. (See Rule 401.)

- (a) Date of completion for a gas well shall be the date

a Christmas tree is installed or 30 days following conclusion of active completion work on the well, whichever date comes first.

- (b) Upon making a determination that the well should not properly be classified as a gas well, the Division will reduce the acreage dedicated to the well.
- (c) Failure of the operator to file the aforesaid tests within the specified time will also subject the well to such acreage reduction.

(2) Non-Standard Units. Any ~~completed-gas~~ well which does not have the required amount of acreage dedicated to it for the pool or formation in which it is completed or to which it is, projected may not be produced until a standard unit for the well has been formed and dedicated or until a non-standard unit has been approved.

(a) The supervisor of the appropriate district office of the Division shall have the authority to approve non-standard units without notice and hearing when the unorthodox size and shape is necessitated by a variation in the legal subdivision of the United States Public Lands Survey and/or consists of an entire governmental section and the non-standard unit is not less than 70% nor more than 130% of a standard unit. Such approval shall consist of acceptance of Division Form C-102 showing the proposed non-standard unit and the acreage contained therein.

(b) The Division Director may grant administrative approval to non-standard ~~gas~~ units without notice and hearing when an application has been filed for a non-standard unit and the unorthodox size or shape of the unit is necessitated by a variation in the legal subdivision of the U.S. Public Land Surveys, or the following facts exist and the following provisions are complied with:

- (i) The non-standard unit consists of a single quarter-quarter section or lot or the non-standard unit consists of quarter-quarter sections or lots that are contiguous by a common bordering side.
- (ii) The non-standard unit lies wholly within a single governmental quarter section if the well is completed in a pool or formation for which 40, 80 or 160 acres is the standard unit size or wholly within a single governmental half

section if the well is completed in a pool or formation for which 320 acres is the standard unit size.

- (iii) The applicant presents written consent in the form of waivers from all offset operators and from all operators owning interests in the quarter section (for 40, 80 or 160-acre pools or formations) or the half section (for 320-acre pools or formations) in which the non-standard unit is situated and which acreage is not included in said non-standard unit.
- (iv) In lieu of paragraph (c) of this rule, the applicant may furnish proof of the fact that all of the aforesaid operators were notified by registered or certified mail of his intent to form such non-standard unit. The Director may approve the application if no such operator has entered an objection to the formation of such non-standard unit within 30 days after the Director has received the application.

E. Form C-101, Application for Permit to Drill, Deepen, or Plug Back for any well shall designate the exact legal subdivision allotted to the well and no Form C-101 will be approved by the Division or any of its agents without such proper designation of acreage.

F. UNORTHODOX LOCATIONS

~~(1) The Division Director shall have authority to grant an exception to the well location requirements of Sections B and C above without notice and hearing when the necessity for such unorthodox location is based upon topographical conditions, the recompletion of a well previously drilled to a deeper horizon, provided said well was drilled at an orthodox or approved unorthodox location for such original horizon, or to permit the completion of an efficient production and injection pattern within a secondary recovery or pressure maintenance project, provided that any such unorthodox location within such project is no closer than 330 feet to the outer boundary of the lease or the unitized area, nor closer than 10 feet to any quarter quarter section line or subdivision inner boundary.~~

(1) Well locations which are unorthodox based on the well location requirements of section C above or the well location requirements of special pool rules and which are necessary to permit the completion of an efficient production and injection pattern within a secondary recovery, tertiary recovery, or pressure maintenance project are hereby authorized, provided that any such location within such project is no closer than the required minimum orthodox distance to the outer boundary of the lease or the unitized area, nor closer than 10 feet to any quarter-quarter section line or subdivision inner boundary. Such locations shall only require such prior

approval as is necessary for an orthodox location.

~~(2) The Division Director shall have authority to grant an exception to the well location requirements of Rule 104 B.I. (a) and Rule 104 C.II. (a) without notice and hearing when the necessity for such unorthodox location is based upon geologic conditions provided that any such unorthodox location shall be no closer than 660 feet to the nearest side boundary nor closer than 990 feet to the nearest end boundary of the proration unit.~~

(2) The Division Director shall have authority to grant an exception to the well location requirements of Sections B and C above or to the well location requirements of special pool rules without hearing when the necessity for such unorthodox location is based upon geologic conditions, topographical conditions, or the recompletion of a well previously drilled to a deeper horizon, provided said well was drilled at an orthodox or approved unorthodox location for such original horizon.

~~(3) Applications for administrative approval of unorthodox locations shall be filed in TRIPLICATE and shall be accompanied by plats, showing the ownership of all leases offsetting the proration or spacing unit for which the unorthodox location is sought, and also all wells completed thereon. If the proposed unorthodox location is based upon topography, the plat shall also show and describe the existent topographical conditions. If the proposed unorthodox location is based upon completion of an efficient production and injection pattern, the plat shall also show the project outline identifying all producing and injection wells therein, and the applicant shall further include a statement setting forth the necessity for such location. If the proposed unorthodox location is based upon geology as provided in Paragraph (2) above, the application shall include appropriate geologic maps, cross sections, and/or logs, and a discussion of the geologic conditions which result in the necessity for the unorthodox location.~~

(3) Applications for administrative approval of unorthodox locations pursuant to Section F(2), above, shall be filed in TRIPLICATE and shall be accompanied by plats, showing the ownership of all leases offsetting the proration or spacing unit for which the unorthodox location is sought, and also all wells completed thereon. If the proposed unorthodox location is based upon topography, the plat shall also show and describe the existent topographical conditions. If the proposed unorthodox location is based upon geology, the application shall include appropriate geologic maps, cross sections, and/or logs, and a discussion of the geologic conditions which result in the necessity for the unorthodox location.

~~(4) All operators of proration or spacing units offsetting the unit for which the unorthodox location is sought shall be notified of the application by certified or registered mail, and the application shall state that such notification has been given. The Division Director may approve the unorthodox location upon receipt of waivers from all offset operators or if no offset operator has entered an objection to the unorthodox location within 20 days after the Director has received the application.~~

(4) All operators of proration or spacing units offsetting the unit for which the unorthodox location is sought shall be notified of the application by certified or registered mail, and the application shall state that such notification has been given. The Division Director may approve the unorthodox location upon receipt of waivers from all offset operators or if no offset operator has entered an objection to the unorthodox location within 20 days after the Director has received the application.

~~(5) The Division Director may, at his discretion, set any application for administrative approval of an unorthodox location for public hearing.~~

(5) The Division Director may, at his discretion, set any application for administrative approval of an unorthodox location for public hearing, and may require that a directional survey be run in the unorthodox well to establish the location of the producing interval(s).

G. Whenever an exception is granted, the Division may take such action as will offset any advantage which the person securing the exception may obtain over other producers by reason of the unorthodox location.

H. If the drilling tract is within an allocated oil pool or is placed within such allocated pool at any time after completion of the well and the drilling tract consists of less than 39 1/2 acres or more than 40 1/2 acres, the top unit allowable for such well shall be increased or decreased in the proportion that the number of acres in the drilling tract bears to 40.

I. If the drilling tract is within an allocated gas pool or is subsequently placed within an allocated gas pool, and the drilling tract consists of less than 158 acres or more than 162 acres in 160-acre pools, or less than 316 acres or more than 324 acres in 320-acre pools, the top allowable for such well shall be decreased or increased in the proportion that the number of acres in the drilling tract bears to a standard unit for the pool.

J. In computing acreage under H and I above, minor fractions of an acre shall not be counted but 1/2 acre or more shall count as 1 acre.

K. The provisions of H and I above shall apply only to wells completed after January 1, 1950. Nothing herein contained shall affect in any manner any well completed prior to the effective date of this rule and no adjustments shall be made in the allowable production for any such wells by reason of these rules.

L. In order to prevent waste the Division may, after notice and hearing, fix different spacing requirements and require greater acreage for drilling tracts in any defined oil pool or in any defined gas pool notwithstanding the provisions of B and C above.

M. The Division may approve the pooling or communitization of fractional lots of 20.49 acres or less with another oil proration unit when:

- (1) The units involved are contiguous;
- (2) They are part of the same basic lease, carrying the same royalty interest; and
- (3) The ownership of the units involved is common.

N. Application to the Division for pooling shall be accompanied by three (3) copies of a certified plat showing the dimensions and acreage involved in the pooling, the ownership of all leases and royalty interests involved, and the location of any proposed wells.

O. Applicant shall furnish all operators who directly and diagonally offset the units involved a copy of the application to the Division and shall include with his application a written statement that all offset operators have been properly notified. Offset operators shall include only those operators who have offset properties within the State of New Mexico. The Division shall wait at least ten days before approving any such pooling, and shall approve such pooling only in the absence of objection from any offset operator. In the event that an operator objects to the pooling, the Division shall consider the matter only after proper notice and hearing.

P. The Division may waive the ten-day waiting period requirement if the applicant furnishes the Division with the written consent to the pooling by all offset operators involved.

Q. The Division may consider that the requirements of subparagraphs 2 and 3 of paragraph M of this rule have been fulfilled if the applicant furnishes with each copy of each application to the Division a copy of executed pooling agreement communitizing the units involved.

R. Each well drilled on any communitized tract shall be located in the approximate geographical center of the combined units with a tolerance of 150 feet for topographical conditions, but in any event shall not be located closer than 330 feet to the outer boundaries of the proposed proration unit or communitized tract.