

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

**IN THE MATTER OF THE PROPOSAL OF THE OIL CONSERVATION
COMMISSION, ON ITS OWN MOTION, TO AMEND OIL CONSERVATION
DIVISION RULES 104 AND 701.**

**CASE NO. 13453
ORDER NO. R-12303**

ORDER INSTITUTING RULEMAKING

BY THE COMMISSION:

This matter having come before the Commission for consideration at a duly called meeting of the Commission on this 8th day of March, 2005, the Commission now

FINDS:

1. It has heretofore been the policy of the Oil Conservation Division (the Division) that all wells located in a spacing or proration unit should be operated by the same operator.
2. Division Rule 104 [19.15.3.104 NMAC] provides that any infill well drilled in certain gas pools in certain counties in southeastern New Mexico must be operated by the same operator as any pre-existing well in the same spacing or proration unit. However, Division rules are otherwise silent as to whether different operators may operate different wells within a spacing or proration unit.
3. The Chief of the Engineering and Geological Services Bureau of the Division, in consultation with other members of the Division staff and stakeholder representatives, has developed proposed amendments to Division Rules 104 and 701 to allow operation of wells within a spacing or proration units by multiple operators subject to certain procedures and exceptions. A copy of the proposed rule amendments so formulated is attached to this Order as Exhibit A.
4. The Commission should convene a public hearing to consider the proposed amendments to Rules 104 and 701 to allow and govern the operation of wells within a spacing or proration unit by multiple operators in all counties and pools in the State.

IT IS THEREFORE ORDERED:

1. The Commission shall conduct a public hearing at its regular meeting on April 14, 2005, or at any subsequent date to which the same may be continued, to consider whether or not to adopt amendments to Division Rules 104 and 701, as proposed in Exhibit A attached hereto, to allow and govern operation of wells within a spacing unit by multiple operators in all counties and pools in the State, subject to regulations and exceptions as therein proposed.

2. The Commission counsel and the Commission Secretary, with the assistance of the Division staff, are directed to cause appropriate notices of the public hearing of this matter before the commission to be published in accordance with the laws of New Mexico and Division rules.

3. The notices so published shall state that any person desiring to file written comments on the proposed rule amendments shall **file** the same with the Secretary of the Commission not later than five working days prior to the scheduled public hearing, and that persons desiring to be heard thereon may appear at the public hearing and present testimony or oral statements with respect thereto.

4. At such hearing, the Commission counsel shall present the proposed rule amendments, and the Commission shall consider the same, together with any public comments or testimony filed with the Commission or presented at the hearing as above provided.

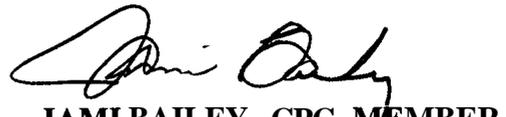
5. Jurisdiction of this matter is retained for entry of such further orders as may be necessary.

DONE at Santa Fe, New Mexico, on the day and year hereinabove designated.

STATE OF NEW MEXICO
OIL CONSERVATION COMMISSION



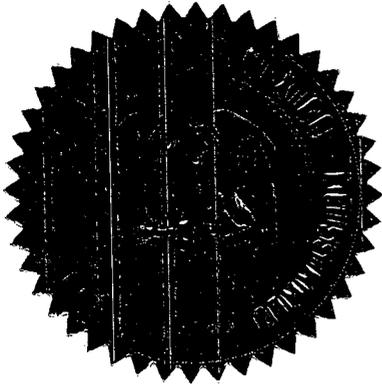
MARK E. FESMIRE, P.E., CHAIR



JAMI BAILEY, CPG, MEMBER



FRANK T. CHAVEZ, MEMBER



SEAL

EXHIBIT A

19.15.3.104 WELL SPACING AND LOCATION:

B. OIL WELL ACREAGE AND WELL LOCATION REQUIREMENTS.

(1) Any wildcat well that is projected to be drilled as an oil well to a formation and in an area that in the opinion of the division may reasonably be presumed to be productive of oil rather than gas and each development well for a defined oil pool, unless otherwise provided in special pool orders, shall be located on a spacing unit consisting of approximately 40 contiguous surface acres substantially in the form of a square which is a legal subdivision of the U.S. Public Land Surveys, which is a governmental quarter-quarter section or lot, and shall be located no closer than 330 feet to any boundary of such unit. Only those 40-acre spacing units committed to active secondary recovery projects shall be permitted more than four wells.

(2) If a well drilled as an oil well is completed as a gas well but does not conform to the applicable gas well location rules, the operator must apply for administrative approval for a non-standard location before the well can produce. The Director may set any such application for hearing.

C. GAS WELLS ACREAGE AND WELL LOCATION REQUIREMENTS.

Any wildcat well that is **projected** to be drilled as a gas well to a formation and in an area that in the opinion of the division may reasonably be presumed to be productive of gas rather than oil and each development well for a defined gas pool, unless otherwise provided in special pool orders, shall be spaced and located as follows:

(1) 640-Acre Spacing applies to any deep gas well in Rio Arriba, San Juan, Sandoval or McKinley County that is projected to be drilled to a gas producing formation older than the Dakota formation or is a development well within a gas pool created and defined by the division after June 1, 1997 in a formation older than the Dakota formation, which formation or pool is located within the surface outcrop of the Pictured Cliffs formation (i.e., the San Juan Basin). Such well shall be located on a spacing unit consisting of 640 contiguous surface acres, more or less, substantially in the form of a square which is a section and legal subdivision of the U.S. Public Land Surveys and shall be located no closer than: 1200 feet to any outer boundary of the spacing unit, 130 feet to any quarter section line, and 10 feet to any quarter-quarter section line or subdivision inner boundary.

(2) 320-Acre Spacing applies to any deep gas well in Lea, Chaves, Eddy or Roosevelt County, defined as a well that is projected to be drilled to a gas producing formation or is within a defined gas pool in the Wolfcamp or an older formation. Such well shall be located on a spacing unit consisting of 320 surface contiguous acres, more or less, comprising any two contiguous quarter sections of a single section that is a legal subdivision of the U.S. Public Land Surveys provided that:

(a) the initial well on a 320-acre unit is located no closer than 660 feet to the outer boundary of the quarter section on which the well is located and no closer than 10 feet to any quarter-quarter section line or subdivision inner boundary;

(b) only one infill well on a 320-acre unit shall be allowed provided that the well is located in the quarter section of the 320-acre unit not containing the initial well and is no closer than 660 feet to the outer boundary of the quarter section and no closer than 10 feet to any quarter-quarter section line or subdivision inner boundary; and

~~(c) the~~ the division designated operator for the infill well is the same operator ~~currently~~ designated by the division for the initial well

(3) **160-Acre Spacing** applies to any other gas well not covered above. Such well shall be located in a spacing unit consisting of **160** surface contiguous acres, more or less, substantially in the form of a square which is a quarter section and a legal subdivision of the U.S. Public Land Surveys and shall be located no closer than 660 feet to any outer boundary of such unit and no closer than 10 feet to any quarter-quarter section or subdivision inner boundary.

D. ACREAGE ASSIGNMENT.

(1) **Well Tests and Classification.** It is the responsibility of the operator of any wildcat 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 test with the division within 10 days following completion of the test. (See Rule 401)

(a) The date of completion for a gas well is the date of the conclusion of active completion work on the well.

(b) If the division determines that a well should not be classified as a gas well, the division will reduce the acreage dedicated to the well to the standard acreage for an oil well.

(c) Failure of the operator to file the test within the specified time will also subject the well to such acreage reduction.

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

(a) Division District Offices have the authority to approve non-standard spacing units without notice when the unorthodox size or shape is necessitated by a variation in the legal subdivision of the U. S. Public Land Surveys **and/or** consists of an entire governmental section and the non-standard spacing unit is not less than 70% or more than 130% of a standard spacing unit. The operator must obtain division approval of division Form C-102 showing the proposed non-standard spacing unit and the acreage contained therein.

(b) The Director may grant administrative approval to non-standard spacing units after notice and opportunity for hearing when an application has been filed and the unorthodox size or shape is necessitated by a variation in the legal subdivision of the U.S. Public Land Surveys or the following facts exist:

(i) the non-standard spacing unit consists of: (A) a single quarter-quarter section or lot or (B) quarter-quarter sections or lots joined by a common side; and

(ii) the non-standard spacing unit lies wholly within: a single quarter section if the well is completed in a pool or formation for which 40, 80, or 160 acres is the standard spacing unit size; a single half section if the well is completed in a pool or formation for which 320 acres is the standard spacing unit size; or a single section if the well is completed in a pool or formation for which 640 acres is the standard spacing unit size.

(c) Applications for administrative approval of non-standard spacing units pursuant to Subsection D, Paragraph (2), **Subparagraph** (b) of 19.15.3.104 NMAC shall be submitted to the division's Santa Fe Office and accompanied by: (i) a plat showing the spacing unit and an applicable standard spacing unit for that pool or formation, the proposed well dedications and all adjoining spacing units; (ii) a list of affected persons as defined in Rule 1207.A (2); and (iii) a statement discussing the reasons for the formation of the non-standard spacing unit.

(d) The applicant shall submit a statement attesting that the applicant, on or before the date the application was submitted to the division, sent notification to the affected persons by submitting a copy of the application, including a copy of the plat described in Subparagraph (c) above, by certified mail, return receipt requested, advising them that if they have an objection it must be filed in writing within 20 days from the date the division receives the application. The Director may approve the

application upon receipt of waivers from all the notified persons or if no person has filed an **objection** within the 20-day period.

(e) The Director may set for hearing any application for administrative approval.

(3) Number of Wells Per Spacing Unit. Exceptions to the provisions of statewide rules or special pool orders concerning the number of wells allowed per spacing unit may be permitted by the Director only after notice and opportunity for hearing. Notice shall be given to those affected persons defined in Rule 1207.A (2).

E. FORMS

—~~Form C 102 "Well **Location** and Acreage **Dedication** Plat"~~ for any well shall designate the exact legal subdivision dedicated to the well. Form C 101 "~~**Application**~~ for Permit to Drill, Deepen, or Plug ~~**Back**~~" will not be approved without an ~~acreage~~ designation on Form C ~~102~~.

SPECIAL RULES FOR MULTIPLE OPERATORS WITHIN A SPACING UNIT

—(1) Allowable production. If an operator completes a well in an oil pool or prorated gas pool, located within a proration unit containing an existing well or wells producing from that pool and operated by a different operator, unless otherwise agreed by all operators of wells producing from that proration unit, the allowable production from such newly completed well shall not exceed the difference between the allowable production for such proration unit and the actual production from such pool of the existing well or wells within such proration unit. The division may authorize exceptions to this provision after hearing following appropriate notice.

(2) Any operator who intends to operate a well in a spacing or proration unit containing an existing well or wells operated by another operator shall, prior to filing the application for permit to drill for such well, furnish written notification of its intent to the operator of each such existing well, and if the unit includes state or federal minerals, to the State Land Office or United States Bureau of Land Management, as applicable; provided that separate notification to the Bureau of Land Management shall not be required if the application is filed with that agency Pursuant to 19.15.1.14 NMAC. The applicant shall submit with its application for permit to drill a statement attesting that applicant, on or before the date that the application was submitted to the division, sent notices to the designated parties, together with a copy of the application for permit to drill and accompanying well location and acreage dedication plat, by certified mail, return receipt requested, advising them that if they have an objection it must be filed in writing within twenty days of the date the application is filed. The District Supervisor may approve the application upon receipt of written waivers from all persons required to be notified (approval of the application by the United States Bureau of Land Management being deemed

equivalent to waiver by that agency), or if no objection has been filed with the division within twenty days from the date when the application is filed.

(3) If an operator transfers operation of less than all of its well located within a spacing or proration unit to another operator, and such spacing unit includes any state or federal minerals, the operator shall, prior to filing form C-104A to effectuate such transfer, provide written notification to the State Land Office or United States Bureau of Land Management, as applicable, of such transfer.

(4) No provision of 19.15.3.104 NMAC shall authorize the operation of any producing well within a unit described in an existing compulsory pooling order by any operator other than the operator designated in such order.

(5) No provision of 19.15.3.104 NMAC shall authorize the operation of any producing well within any federal exploratory unit or state exploratory unit by an operator other than the designated operator of such unit except as provided in the rules of the United States Bureau of Land Management or State Land Office applicable to such unit.

F. through I. [Unchanged]

19.15.9.701 INJECTION OF FLUIDS INTO RESERVOIRS

F. Pressure Maintenance Projects

- (1) Pressure maintenance projects are defined as those **projects** in which fluids are injected into the producing horizon in an effort to build up **and/or** maintain the reservoir pressure in an area which has not reached the advanced or "stripper" state of depletion.
- (2) All applications for establishment of pressure maintenance projects shall be set for hearing. The project area and the allowable formula for any pressure maintenance project shall be fixed by the Division on an individual basis after notice and hearing.
- (3) Pressure maintenance projects may be expanded and additional wells placed on injection only upon authority from the Division after notice and hearing or by administrative approval.
- (4) The Division Director shall have authority to grant an exception to the hearing requirements of Subsection A of 19.15.9.701 NMAC for the conversion to **injection** of additional wells within a **project** area provided that any such well is necessary to develop or maintain efficient pressure

maintenance within such project and provided that no objections are received pursuant to Subsection C of 19.15.9.701 NMAC.

- (5) An established pressure maintenance project shall have only one designated operator. Any exception must be set for hearing.

G. Water Flood Projects

- (1) Water flood projects are defined as those projects in which water is injected into a producing horizon in sufficient quantities and under sufficient pressure to stimulate the production of oil from other wells in the area, and shall be limited to those areas in which the wells have reached an advanced state of depletion and are regarded as what is commonly referred to as "stripper" wells.
- (2) All applications for establishment of water flood projects shall be set for hearing.
- (3) The project area of a water flood project shall comprise the proration units owned or operated by a given operator upon which injection wells are located plus all proration units owned or operated by the same operator which directly or diagonally offset the injection tracts and have producing wells completed on them in the same formation; provided however, that additional proration units not directly nor diagonally offsetting an injection tract may be included in the project area if, after notice and hearing, it has been established that such additional units have wells completed thereon which have experienced a substantial response to water injection.
 - (4) The allowable assigned to wells in a water flood project area shall be equal to the ability of the wells to produce and shall not be subject to the depth bracket allowable for the pool nor to the market demand percentage factor.
- (5) Nothing herein contained shall be construed as prohibiting the assignment of special allowables to wells in buffer zones after notice and hearing. Special allowables may also be assigned in the limited instances where it is established at a hearing that it is imperative for the protection of correlative rights to do so.
- (6) Water flood projects may be expanded and additional wells placed on injection only upon authority from the Division after notice and hearing or by administrative approval.

- (7) The Division Director shall have authority to grant an exception to the hearing requirements of Subsection A of 19.15.9.701 NMAC for conversion to injection of additional wells provided that any such well is necessary to develop or maintain thorough and efficient water flood injection for any authorized project and provided that no objections are received pursuant to Subsection C of 19.15.9.701 NMAC.
- (8) An established water flood project shall have only one designated operator. Any exception must be set for hearing.