

# New Mexico Energy, Minerals and Natural Resources Department

**Susana Martinez**  
Governor

John H. Bemis  
Cabinet Secretary-Designate

Brett F. Woods, Ph.D.  
Deputy Cabinet Secretary

Jami Bailey  
Division Director  
Oil Conservation Division



JUNE 17, 2011

Mr. Luis Gonzales  
Southwest Royalties  
Six Desta Drive  
Suite 2100  
Midland, TX 79705

**RE: SURFACE REMEDY FOR SOUTHWEST ROYALTIES ARCO FEDERAL NO. 5  
TANK BATTERY, API NO. 30-015-20631  
UNIT LETTER K, SECTION 17, TOWNSHIP 17 SOUTH, RANGE 30 EAST**

Mr. Gonzales:

The Oil Conservation Division (OCD) has reviewed the workplans and reports submitted by R.T. Hicks Consultants (RTH) on behalf of Southwest Royalties to address a release of produced water at the Southwest Royalties ARCO Federal No. 5 tank battery, API No. 30-015-20631, located in Unit Letter K, Section 17, Township 17 South, Range 30 East, in Eddy County, New Mexico. Southwest Royalty has generally addressed these plans to the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) because the release was less than the minimum reporting limit of 5 barrels specified in 19.15.29 NMAC. OCD understands that the most recent release of produced water occurred in September 2010 and that the spill may possibly have occurred on top of an older release.

Southwest Royalties has determined that the chlorides contamination at the site extends deeper than 20 feet bgs., and may be as deep as 60 feet bgs. However, Southwest Royalties has determined that there is no protectable ground water in this area of Eddy County. OCD accepts Southwest Royalties' assessment of both the chlorides soil contamination and its conclusion that there is no protectable ground water at this site and no risk to human health. Under 19.15.29.11 NMAC, corrective actions are required for releases that endanger public health or the environment. OCD agrees that the main environmental concern is the timely reestablishment of vegetation at the site.

However, Southwest Royalty is prohibited from disposing of oil field waste, including remediation waste (contaminated soil) in a pit by 19.15.34.11 NMAC (*Disposition of Produced Water and Other Oil Field Waste*), except as authorized by other OCD rules. Part 34.11 states "Except as authorized by 19.15.30 NMAC, 19.15.17 NMAC, 19.15.36 NMAC, 19.15.29 NMAC

Oil Conservation Division \* 1220 South St. Francis Drive  
\* Santa Fe, New Mexico 87505

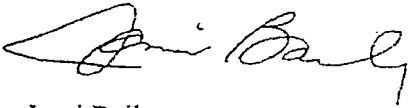
\* Phone: (505) 476-3440 \* Fax (505) 476-3462 \* <http://www.emnrd.state.nm.us>

BEFORE THE OIL CONSERVATION DIVISION  
Santa Fe, New Mexico  
Exhibit No. 7  
Submitted by:  
**SOUTHWEST ROYALTIES, INC.**  
Hearing Date: September 29, 2011

*or 19.15.26.8 NMAC, persons, including transporters, shall not dispose of produced water or other oil field waste: (1) on or below the surface of the ground; in a pit; or in a pond, lake, depression or watercourse...."* BLM does not have authority to authorize disposal of oil field waste/remediation waste in a pit.

Southwest Royalty's surface remediation proposal far exceeds OCD's corrective action requirements under 19.15.29 NMAC because there is no threat to protectable ground water and the surface impact does not pose a risk to human health. OCD suggests that Southwest Royalty confer with BLM about a surface restoration program that does not involve disposal of oil field waste in a pit. If you have any question, please contact Glenn von Gonten at (505) 476-3488.

Sincerely,



Jami Bailey  
Director

JB/gvg

Cc: Daniel Sanchez, OCD  
Mike Bratcher, OCD District 2  
Terry Gregston, BLM  
Randy Hicks, R.T. Hicks