

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

**IN THE MATTER OF THE HEARING CALLED  
BY THE OIL CONSERVATION DIVISION FOR  
THE PURPOSE OF CONSIDERING:**

**CASE NO. 12296  
ORDER NO. R-8768-B**

**APPLICATION OF BURLINGTON RESOURCES OIL & GAS COMPANY TO  
AMEND RULE (7) OF THE SPECIAL RULES AND REGULATIONS FOR THE  
BASIN-FRUITLAND COAL GAS POOL, RIO ARRIBA, MCKINLEY,  
SANDOVAL AND SAN JUAN COUNTIES, NEW MEXICO.**

**ORDER OF THE DIVISION**

**BY THE DIVISION:**

This case came on for hearing at 8:15 a.m. on January 20, 2000, at Santa Fe, New Mexico, before Examiner Mark W. Ashley.

NOW, on this 10th day of February, 2000, the Division Director, having considered the testimony, the record, and the recommendations of the Examiner,

**FINDS THAT:**

- (1) Due public notice has been given and the Division has jurisdiction of this case and its subject matter.
- (2) Burlington Resources Oil & Gas Company ("Burlington") seeks an order of the Division to amend Rule (7) of the Special Rules and Regulations for the Basin-Fruitland Coal Gas Pool to change the well location requirements for wells in this pool and to add well location requirements for federal exploratory units.
- (3) Burlington is the operator of approximately 908 wells currently producing from the Basin-Fruitland Coal Gas Pool.
- (4) In compliance with Division notice rules, Burlington sent copies of its application, including its proposed rules and notice of hearing, to approximately 51 operators in the Basin Fruitland Coal Gas Pool. Notice of this case was also published in the newspaper and on the Division's hearing docket which is mailed to approximately 300 operators in New Mexico.
- (5) By Order No. R-8768, issued in Case No. 9420 and dated October 17, 1988,

the Division created, defined, and promulgated temporary Special Rules and Regulations for the Basin-Fruitland Coal Gas Pool, including provisions for 320-acre gas spacing and proration units and designated well locations. The horizontal limits for this pool currently comprise all or portions of the following described area in San Juan, McKinley, Sandoval and Rio Arriba Counties, New Mexico:

Township 19 North, Ranges 1 West through 6 West, NMPM;  
Township 20 North, Ranges 1 West through 8 West, NMPM;  
Township 21 North, Ranges 1 West through 9 West, NMPM;  
Township 22 North, Ranges 1 West through 11 West, NMPM;  
Township 23 North, Ranges 1 West through 14 West, NMPM;  
Township 24 North, Ranges 1 East through 16 West, NMPM;  
Township 25 North, Ranges 1 East through 16 West, NMPM;  
Township 26 North, Ranges 1 East through 16 West, NMPM;  
Township 27 North, Ranges 1 West through 16 West, NMPM;  
Township 28 North, Ranges 1 West through 16 West, NMPM;  
Township 29 North, Ranges 1 West through 15 West, NMPM;  
Township 30 North, Ranges 1 West through 15 West, NMPM;  
Township 31 North, Ranges 1 West through 15 West, NMPM and  
Township 32 North, Ranges 1 West through 13 West, NMPM

(6) By Order No. R-8768-A, issued in Case No. 9420 and dated July 16, 1991, the Division amended Rules No. (3), (4), (5) and (6), and continued all other provisions contained in Order No. R-8768 until further order of the Division.

(7) Rule (7) of the Special Rules and Regulations for the Basin-Fruitland Coal Gas Pool currently states:

“Rule 7. The first well drilled or recompleted on every standard or non-standard unit in the Basin-Fruitland Coal Gas Pool shall be located in the NE/4 or SW/4 of a single governmental section and shall be located no closer than 790 feet to any outer boundary of the proration unit nor closer than 130 feet to any quarter section line nor closer than 10 feet to any quarter-quarter section line or subdivision inner boundary.”

(8) Burlington testified that one of the most effective and efficient means of drilling and producing new coal gas wells is to commingle production from other formations including the Mesaverde formation in the same wellbore.

(9) The current well location requirements for wells in the Basin-Fruitland Coal Gas Pool are not the same as the current well location requirements for wells in the Blanco-Mesaverde Gas Pool.

(10) By Order No. R-10987-A, issued in Case No. 12069 and dated February 1, 1999, the Division amended the Blanco-Mesaverde Gas Pool rules to include, among other things, the following:

(a) wells drilled in this pool shall be located not closer than 660 feet to the outer boundary of the 320-acre gas spacing unit and not closer than 10 feet to any interior quarter or quarter-quarter section line or subdivision inner boundary; and

(b) wells located within federal exploratory units shall not be closer than 10 feet to any section, quarter section or interior quarter-quarter section line or subdivision inner boundary, except that wells located within one-half mile of the outer boundary of any such unitized area shall not be closer than permitted by subparagraph (a) above.

(11) As a result of the different well location requirements for each of these pools, a Mesaverde well at a standard gas well location may be unorthodox in the Basin-Fruitland Coal Gas Pool.

(12) Additionally, the current well location requirements for wells in the Basin-Fruitland Coal Gas Pool are not the same as the current well location requirements for gas wells spaced on 320-acres under statewide spacing rules.

(13) By Order No. R-11231, issued in Case No. 12119, dated August 12, 1999 and made effective August 31, 1999, the Division amended the well location requirements for gas wells spaced on 320-acres under statewide spacing rules to require wells to be located 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.

(14) Burlington proposes that Rule (7) of the Special Rules and Regulations for the Basin-Fruitland Coal Gas Pool be amended as follows:

"Rule 7. Well Location Requirements:

(a) Wells drilled or recompleted within the Basin-Fruitland Coal Gas Pool shall be located in the NE/4 or the SW/4 of a single governmental section and shall be located no closer than 660 feet to any outer boundary of a spacing unit nor closer than 10 feet to any interior quarter or quarter-quarter section line or subdivision inner boundary.

(b) Wells located within federal exploratory units shall not be closer than 10 feet to any section, quarter section or quarter-quarter section line or subdivision inner boundary, except that wells located within one-half mile of the outer boundary of any such unitized area shall not be closer than permitted by paragraph (a) above."

(15) Burlington presented technical evidence demonstrating that:

(a) the Basin-Fruitland Coal Gas Pool can be subdivided into an over-pressured area and an under-pressured area;

(b) the over-pressured area is located in the north central portion of the pool and currently comprises all or portions of the following described area in San Juan and Rio Arriba Counties, New Mexico:

Township 29 North, Ranges 5 West through 8 West, NMPM;  
Township 30 North, Ranges 4 West through 9 West, NMPM;  
Township 31 North, Ranges 5 West through 10 West, NMPM;  
and  
Township 32 North, Ranges 5 West through 12 West, NMPM;

(c) nearly all of the acreage in the over-pressured area has been developed and adequately drained. The area drained by individual wells in the over-pressured area of the pool is approximately 320 acres;

(d) initial completions in the over-pressured area experienced reservoir pressures of approximately 1600 psi; currently new completions experience reservoir pressures

of between 400 and 500 psi;

(e) permeability in the over-pressured area is approximately 4.5 millidarcies;

(f) because the over-pressured area has essentially been developed and the reservoir pressure has decreased substantially, relaxing the setback requirements in the over-pressured area will not violate correlative rights;

(g) the under-pressured area includes the remainder of the acreage in the Basin-Fruitland Coal Gas Pool;

(h) the under-pressured area is not fully developed and is the area of primary concern for future development under the proposed setback changes. The area drained by individual wells in the under-pressured area of the pool is approximately 160 acres;

(i) initial completions in the under-pressured area experienced reservoir pressures of less than 600 psi; currently new completions experience reservoir pressures of between 200 and 300 psi;

(j) permeability in the under-pressured area is approximately .3 millidarcies;

(k) relaxing the setback requirements in the under-pressured area will not violate correlative rights because wells drain approximately 160 acres, permeability is approximately .3 millidarcies, and the current reservoir pressure has decreased substantially.

(16) Adopting Burlington's proposal to relax the footage setbacks of the pool will serve the best interests of conservation, prevent waste, protect correlative rights and provide workable, fair and efficient regulation of well locations.

(17) In order to increase the opportunity to locate wells in the optimum position and avoid processing numerous applications for unorthodox well locations, Burlington's request to relax the exterior and interior footage setback requirements within the Basin-

Fruitland Coal Gas Pool should be approved.

(18) Burlington did not present sufficient data outlining the existing federal exploratory units and participating areas and their relationship to adjoining proration units. Additionally, Burlington did not present evidence and testimony justifying why the existing setback requirements and the NE/4 SW/4 development pattern are not the most orderly form of development for existing federal exploratory units and participating areas within the Basin-Fruitland Coal Gas Pool.

(19) Burlington's request to apply the proposed development pattern and setback requirements to federal exploratory units and participating areas has the potential to drain proration units that are not within a participating area of a federal exploratory unit, does not promote conservation and may violate correlative rights. It should therefore be denied.

IT IS THEREFORE ORDERED THAT:

(1) Pursuant to the application of Burlington Resources Oil & Gas Corporation ("Burlington"), Rule (7) of the Special Rules and Regulations for the Basin-Fruitland Coal Gas Pool is hereby amended as follows:

Rule 7. Wells drilled or recompleted on every standard or non-standard unit in the Basin-Fruitland Coal Gas Pool shall be located in the NE/4 or SW/4 of a single governmental section and shall be located no closer than 660 feet to any outer boundary of the proration unit nor closer than 10 feet to any interior quarter or quarter-quarter section line or subdivision inner boundary.

(2) Burlington's request to apply the relaxed setback requirements to federal exploratory units is hereby denied.

(3) All other provisions of Order No. R-8768, as amended, shall remain in full force and effect until further notice.

(4) Jurisdiction is hereby retained for the entry of such further orders as the Division may deem necessary.

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

STATE OF NEW MEXICO  
OIL CONSERVATION DIVISION

  
LORI WROTENBERY  
Director

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