

**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:**

**APPLICATION OF RAPTOR NATURAL PIPELINE, LLC CASE NO. 12588
f/k/a LG & E ENERGY CORPORATION, FOR SPECIAL
RULES FOR THE GRAMA RIDGE MORROW GAS STORAGE
UNIT, LEA COUNTY, NEW MEXICO.**

**APPLICATION OF LG & E NATURAL PIPELINE LLC CASE NO. 12441
FOR SPECIAL RULES FOR THE GRAMA RIDGE
MORROW GAS STORAGE UNIT, LEA COUNTY, NEW
MEXICO.**

ORDER NO. R-11611

ORDER OF THE DIVISION

BY THE DIVISION:

These cases came on for hearing at 9:00 a.m. on May 21, 2001, at Santa Fe, New Mexico, before Examiner Michael E. Stogner.

NOW, on this 3rd day of July, 2001, 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 these cases and their subject matter.
- (2) At the time of the hearing, Cases No. 12588 and 12441 were consolidated for the purpose of testimony. It is further noted that the original applicant in Case No. 12441, LG&E Natural Pipeline, LLC, through a change of name became Raptor Natural Pipeline LLC.
- (3) BTA Oil Producers, Yates Petroleum Corporation, C. W. Trainer, Inc., Nearburg Exploration Company L.L.C. and Concho Resources, Inc. appeared at the hearing and were represented by counsel.

(4) The applicant in Case No. 12588, Raptor Natural Pipeline LLC, is the Unit Operator of the Grama Ridge Morrow Gas Storage Unit, utilized for the purposes of the injection, storage, and withdrawal of gas in the Unitized Formation, consisting of those Morrow formation sands encountered between log depths of 12,722 feet and 13,208 feet in the Shell Oil Company State GRA Well No. 1 (**API No. 30-025-21336**), located 1980 feet from the North line and 660 feet from the West line (Unit E) of Section 3, Township 22 South, Range 34 East, NMPM, Lea County, New Mexico.

(5) The Grama Ridge Morrow unitized area, as originally approved by the Division on January 29, 1973, pursuant to Order No. R-4473, and subsequently amended, encompasses the above-referenced interval of the Morrow Formation underlying the following lands:

Township 21 South, Range 34 East, NMPM

Section 33: All

Section 34: All

Township 22 South, Range 34 East, NMPM

Section 3: All

Section 4: All

Section 10: All.

(6) Unit operations originally commenced in 1964 as conventional production operations authorized by the Division under Order No. R-2792. In 1973, the Division, by Order No. R-4491, authorized the conversion of the Unit from primary recovery to gas storage, pursuant to a three-phase plan consisting of pilot pressure testing to determine the limits of the Morrow reservoir, followed by the installation of permanent compression equipment and fill-up operations, and subsequently, by installation of additional compression to facilitate fill-up to 2,500 psig surface pressure.

(7) In 1979, in Case No. 6557, the New Mexico Oil Conservation Commission ("Commission") issued Order No. R-6050, creating the East Grama Ridge-Morrow Gas Pool in the area. In Order No. R-6050, the Commission found that the Morrow producing interval in the area does not constitute a broad, continuous producing body, but instead is composed of numerous and separate isolated sand bodies. Subsequently, in Case No. 8088, the Commission found in Order No. R-7582 that the boundaries of the Grama Ridge Storage Reservoir could not be precisely determined. The issuance of Order No. R-7582 by the Commission in Case No. 8088 was precipitated by the proposed location of the L&B Oil Company Federal Well No. 1 to be drilled at a location 660 feet from the South line and

1980 feet from the East line (Unit O) of Section 5, Township 22 South, Range 34 East, NMPM, Lea County, New Mexico directly offsetting the Grama Ridge Morrow Gas Storage Unit. At the insistence of the Unit operator, then Llano, Inc., the Commission ordered L&B Oil Company to permit Llano to run an RFT log in the Federal Well No. 1, in order to establish the pressure in each Morrow stringer and thereby determine if the well was in communication with the gas storage project. The Commission further ordered L&B Oil Company to provide Llano with certain information on the Federal Well No. 1, including drilling time, weight, bit changes, *etc.*; copies of drill stem tests; mud log information; samples of drill cuttings; and copies of the CNL-FDC porosity log or equivalent porosity log. L&B was further ordered to delay running casing into the well until Llano had the opportunity to run the RFT log. Order No. R-7582 finally prohibited L&B Oil Company from producing gas from those Morrow stringers that the RFT log data showed as having pressure similar to Llano's gas storage project

(8) The applicant presented evidence establishing that Nearburg Exploration Company LLC drilled and completed its Grama Ridge East "34" State Well No. 1 (**API No. 30-025-34948**) within the horizontal limits of the Unit at a location approximately 1548 feet from the North line and 990 feet from the East line (Unit H) of Section 34, Township 21 South, Range 34 East, NMPM, Lea County, New Mexico. This well was also drilled to a total depth and completed within the vertical limits of the structural equivalent of the Unitized Formation.

(9) Raptor presented testimony and evidence establishing that, based on currently available data, it appears that the Grama Ridge East "34" State Well No. 1 has not adversely affected Unit Operations, although the possibility of actual communication with the Unitized Formation cannot be precluded with absolute certainty.

(10) Raptor presented additional geologic and engineering evidence establishing that the exact boundaries of the storage reservoir still cannot be precisely determined. The evidence further establishes that the precise location of faults in the area and the apparent boundary or boundaries between the storage reservoir and the East Grama Ridge-Morrow Gas Pool is uncertain.

(11) Raptor presented additional geologic evidence of the depositional mechanics of the Morrow formation in the area, establishing that there is a reasonable possibility of communication between the storage reservoir and Morrow sands in the East Grama Ridge-Morrow Gas Pool. These depositional mechanisms include distributary prograding channel sands with truncation of lobe sands; bifurcating distributary channels; crevasse splays with communication up-formation; stacked channel sands with truncation; offsetting channels of relatively close proximity with varying relative reservoir pressures which may lead to the

failure of inter-reservoir sealing mechanisms; and, faulted distributaries with cross-fault communication.

(12) The applicant presented additional evidence establishing that the potential exists for additional drilling and development within the horizontal limits of the Unit Area and that additional drilling or recompletions may result in wells being completed in Morrow Formation reservoirs that are in communication with that portion of the formation dedicated to the Grama Ridge Morrow Gas Storage Unit. As a consequence, there exists a reasonable potential that the drilling, completion, and operation of new wells or recompletions of existing wells in the area, would result in interference with Unit operations and the impairment of Applicant's correlative rights.

(13) Raptor requests that the Division adopt Special Project Rules and Operating Procedures for the Grama Ridge Morrow Gas Storage Unit Area, including certain notification, casing, cementing, completion and recompletion requirements for newly drilled and existing wells within the Unit Area.

(14) Raptor presented engineering testimony and evidence in support of its proposed casing and cementing requirements that would permit recompletions and new drills through the Unitized Formation, and completions immediately above and below the Unitized Formation, while maintaining the integrity of the Unit and unit operations.

(15) Raptor presented evidence establishing that the implementation of such rules is reasonable, and does not unduly burden operators of wells within the project area, and industry and regulatory precedent exists for such rules.

(16) The evidence presented further established that the implementation of such Special Project Rules and Operating Procedures would be in the interest of, and would promote, public safety.

(17) In August 2000, Raptor, then known as LG&E Natural Pipeline LLC, convened a meeting in Midland, Texas with operators in the vicinity of the Grama Ridge Morrow Gas Storage Unit to discuss the establishment of proposed Special Project Rules and Operating Procedures in the Grama Ridge Morrow Gas Storage Unit Area as well as in a buffer zone consisting of each 320- acre gas spacing and proration unit immediately adjacent to the Grama Ridge Morrow Gas Storage Unit. As a result of that meeting and the comments received from the other operators, Raptor/LG&E modified its proposal by eliminating certain notification and testing procedures as well as the buffer zone. Subsequent meetings with other operators, specifically Nearburg Exploration, resulted in further refinements and modifications to the proposed Special Project Rules and Operating Procedures.

(18) The Special Project Rules and Operating Procedures presently proposed by Raptor provide for:

- (a) Advance notification of drilling or recompletion operations;
- (b) The sharing of certain information during drilling operations;
- (c) Availability of well logs;
- (d) Certain casing and cementing requirements for wells penetrating the Morrow Formation and completed above the top of the Unitized Formation;
- (e) Certain casing and cementing requirements for wells penetrating the Morrow Formation and completed below the base of the Unitized Formation and/or below the base of the Morrow Formation; and
- (f) A prohibition on completions within the Unitized Formation underlying the Unit Project Area by other than the Unit Operator.

The proposed Special Project Rules and Operating Procedures would not apply to any well that does not penetrate the Morrow Formation within the Unit Project Area.

(19) The evidence presented by Raptor established that the Special Project Rules and Operating Procedures are necessary to protect the correlative rights of the Unit Operator to the gas in its storage facility as well as to maintain the integrity of Unit operations. The evidence further established that the Special Project Rules and Operating Procedures would serve to prevent waste and are otherwise in the interests of conservation. The Special Project Rules and Operating Procedures would also promote public safety.

(20) In addition to its general authority to prevent waste and protect correlative rights set forth at N.M. Stat. Ann. 1978 Section 70-2-11, the Division is authorized by Section § 70-2-12.B (2), (7) and (13) to prevent the escape of gas from strata, to require wells to be drilled so as to prevent injury to neighboring leases or properties, and to regulate the subsurface storage of natural gas.

(21) Special operating procedures for all recompletions and newly drilled wells within the Grama Ridge Morrow Gas Storage Unit project area should be implemented in accordance with the Special Project Rules and Operating Procedures, as described above.

IT IS THEREFORE ORDERED THAT:

(1) Pursuant to the application of Raptor Natural Pipeline LLC, special project rules and operating procedures for the Grama Ridge Morrow Gas Storage Unit Area in Lea County, New Mexico are hereby promulgated as follows:

**SPECIAL PROJECT RULES AND OPERATING PROCEDURES
FOR THE
GRAMA RIDGE MORROW GAS STORAGE UNIT**

RULE 1. Each newly drilled or recompleted well penetrating the Morrow formation in the area of the Grama Ridge Morrow Gas Storage Unit Project Area shall be drilled, operated, and produced in accordance with the Special Project Rules and Operating Procedures hereinafter set forth.

RULE 2. Provisions of these Special Project Rules and Operating Procedures shall apply to the Grama Ridge Morrow Gas Storage Unit Project Area (the "Unit Project Area" or "Unit Area"), defined as and consisting of the following described acreage in Lea County, New Mexico:

**GRAMA RIDGE MORROW
GAS STORAGE UNIT
PROJECT AREA**

Township 21 South, Range 34 East, NMPM

Section 33: All

Section 34: All

Township 22 South, Range 34 East, NMPM

Section 3: All

Section 4: All

Section 10: All.

RULE 3. For purposes of these Special Project Rules

and Operating Procedures, the “Unitized Formation,” as to State lands, is defined by that April 25, 1973, Unit Agreement For The Operation Of The Grama Ridge Morrow Unit Area, Lea County, New Mexico, as amended, and consists of “[t]hat subsurface portion of the unit area commonly known as the Morrow sands which is the same zone as [sic] the top and bottom of which were encountered at log depths of 12,722 feet and 13,208 feet respectively, in the Shell Oil Company State GRA Well No. 1 (API No. 30-025-21336), as shown on the Schlumberger Sonic Log B Gamma Ray Log of said well dated July 5, 1965, which well is located 1980 feet from the North line and 660 feet from the West line (Unit E) of Section 3, Township 22 South, Range 34 East, NMPM, Lea County, New Mexico.” As to State and fee lands, the Unit Area includes Sections 33 and 34, Township 21 South, Range 34 East, NMPM, and the NE/4 of Section 4 and all of Section 3, Township 22 South Range 34 East, NMPM. As to Federal lands, the “Unitized Formation” consists of the Morrow Formation underlying the “gas storage reservoir area” (also the Unit Area) in Section 4 (excluding the NE/4 of Section 4) and Section 10, Township 22 South, Range 34 East, NMPM, as defined in that November 24, 1975 Agreement for the Subsurface Storage of Gas, No. 14-08-0001-14277, as amended.

RULE 4. For purposes of these Special Project Rules and Operating Procedures, the “Morrow Formation” is defined as the full extent of the vertical limits of the Morrow formation. The “Unit Operator” is defined as the operator of the Grama Ridge Morrow Gas Storage Unit Area.

RULE 5. Operators other than the Unit Operator proposing to drill a new well or recomplete an existing well penetrating or that may penetrate the Morrow Formation within the Unit Project Area of the Grama Ridge Morrow Gas Storage Unit, as defined above, shall:

- (a) provide the Unit Operator with advance written notification of intent to drill at the sooner of the date of filing of APD, C-101 and

C-102 forms, or thirty (30) days prior to commencing drilling operations;

- (b) on commencement of drilling operations, provide the Unit Operator with the following information within twenty-four (24) hours of its availability:

 - (i) daily drilling reports, including detailed time breakdown and other parameters normally associated with IADC daily drilling reports; and
 - (ii) the anticipated date and time when the top of the Morrow formation will be encountered by the drill bit; and
- (c) provide the Unit Operator with copies of all logs run on the well within twenty-four (24) hours of their availability and before casing is set.

RULE 6. For each well penetrating the Morrow formation within the boundaries of the Unit Project Area and completed above the top of Unitized Formation, the operator shall:

- (a) in the event of a cased hole into or through the Unitized Formation, isolate the Unitized Formation by squeezing cement immediately above and below (if penetrated) the Unitized Formation and immediately below the operator's deepest completion interval, run a cement bond log, and then fill the casing with cement to a level higher than the top of the Unitized Formation; and
- (b) in the case of an open hole into or through the Unitized Formation with casing set above the Unitized Formation:

- (i) if the hole total depth is within the Unitized Formation, fill the hole with cement to a level 20 feet higher than the top of the Unitized Formation; and
- (ii) if the hole total depth is below the bottom of the Unitized Formation, set a bridge plug at a depth 20 feet below the bottom of the Unitized Formation and fill the hole with cement from the bridge plug to a level 20 feet higher than the top of the Unitized Formation.

RULE 7. For each well penetrating the Morrow Formation and completed below the base of the Unitized Formation within the boundaries of the Unit Project Area, the operator shall:

- (a) squeeze cement immediately above the perforation interval, squeeze cement immediately below the Unitized Formation and squeeze cement immediately above the Unitized Formation; and
- (b) provide the Unit Operator with a cement bond log to document bond on all squeeze jobs.

RULE 8. For each exploratory well penetrating the Morrow Formation that is to be plugged and abandoned without casing, the operator shall fill the hole with cement from a bridge plug set at 20 feet below the base of the Unitized Formation (if applicable) to a level 20 feet above the top of the Unitized Formation.

RULE 9. The Unit Operator, on the request of an operator providing information and materials pursuant to Rule 5 (a) through (c) above or any other applicable provision of these Special Project Rules and Operating Procedures, shall

treat all or any part of such information and materials as confidential and shall prevent their release to any third party, except that this confidentiality provision shall not cover such information and materials that: (i) are or become generally available to the public other than as a result of a disclosure by the Unit Operator or an affiliate in violation of this provision; (ii) the Unit Operator or an affiliate already possessed on a non-confidential basis; or (iii) the Unit Operator or an affiliate is obligated to disclose by law, subpoena, or the order of a court or other governmental entity having jurisdiction.

RULE 10. Completions within the Unitized Formation underlying the Unit Project Area by anyone other than the Unit Operator are prohibited.

RULE 11. These Special Project Rules and Operating Procedures shall not apply to any well that does not penetrate the Morrow Formation within the Grama Ridge Morrow Gas Storage Unit Project Area.

(2) The Special Project Rules and Operating Procedures for the Grama Ridge Morrow Gas Storage Unit Area shall become effective May 1, 2001.

(3) Jurisdiction of this case is retained for the entry of such further orders as the Division may deem necessary.

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



STATE OF NEW MEXICO
OIL CONSERVATION DIVISION

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Lori Wrotenbery".

LORI WROTENBERY
Director

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