

**RAILROAD COMMISSION OF TEXAS
OFFICE OF GENERAL COUNSEL
HEARINGS SECTION**

OIL AND GAS DOCKET NO. 03-0237813

ENFORCEMENT ACTION FOR ALLEGED VIOLATIONS COMMITTED BY ROBERT M. WYRICK, SOLE PROPRIETOR, RIO ENERGY (712522), AS TO THE HERMANN (02350) LEASE, WELL NOS. 1, 1B, 2B, 3B, 4B, 5, 5B, 8, 10, 12, 15, 15B, 16, 16B, 17B, 18, 18B, 21, 22, 23, 27B, 30B, 54, 75, 76 AND 84, HUMBLE FIELD, HARRIS COUNTY, TEXAS

FINAL ORDER

The Commission finds that after statutory notice the captioned enforcement proceeding was heard by the examiner on July 29, 2004, and that the respondent, Robert M. Wyrick, Sole Proprietor, Rio Energy (712522), failed to appear or respond to the notice. Pursuant to § 1.49 of the Commission's General Rules of Practice and Procedure [Tex. R. R. Comm'n, 16 TEX. ADMIN. CODE § 1.49] and after being duly submitted to the Railroad Commission of Texas at conference held in its offices in Austin, Texas, the Commission makes the following findings of fact and conclusions of law.

FINDINGS OF FACT

1. Robert M. Wyrick, Sole Proprietor, Rio Energy (712522), ("Respondent") was given Notice of Opportunity for Hearing by certified mail, addressed to the most recent P-5 address on the Form P-5 Organization Report, which was returned to the Commission marked "unclaimed."
2. The returned certified receipt containing the Original Complaint and the Notice of Opportunity for Hearing, was returned to the Commission marked "unclaimed" on July 10, 2004. The certified receipt has been on file with the Commission for 15 days, exclusive of the day of receipt and day of issuance.
3. Robert M. Wyrick, as sole proprietor, was a person in a position of ownership or control of respondent, as defined by Texas Natural Resources Code Section 91.114, during the time period of the violations of Commission rules committed by respondent.
4. The violations of Commission rules committed by respondent are related to safety and the control of pollution.

5. Respondent designated itself to the Commission as the operator of Well Nos. 1, 1B, 2B, 3B, 4B, 5, 5B, 8, 10, 12, 15, 15B, 16, 16B, 17B, 18, 18B, 21, 22, 23, 27B, 30B, 54, 75, 76 and 84 on the Hermann (02350) Lease ("subject wells"/"subject lease") by filing a Form P-4 (Producers Transportation Authority and Certificate of Compliance) with the Commission effective on February 23, 2000.
6. According to Commission records the Respondent's Form P-5 (Organization Report) became delinquent on February 1, 2002. Respondent paid a fee of \$1,500.00 as its financial assurance at the time of its last P-5 renewal.
7. Well Nos. 1B, 2B, 3B, 4B, 5, 5B, 8, 10, 12, 15, 15B, 16, 16B, 17B, 18, 18B, 21, 22, 27B, 30B, 54, 75, 76 and 84 ceased production on or before October 31, 2001.
8. Well No. 1 and Well No. 23 are permitted disposal wells. Well No. 1 ceased injection on or before July 2000 and Well No. 23 ceased injection on or before July 1990.
9. The subject wells have not been properly plugged in accordance with, and are not otherwise in compliance with, Statewide Rule 14.
10. Usable quality groundwater in the area is likely to be contaminated by migrations or discharges of saltwater and other oil and gas wastes from the subject wells. Unplugged wellbores constitute a cognizable threat to the public health and safety because of the probability of pollution.
11. The estimated cost to the State of plugging the subject wells is \$127,647.00.
12. Commission district office inspections were conducted on August 12, 2003, October 14, 2003 and July 6, 2004 for the Hermann (02350) Lease. Well No. 18 has casing open to the atmosphere.
13. Maintenance of surface control by wellhead assemblies is necessary to prevent the discharge of oil and gas wastes on the subject lease constituting a hazard to public health and safety because the discharges of oil and gas wastes onto land surface can migrate into surface or subsurface waters.
14. The Respondent has not demonstrated good faith since it failed to plug or otherwise place the subject lease and subject wells in compliance after being notified of the violations by the District Office and failed to appear at the hearing to explain its inaction.

CONCLUSIONS OF LAW

1. Proper notice was issued by the Railroad Commission to respondent and to all other appropriate persons legally entitled to notice.
2. All things necessary to the Commission attaining jurisdiction over the subject matter and the parties in this hearing have been performed or have occurred.

3. Respondent was in violation of Commission Statewide Rules 13(b)(1)(B) and 14(b)(2).
4. Respondent is responsible for maintaining the subject lease in compliance with Rule 13(b)(1)(B), which requires that surface control of all wells be maintained with wellhead assemblies.
5. Respondent is responsible for maintaining the subject lease and plugging of the subject wells in compliance with all applicable Commission rules according to Statewide Rules 14, 58, and 79 and Chapters 89 and 91 of the Texas Natural Resources Code.
6. The documented violations committed by the respondent constitute acts deemed serious, a hazard to the public health, and demonstrate a lack of good faith pursuant to TEX. NAT. RES. CODE ANN. §81.0531(c) (Vernon 2001).
7. As a person in a position of ownership or control of respondent at the time respondent violated Commission rules related to safety and the control of pollution, Robert M. Wyrick, and any other organization in which he may hold a position of ownership or control, shall be subject to the restrictions of Texas Natural Resource Code Section 91.114(a)(2) for a period of no more than seven years from the date the order entered in this matter becomes final, or until the conditions that constituted the violations herein are corrected or are being corrected in accordance with a schedule to which the Commission and the organization have agreed; and all administrative, civil, and criminal penalties and all cleanup and plugging costs incurred by the State relating to those conditions are paid or are being paid in accordance with a schedule to which the Commission and the organization have agreed, whichever is earlier.

IT IS ORDERED THAT within 30 days from the day immediately following the date this order becomes final:

1. Robert M. Wyrick, Sole Proprietor, Rio Energy (712522), shall plug Well Nos. 1 and 23, Hermann (02350) Lease, Humble Field, Harris County, Texas in compliance with applicable Commission rules and regulations; and
2. Robert M. Wyrick, Sole Proprietor, Rio Energy (712522), shall plug or otherwise place the Hermann (02350) Lease, Well Nos. 1B, 2B, 3B, 4B, 5, 5B, 8, 10, 12, 15, 15B, 16, 16B, 17B, 18, 18B, 21, 22, 27B, 30B, 54, 75, 76 and 84, Humble Field, Harris County, Texas in compliance with applicable Commission rules and regulations; and
3. Robert M. Wyrick, Sole Proprietor, Rio Energy (712522), shall pay to the Railroad Commission of Texas, for disposition as provided by law, an administrative penalty in the amount of **FIFTY THREE THOUSAND DOLLARS (\$53,000.00)**.

It is further **ORDERED** by the Commission that this order shall not be final and effective until 20 days after a party is notified of the Commission's order. A party is presumed to have been notified of the Commission's order three days after the date on which the notice is actually mailed. If a timely motion for rehearing is filed by any party at interest, this order shall not become final and effective until such motion is overruled, or if such motion is granted, this order shall be subject to further action by the Commission. Pursuant to TEX. GOV'T CODE § 2001.146(e), the time allotted for Commission action on a motion for rehearing in this case prior to its being overruled by operation of law, is hereby extended until 90 days from the date the parties are notified of the order.

All requested findings of fact and conclusions of law which are not expressly adopted herein are denied. All pending motions and requests for relief not previously granted or granted herein are denied.

Noncompliance with the provisions of this order is subject to enforcement by the Attorney General and subject to civil penalties of up to \$10,000.00 per day per violation.

Done this 7th day of September 2004.

RAILROAD COMMISSION OF TEXAS

(Signatures affixed by Default Master Order dated September 7, 2004)

JD/sa