

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

**OIL AND GAS DOCKET NO. 03-0248088**

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**ENFORCEMENT ACTION FOR ALLEGED VIOLATIONS COMMITTED BY TRES OPERATING CO., LLC (868280), AS TO THE ELROY F. ULLRICH LEASE, WELL NO. 1 (609988), WILDCAT/CLAY FIELD, WASHINGTON COUNTY, TEXAS**

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**FINAL ORDER**

The Commission finds that after statutory notice the captioned enforcement proceeding was heard by the examiner on May 31, 2007, and that the respondent, Tres Operating Co., LLC (868280), 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. Tres Operating Co., LLC (868280), ("Respondent") was given Notice of 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.
2. The returned certified receipt containing the Original Complaint and the Notice of Hearing mailed to Respondent's most recent P-5 address was returned to the Commission marked "unclaimed" on May 23, 2007. The certified receipt has been on file with the Commission for 15 days, exclusive of the day of receipt and day of issuance.
3. James Gibson, 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 No. 1 (609988) on the Elroy F. Ullrich Lease ("subject well"/"subject lease") by filing a Form W-1 (Permit to Drill, Deepen, Plug Back or Re-Enter) with the Commission on November 21, 2005.

6. According to Commission records the Respondent's Form P-5 (Organization Report) is active. Respondent has a \$25,000.00 cash as its financial assurance.
7. Commission district office inspections were conducted on March 29, 2006, March 30, 2006, March 31, 2006, April 3, 2006, April 10, 2006, April 17, 2006 November 8, 2006, December 8, 2006 and April 9, 2007 for the Elroy F. Ullrich Lease. Well No. 1 (609988) has no wellhead on the well, and is open to the atmosphere.
8. 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.
9. The subject well has not been properly plugged in accordance with, and is 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 well. Unplugged well bores constitute a cognizable threat to the public health and safety because of the probability of pollution.
11. A Commission district office inspection was conducted on March 29, 2006 for the Elroy F. Ullrich Lease. There was a 10' x 10' spill containing motor oil near the well, and another area of 20' x 30' spill containing pump oil near the pits. The reserve pit had backed up, letting oil flow into the woods behind the pit for a distance of approximately 400'.
12. No permit has been issued to Respondent for the discharge of oil and gas wastes on or from the subject lease.
13. The unpermitted discharges of oil and gas wastes or other substances or materials on the subject lease constitute a hazard to public health and safety because leaks and spills of oil and produced waters onto soils can migrate into surface water bodies causing contamination or can leach into the ground and percolate through soils into groundwater supplies.
14. The Respondent has not demonstrated good faith since it failed to plug or otherwise place the subject lease and subject well 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 is in violation of Commission Statewide Rules 3, 8 and 14(b)(2).
4. Respondent is responsible for maintaining the subject lease in compliance with Statewide Rule 3, which requires that each property that produces oil, gas or geothermal resources and each oil, gas or geothermal resource well and tank, or other approved crude oil measuring facility shall post signs or identification.
5. Respondent is responsible for maintaining the subject lease in compliance with Statewide Rule 8(d)(1), which prohibits the discharge of oil and gas wastes without a permit.
6. Respondent is responsible for maintaining the subject lease and subject well 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.
7. 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).
8. 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, James Gibson, 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.
9. Respondent James Gibson shall be made subject to the requirements of Texas Natural Resources Code §91.114.

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

1. Tres Operating Co., LLC (868280), shall place the Elroy F. Ullrich Lease, Well No. 1 (609988), Wildcat/Clay Field, Washington County, Texas in compliance with applicable Commission rules and regulations; and
2. Tres Operating Co., LLC (868280), shall pay to the Railroad Commission of Texas, for disposition as provided by law, an administrative penalty in the amount of **ELEVEN THOUSAND DOLLARS (\$11,000.00)**.

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 26<sup>th</sup> day of June 2007.

**RAILROAD COMMISSION OF TEXAS**

(Signatures affixed by Default Master Order dated June 26, 2007)

ME/sa