

RAILROAD COMMISSION OF TEXAS
OFFICE OF GENERAL COUNSEL
HEARINGS SECTION

OIL AND GAS DOCKET NO. 03-0253333

ENFORCEMENT ACTION FOR ALLEGED VIOLATIONS COMMITTED BY TRISTAR EXPLORATION, INC. (871101), AS TO THE ISABEL B. MARTIN UNIT (23728) LEASE, WELL NO. 1, CHENANGO (8700) FIELD, BRAZORIA COUNTY, TEXAS

FINAL ORDER

The Commission finds that after statutory notice the captioned enforcement proceeding was heard by the examiner on January 3, 2008, and that the respondent, Tristar Exploration, Inc. (871101), failed to appear or respond to the Notice of Opportunity for Hearing. 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. Tristar Exploration, Inc. (871101), ("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 signed and returned to the Commission.
2. The returned certified receipt (green card) that was attached to the Original Complaint and the Notice of Opportunity for Hearing mailed to Respondent's most recent P-5 address was signed and returned to the Commission on November 9, 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. On August 13, 2007, Respondent, a Corporation, filed an Organization Report (Form P-5) with the Commission reporting that its officers consisted of the following individual(s): Andrew A. Alff, President; and William Buck, Vice President.
4. Andrew A. Alff, 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.
5. William Buck, 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.
6. The violations of Commission rules committed by respondent are related to safety and the control of pollution.
7. Respondent designated itself to the Commission as the operator of Well No. 1 on the Isabel

B. Martin Unit (23728) Lease (“subject well”/“subject lease”) by filing a Form P-4 (Producers Transportation of Authority and Certificate of Compliance) with the Commission effective on October 1, 2000.

8. According to Commission records the Respondent’s Form P-5 (Organization Report) is active. Respondent has a \$50,000.00 bond as its financial assurance.
9. The subject well ceased production on or before December 1999.
10. The Statewide Rule 14(b)(2) plugging extension for Well No. 1 on the Isabel B. Martin Unit (23728) Lease was denied on July 24, 2006, for failure to file an H-15.
11. 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 wellbores constitute a cognizable threat to the public health and safety because of the probability of pollution.
12. The estimated cost to the State of plugging the subject well is \$22,339.00.
13. Commission records indicate no Form H-15 (Test On An Inactive Well More Than 25 Years Old) has been filed and approved for the Isabel B. Martin Unit (23728) Lease, Well No. 1. Commission records further show that Isabel B. Martin Unit (23728) Lease, Well No. 1 was completed on October 24, 1980, that an H-15 test was due in May 2006, and that the well has not been plugged.
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.
15. Respondent has a prior history of Commission rule violations including the following docket(s):

Docket No. 03-0233440; Final Order Served: September 7, 2005;
Docket No. 7B-0235591; Agreed Order Served: June 22, 2004;
Docket No. 7B-0239085; Agreed Order Served: January 24, 2006; and
Docket No. 7B-0239087; Agreed Order Served: March 29, 2007.

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 14(b)(2) and 14(b)(3).
4. Respondent is responsible for maintaining the subject lease in compliance with Statewide Rule 14(b)(3), which requires that the operator of any well more than 25 years old that becomes inactive shall plug or test such well to determine whether the well poses a

potential threat of harm to natural resources, including surface and subsurface water, oil and gas.

5. Respondent is responsible for maintaining the subject lease and 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.
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).
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, Andrew A. Alff, 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.
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, William Buck, 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. Tristar Exploration, Inc. (871101), shall plug the Isabel B. Martin Unit (23728) Lease, Well No. 1, Chenango (8700) Field, Brazoria County, Texas in compliance with applicable Commission rules and regulations;
2. Tristar Exploration, Inc. (871101), shall pay to the Railroad Commission of Texas, for disposition as provided by law, an administrative penalty in the amount of **FIVE THOUSAND DOLLARS (\$5,000.00)**.

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 24th day of April 2008.

RAILROAD COMMISSION OF TEXAS

(Signatures affixed by Default Master Order dated April 24, 2008)

ME/sa