

**RAILROAD COMMISSION OF TEXAS
HEARINGS DIVISION**

OIL AND GAS DOCKET NO. 7C-0305639

ENFORCEMENT ACTION AGAINST LOW-END OIL LLC (OPERATOR NO. 510360) FOR VIOLATIONS OF STATEWIDE RULES ON THE JOHNSON, J. WILLIS "A" (216778) LEASE, WELL NO. 1, VERIBEST (HARKEY) FIELD, COUNTY; AND TEXTRON-JOHNSON (16204) LEASE, WELL NO. 3, HARRIETT (PALO PINTO) FIELD, COUNTY, TEXAS

FINAL ORDER

The Railroad Commission of Texas ("Commission") finds that after statutory notice the captioned enforcement proceeding was heard by a Commission Administrative Law Judge on September 14, 2017, and that the respondent, Low-End Oil LLC, failed to appear or respond to the **Notice of Opportunity for Hearing**. Pursuant to § 1.45 of the Commission's General Rules of Practice and Procedure, 16 TEX. ADMIN. CODE § 1.45, and after being duly submitted to the Commission at a conference held in its offices in Austin, Texas, the Commission makes the following findings of fact and conclusions of law.

FINDINGS OF FACT

1. Low-End Oil LLC ("Respondent"), Operator No. 510360, was sent the Original Complaint and Notice of Opportunity for Hearing by certified and first-class mail, addressed to the most recent Commission Form P-5 (Organization Report) ("Form P-5") address. Respondent's officer as identified on the Form P-5—Christopher Earl Mathews—was sent the Original Complaint and Notice of Opportunity for Hearing by certified and first-class mail, addressed to the last known address.
2. The certified mail envelope containing the Original Complaint and Notice of Opportunity for Hearing addressed to the Respondent was received on July 28, 2017. The first-class mail envelope was not returned. The Certified Mail envelopes addressed to Christopher Earl Mathews, and Low-End Oil LLC at 7219 Whispering Winds, were returned to the Commission unopened on August 21, 2017 and July 31, 2017, respectively. The first-class mail envelope addressed to Christopher Earl Mathews was not returned. The first-class mail envelope addressed to Low-End Oil LLC at 7219 Whispering Winds was returned to the Commission on August 2, 2017. Record of the delivery and return of certified mail has been on file with the Commission for more than 15 days, exclusive of the day of receipt and day of issuance. Respondent was given more than 30 days' notice of the Original Complaint and Notice of Opportunity for Hearing. Respondent has not entered into an agreed settlement order, filed an answer or requested a hearing.
3. On August 19, 2015, Respondent, a limited liability company, filed a Form P-5 with the Commission reporting that its officer consists of the following individual: Christopher Earl Mathews, Managing Member.

4. Christopher Earl Mathews was in a position of ownership or control of Respondent, as defined in TEX. NAT. RES. CODE § 91.114, during the time period of the violations of Commission rules committed by Respondent.
5. Respondent's Form P-5 is delinquent. Respondent had a \$50,000.00 cash deposit as its financial assurance at the time of the last Form P-5 annual renewal submission.
6. Respondent designated itself to the Commission as the operator of the Johnson, J. Willis "A" (216778) Lease, Well No. 1, by filing a Commission Form P-4 (Certificate of Compliance and Transportation Authority), effective November 1, 2015, approved December 3, 2015.
7. Respondent designated itself to the Commission as the operator of the Textron-Johnson (16204) Lease, Well No. 3, by filing a Commission Form P-4 (Certificate of Compliance and Transportation Authority), effective November 1, 2015, approved December 10, 2015.
8. Commission inspection reports made on January 8, 2016, March 9, 2017, and June 6, 2017 for the Johnson, J. Willis "A" (216778) Lease, Well No. 1, show that the signs or identification required to be posted at the lease entrance was missing.
9. Commission inspection reports made on January 8, 2016, March 9, 2017, and June 6, 2017 for the Johnson, J. Willis "A" (216778) Lease, Well No. 1, show that the sign or identification required to be posted at the well location was missing.
10. A Commission inspection report made on June 6, 2017 for the Johnson, J. Willis "A" (216778) Lease, Well No. 1, shows that the signs or identification required to be posted at the tank battery displayed incorrect information. The sign posted at the tank battery incorrectly had Edwin S. Nichols Exploration, Inc. listed as the current operator.
11. Commission inspection reports made on March 9, 2017, and June 6, 2017 for the Textron-Johnson (16204) Lease show that the signs or identification required to be posted at the lease entrance displayed incorrect information. A follow up inspection made on July 5, 2017, confirmed that the sign incorrectly listed Edwin S. Nichols Exploration, Inc. as the current operator.
12. Commission inspection reports made on January 8, 2016, March 9, 2017, and June 6, 2017 for the Textron-Johnson (16204) Lease, Well No. 3, show that the sign or identification required to be posted at the well location was missing.
13. The lack of legible signs and identification displaying correct information, as set forth in Statewide Rules 3(1), 3(2), 3(3), may cause confusion as to the responsible operator to be contacted and the actual location of a violation or emergency, which can result in delays in remedying a violation or emergency.
14. Commission inspection reports made on January 8, 2016, March 9, 2017, and June 6, 2017, and the absence of reported production since January 2014, showed that the Johnson, J. Willis "A" (216778) Lease, Well No. 1, has been inactive for a

- period greater than one year. Production from the subject lease ceased on or before January 2014. Production records also indicate that no production has occurred on the well since Low-End Oil LLC became the operator of the lease in November 2015.
15. Commission inspection reports made on January 8, 2016, March 9, 2017, and June 6, 2017, and the absence of reported production since February 2014, showed that the Textron-Johnson (16204) Lease, Well No. 3 has been inactive for a period greater than one year. Production from the subject lease ceased on or before February 2014. Production records also indicate that no production has occurred on the well since Low-End Oil LLC became the operator of the lease in November 2015.
 16. No workovers, re-entries, or subsequent operations have taken place on the subject well within the last twelve months; the subject well has not been properly plugged in accordance with Statewide Rule 14, 16 TEX. ADMIN CODE § 3.14; and no plugging extensions are in effect for the subject well as allowed by Statewide Rule 14.
 17. Usable quality groundwater in the area can become contaminated by migrations or discharges of saltwater and other oil and gas waste from the subject well. Unplugged wellbores, in violation of Statewide Rule 14(b)(2), constitute a cognizable threat to the public health and safety because of the potential of pollution.
 18. The total estimated cost to the State for plugging the Johnson, J. Willis "A" Lease, Well No. 1 (Gas ID No. 216778), Well No. 3 is \$33,019.05. The total estimated cost to the State for plugging the Textron-Johnson (16204) Lease, Well No. 3 is \$33,508.50.
 19. Commission inspection reports made on January 8, 2016, March 9, 2017, and June 6, 2017, for the Johnson, J. Willis "A" (216778) Lease, Well No. 1, show the inspectors did not have access to the Bradenhead at the surface.
 20. Commission inspection reports made on January 8, 2016, March 9, 2017, and June 6, 2017 for the Textron-Johnson (16204) Lease, Well No. 3, show the inspectors did not have access to the Bradenhead at the surface.
 21. Wells that have pressure on the Bradenhead, in violation of Statewide Rule 17(a), may result in a discharge of oil and gas waste into ground water and contamination of surface or subsurface waters, thereby resulting in pollution.
 22. Commission inspection reports made on January 8, 2016, March 9, 2017, and June 6, 2017, for the Johnson, J. Willis "A" (216778) Lease, Well No. 1, show that tree and grass vegetation has overgrown the area around the well.
 23. Commission inspection reports for the Textron-Johnson (16204) Lease, Well No. 3, show that tree and grass vegetation has overgrown the area around the well.

24. Failure to remove trees and vegetation from within the firewall, as required by Statewide Rule 21(i), creates a fire hazard.
25. The Respondent has no prior history of violations of Commission Rules.

CONCLUSIONS OF LAW

1. Proper notice was issued by the Commission to Respondent and all other appropriate persons legally entitled to notice.
2. All things necessary to the Commission attaining jurisdiction over the subject matter and the parties have been performed or have occurred.
3. Respondent is responsible for maintaining the subject lease in compliance with all applicable Commission rules and TEX. NAT. RES. CODE, chs. 89 and 91.
4. Respondent is in violation of Statewide Rules 3(1), 3(2), 3(3), 14(b)(2), 17(a), and 21(i). 16 TEX. ADMIN. CODE §§ 3.3(1), 3.3(2), 3.3(3), 3.14(b)(2), 3.17(a), and 3.21(i).
5. The documented violations committed by Respondent constitute acts deemed serious, and a hazard to the public health, and demonstrate a lack of good faith pursuant to TEX. NAT. RES. CODE § 81.0531(c).
6. Respondent is responsible for maintaining the subject leases in compliance with Statewide Rule 3(1) which requires that for 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, a sign shall be posted at the principal entrance which shall show the name by which the property is carried on the records of the Commission, the name of the operator, and the number of acres in the property.
7. Respondent is responsible for maintaining the subject leases in compliance with Statewide Rule 3(2), which requires that each well site that produces oil, gas, or geothermal resources shall post signs or identification showing the name of the property, name of the operator and the well number.
8. Respondent is responsible for maintaining the subject leases in compliance with Statewide Rule 3(3), which requires that each tank battery that produces oil, gas, or geothermal resources shall post signs or identification showing the name of the property, commission lease number, name of the operator, number of acres in the property and if commingled, include the commingling permit number.
9. Respondent is responsible for maintaining the subject leases in compliance with Statewide Rule 14(b)(2), which requires that plugging operations on each dry or inactive well shall be commenced within a period of one year after drilling or

operations cease and shall proceed with due diligence until completed, unless the operator is eligible for and obtains an extension of the plugging deadline.

10. Respondent is responsible for maintaining the subject lease in compliance with Statewide Rule 17(a), which requires that all wells be equipped with a Bradenhead.
11. Respondent is responsible for maintaining the subject leases in compliance with Statewide Rule 21(i), which requires that any rubbish or debris that might constitute a fire hazard shall be removed to a distance of at least 150 feet from the vicinity of any well, tank, or pump station. All waste shall be burned or disposed of in such manner as to avoid creating a fire hazard.
12. Pursuant to TEX. NAT. RES. CODE § 81.0531, the Commission may assess administrative penalties against Respondent for the subject violations of up to \$10,000 per day for each violation, with each day such violations continued constituting a separate violation.
13. An assessed administrative penalty in the amount of **TWENTY-THREE THOUSAND, EIGHT HUNDRED THIRTY-FIVE DOLLARS (\$23,835.00)** is justified considering the facts and violations at issue.
14. 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, Christopher Earl Mathews, and any other organization in which this individual may hold a position of ownership or control, is subject to the restriction in TEX. NAT. RES. CODE § 91.114(a)(2).

ORDERING PROVISIONS

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

1. Low-End Oil LLC (Operator No. 510360) shall place the Johnson, J. Willis "A" (216778) Lease, Well No. 1, and Textron-Johnson (16204) Lease, Well No. 3, in compliance with Statewide Rules 3(1), 3(2), 3(3), 14(b)(2), 17(a), and 21(i), and any other applicable Commission rules and statutes.
2. Low-End Oil LLC (Operator No. 510360) shall pay to the Railroad Commission of Texas, for disposition as provided by law, an administrative penalty in the amount of **TWENTY-THREE THOUSAND, EIGHT HUNDRED THIRTY-FIVE DOLLARS (\$23,835.00)**.

It is further **ORDERED** that 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, Christopher Earl Mathews, and any other organization in which this individual may hold a position of ownership or control, **shall be subject to the restriction**

in TEX. NAT. RES. CODE § 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.

It is further **ORDERED** by the Commission that this order shall not be final and effective until 25 days after the order is signed, unless the time for filing a motion for rehearing has been extended under TEX. GOV'T CODE § 2001.142, by agreement under TEX. GOV'T CODE § 2001.147, or by written Commission order issued pursuant to TEX. GOV'T CODE § 2001.146(e). If a timely motion for rehearing of an application 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 Commission order is signed.

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 per day per violation.

Done this 5th day of December 2017.

RAILROAD COMMISSION OF TEXAS

(Signatures affixed by Default Master
Order dated December 5, 2017)

RML/jnm