

**RAILROAD COMMISSION OF TEXAS
HEARINGS DIVISION**

OIL AND GAS DOCKET NO. 7B-0314561

ENFORCEMENT ACTION AGAINST AURORA OPERATING, LLC (OPERATOR NO. 036924) FOR VIOLATIONS OF STATEWIDE RULES ON THE SWENSON (31898) LEASE, WELL NO. 1851H, SWENSON (CADDO) FIELD, THROCKMORTON COUNTY; AND SWENSON RANCH EAST "B" (32018) LEASE, WELL NO. 1851RE, NORTH ELM CREEK (STRAWN) FIELD, THROCKMORTON 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 November 8, 2018, and that the respondent, Aurora Operating, LLC, failed to appear or respond to the **Notice of Opportunity for Hearing**. Pursuant to § 1.25 of the Commission's General Rules of Practice and Procedure, 16 TEX. ADMIN. CODE § 1.25, 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. Aurora Operating, LLC ("Respondent"), Operator No. 036924, 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.
2. The certified mail envelope containing the Original Complaint and Notice of Opportunity for Hearing addressed to the Respondent was received on October 9, 2018. The first-class mail was not returned. 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 March 23, 2016, Respondent, a limited liability company, filed a Form P-5 with the Commission reporting that its officer consists of the following individual: Andrey Platunov.
4. Respondent's Form P-5 is delinquent. Respondent had a \$25,000.00 cash deposit as its financial assurance at the time of the last Form P-5 annual renewal submission.
5. Respondent designated itself to the Commission as the operator of the Swenson (31898) Lease, Well No. 1851H, by filing a Commission Form P-4 (Certificate of

Compliance and Transportation Authority), effective August 24, 2015, approved November 23, 2015.

6. Respondent designated itself to the Commission as the operator of the Swenson Ranch East "B" (32018) Lease, Well No. 1851RE, by filing a Commission Form P-4 (Certificate of Compliance and Transportation Authority), effective August 1, 2015, approved October 17, 2016.
7. Commission District inspection reports made on April 18, 2018 and June 27, 2018, for the Swenson (31898) Lease show that the sign or identification required by Statewide Rule 3(1), [16 C § 3.3(1)], to be posted at the lease entrance was missing.
8. Commission District inspection reports made on April 18, 2018 and June 27, 2018, for the Swenson (31898) Lease show that the sign or identification required by Statewide Rule 3(1), [16 C § 3.3(1)], to be posted at the lease entrance was missing.
9. Commission District inspection reports made on April 18, 2018 and June 27, 2018, for the Swenson Ranch East "B" (32018) Lease show that the sign or identification required by Statewide Rule 3(1), [16 Tex. Admin. Code § 3.3(1)], to be posted at the lease entrance was missing.
10. Commission District inspection reports made on April 18, 2018 and June 27, 2018, for the Swenson Ranch East "B" (32018) Lease, Well No. 1851RE show that the sign or identification required by Statewide Rule 3(2), [16 Tex. Admin. Code § 3.3(2)], to be posted at the well was missing.
11. The lack of legible signs and identification displaying correct information, as set forth in Statewide Rules 3(1) and 3(2), 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.
12. Commission District inspection reports made on April 18, 2018 and June 27, 2018, for the Swenson (31898) Lease report an area of hydrocarbon soaked soil measuring 1,000 square feet located inside the firewall.
13. Commission District inspection reports made on April 18, 2018 and June 27, 2018, for the Swenson Ranch East "B" (32018) Lease report an area of hydrocarbon soaked soil measuring 3,750 square feet located inside the firewall.
14. Commission District inspection reports made on April 18, 2018 and June 27, 2018, for the Swenson Ranch East "B" (32018) Lease, Well No. 1851RE, report an area of hydrocarbon soaked soil measuring 400 feet located at the wellhead.
15. Respondent did not have a permit for said discharges, nor were they authorized under Statewide Rules 8(d)(3), 8(e), 9, 46 or 98.

16. Unpermitted discharges of oil and gas waste, in violation of Statewide Rule 8(d)(1), can contaminate the land surface, affect the health of humans and animals, and may eventually be discharged to surface or subsurface waters, causing pollution.
17. Commission District inspection reports made on April 18, 2018, and June 27, 2018, for the Swenson (31898) Lease, Well No. 1851H, and Commission records indicate that Respondent had not timely dewatered, backfilled, and compacted a reserve pit.
18. Commission District inspection reports made on April 18, 2018, and June 27, 2018, for the Swenson Ranch East "B" (32018) Lease, Well No. 1851RE, and Commission records indicate that Respondent had not timely dewatered, backfilled, and compacted a reserve pit.
19. Reserve pits and mud circulation pits that are not maintained, emptied and backfilled, as set forth in Statewide Rule 8(d)(4)(H)(i)(I), may result in unpermitted discharges of oil and gas waste which can contaminate the land surface, affect the health of humans and animals, and may be discharged to surface or subsurface waters, causing pollution.
20. Commission District inspection reports made on April 18, 2018 and June 27, 2018, and the absence of reported production since August 2016, showed that the Swenson (31898) Lease, Well No. 1851H has been inactive for a period greater than one year. Production from the subject lease ceased on or before July 2016.
21. Commission District inspection reports made on April 18, 2018 and June 27, 2018, and the absence of reported production since August 2015, showed that the Swenson Ranch East "B" (32018) Lease, Well No. 1851RE has been inactive for a period greater than one year. Production from the subject lease ceased on or before July 2015.
22. 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.
23. 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.
24. Pursuant to calculations by Commission District Office personnel, the total estimated cost to the State for plugging the Swenson (31898) Lease, Well No. 1851H is \$27,918.44. Pursuant to calculations by Commission District Office personnel, the total estimated cost to the State for plugging the Swenson Ranch East "B" (32018) Lease, Well No. 1851RE is \$25,890.38. The total estimated cost for these wells is \$53,808.82.

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), 8(d)(1), 14(b)(2), and 8(d)(4)(H)(i)(I). 16 TEX. ADMIN. CODE §§ 3.3(1), 3.3(2), 3.8(d)(1), 3.14(b)(2), and 3.8(d)(4)(H)(i)(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 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.
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 8(d)(1), which prohibits the discharge of oil and gas waste without a permit.
9. Respondent is responsible for maintaining the subject lease in compliance with Statewide Rule 8(d)(4)(H)(i)(I), which requires that reserve pits and mud circulation pits be maintained, emptied and backfilled within one year of cessation of drilling operations
10. 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.

11. 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.
12. An assessed administrative penalty in the amount of **TWENTY-NINE THOUSAND, SIX HUNDRED EIGHTY-FOUR DOLLARS (\$29,684.00)** is justified considering the facts and violations at issue.
13. 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, Andrey Platunov, 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. Aurora Operating, LLC (Operator No. 036924) shall place the Swenson (31898) Lease, Well No. 1851H and Swenson Ranch East "B" (32018) Lease, Well No. 1851RE, in compliance with Statewide Rules 3(1), 3(2), 8(d)(1), 14(b)(2), and 8(d)(4)(H)(i)(I), and any other applicable Commission rules and statutes.
2. Aurora Operating, LLC (Operator No. 036924) shall pay to the Railroad Commission of Texas, for disposition as provided by law, an administrative penalty in the amount of **TWENTY-NINE THOUSAND, SIX HUNDRED EIGHTY-FOUR DOLLARS (\$29,684.00)**.

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, Andrey Platunov, 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 100 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 23th day of January 2019.

RAILROAD COMMISSION OF TEXAS

(Signatures affixed by Default Master
Order dated January 23, 2019)

KMR/pbm