

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

OIL AND GAS DOCKET NO. 03-0317061

ENFORCEMENT ACTION AGAINST PETRO-SMITH OPERATING LLC (OPERATOR NO. 660313) FOR VIOLATIONS OF STATEWIDE RULES ON THE BP AMERICA A-3 LEASE, WELL NO. 1 (GAS ID NO. 206247), BANKSTON (14300 SAND) FIELD, HARDIN COUNTY, TEXAS

FINAL ORDER

The Railroad Commission of Texas ("Commission") finds that statutory notice of the captioned enforcement proceeding was provided pursuant to Commission rules, and that the respondent, Petro-Smith 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 Texas Administrative 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. Petro-Smith Operating LLC ("Respondent"), Operator No. 660313, 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 returned to the Commission on December 11, 2019. 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 January 7, 2019, Respondent, a limited liability company, filed a Form P-5 with the Commission reporting that its officer consists of the following individual: Sebastian N. Smith, Member.
4. Sebastian N. Smith was in a position of ownership or control of Respondent, as defined in Texas Natural Resources Code § 91.114, during the time period of the violations of Commission rules committed by Respondent.
5. Respondent's Form P-5 is active. Respondent had a \$470,000.00 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 BP America A-3 Lease, Well No. 1 (Gas ID No. 206247), by filing a Commission Form P-4 (Certificate of Compliance and Transportation Authority), effective October 1, 2017, approved October 13, 2017.

7. Commission inspection reports made on November 15, 2017, December 15, 2017, January 22, 2018, February 26, 2018, April 3, 2018, June 14, 2018, July 20, 2018, and August 31, 2018 for the BP America A-3 Lease, Well No. 1 (Gas ID No. 206247), show that the signs or identification required to be posted at the lease entrance was missing.
8. Commission inspection reports made on November 15, 2017, December 15, 2017, January 22, 2018, February 26, 2018, April 3, 2018, June 14, 2018, July 20, 2018, and August 31, 2018 for the BP America A-3 Lease, Well No. 1 (Gas ID No. 206247), Well No. 1 shows that the sign or identification required to be posted at the well location displayed incorrect information.
9. 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.
10. Commission inspection reports made on November 15, 2017, December 15, 2017, January 22, 2018, February 26, 2018, April 3, 2018, June 14, 2018, July 20, 2018, and August 31, 2018 for the BP America A-3 Lease, Well No. 1 (Gas ID No. 206247), indicate that the gauge on the wellhead showed 8,000 psi and that the gauge on the casing valve was maxed out at 2,000+ psi. Commission records indicate that Respondent has not notified the district office of the situation.
11. 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.
12. Commission inspection reports made on November 15, 2017, December 15, 2017, January 22, 2018, February 26, 2018, April 3, 2018, June 14, 2018, July 20, 2018, and August 31, 2018 for the BP America A-3 Lease, Well No. 1 (Gas ID No. 206247), indicate that the gauge on the wellhead showed 8,000 psi and that the gauge on the casing valve was maxed out at 2,000+ psi. Commission records indicate that Respondent has not tested the well as required.
13. Pressure on surface casing can indicate downhole problems that, if not resolved, may result in discharge of oil and gas waste into ground water and contamination of surface or subsurface waters.
14. 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 Texas Natural Resources Code, Chapters 89 and 91.

4. Respondent is in violation of Statewide Rules 3(1), 3(2), 17(b), and 17(a). 16 Texas Administrative Code §§ 3.3(1), 3.3(2), 3.17(a), and 3.17(b).
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 Texas Natural Resources Code § 81.0531(c).
6. Respondent is responsible for maintaining the subject lease in compliance with Statewide Rule 3(1), which requires that a sign be posted at the principal entrance of each property that produces oil, gas, or geothermal resources, which shall show the name by which the property is commonly known and 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 lease 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 lease in compliance with Statewide Rule 17(a), which requires that all wells be equipped with a bradenhead and that operators report immediately to the district office when pressure develops between any two strings of casing.
9. Respondent is responsible for maintaining the subject lease in compliance with Statewide Rule 17(b) which requires that any well showing pressure on the bradenhead or leaking gas, oil, or geothermal resource between the surface and the production or oil string be tested and if the test shows pressure or is inconclusive, the casing shall be condemned and a new production or oil string shall be run and cemented.
10. Pursuant to Texas Natural Resources 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.
11. An assessed administrative penalty in the amount of **SIX THOUSAND, FIVE HUNDRED DOLLARS (\$6,500.00)** is justified considering the facts and violations at issue.
12. Respondent violated Commission rules related to safety and the control of pollution. Any other organization in which an officer of this organization holds a position of ownership or control, is subject to the restriction in Texas Natural Resources Code § 91.114.

ORDERING PROVISIONS

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

1. Petro-Smith Operating LLC (Operator No. 660313) shall place the BP America A-3 (206247) Lease, Well No. 1, in compliance with Statewide Rules 3(1), 3(2), 17(b), and 17(a), and any other applicable Commission rules and statutes.
2. Petro-Smith Operating LLC (Operator No. 660313) shall pay to the Railroad Commission of Texas, for disposition as provided by law, an administrative penalty in the amount of **SIX THOUSAND, FIVE HUNDRED DOLLARS (\$6,500.00)**.

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 Texas Government Code § 2001.142, by agreement under Texas Government Code § 2001.147, or by written Commission order issued pursuant to Texas Government 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 Texas Government 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.

Any other organization in which an officer of this organization holds a position of ownership or control at the time Respondent violated Commission rules related to safety and the control of pollution, **shall be subject to the restriction in Texas Natural Resources 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.

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.

RAILROAD COMMISSION OF TEXAS

(Signatures affixed by Default Master Order

dated **MAR 04 2020**)

MAG/wcd