

RAILROAD COMMISSION OF TEXAS

OIL AND GAS DOCKET NO. 00002323

ENFORCEMENT ACTION AGAINST BARJ OIL CO. (OPERATOR NO. 049280) FOR VIOLATIONS OF STATEWIDE RULES ON THE MOSS (8A-64148) LEASE, WELL NO. 1, CORRIGAN, EAST (FUSSELMAN) FIELD, TERRY COUNTY, TEXAS

FINAL ORDER

The Railroad Commission of Texas ("Commission") finds that after statutory notice of the captioned enforcement proceeding Barj Oil Co. ("Respondent"), 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 Commissioners 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. Respondent, Operator No. 049280, 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 delivered on May 26, 2020. The first-class mail was not returned. Record of the delivery or 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.
3. On May 18, 2018, Respondent, a partnership, filed a Form P-5 with the Commission reporting that its officers consist of the following individuals: Bruce Wayne Smith, Royce Wayne Richards, Letitia Jean Richards, and Adelya Evelyn Smith.
4. Bruce Wayne 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. Royce Wayne Richards 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.
6. Letitia Jean Richards 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.

7. Adelya Evelyn 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.
8. Respondent designated itself to the Commission as the operator of the Moss (8A-64148) Lease, Well No(s). 1, by filing a Commission Form P-4 (Certificate of Compliance and Transportation Authority), effective September 18, 2013, approved September 20, 2013.
9. Commission District inspection reports made on May 3, 2019, June 27, 2019, August 12, 2019, October 8, 2019, and December 4, 2019, and the absence of reported production since September 1994 show that the Moss (8A-64148) Lease, Well No. 1 has been inactive for a period greater than one year. Production from the subject lease ceased on or before August 1994.
10. No workovers, re-entries, or subsequent operations have taken place on the subject well in this complaint within the last 12 months; the subject well has not been plugged; no plugging extensions are in effect for the subject well as allowed by Statewide Rule 14.
11. Unplugged wellbores are likely to cause pollution of usable quality ground water and surface water, as defined in Statewide Rule 8(a)(28) [16 Texas Admin. Code § 3.8(a)(28)], by serving as a conduit for the passage of oil, gas, saltwater, and other substances from one stratum or formation to another or to the surface or from the surface downward.
12. Pursuant to calculations by Commission District Office personnel, the total estimated cost to the State for plugging the Moss (8A-64148) Lease, Well No. 1 is \$124,435.00.

CONCLUSIONS OF LAW

1. The Commission properly noticed 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 Moss (8A-64148) Lease, Well No. 1 in compliance with all applicable Commission rules and Texas Natural Resource Code §§ 89 and 91.
4. Respondent is responsible for maintaining the subject lease in compliance with Statewide Rule 14(b)(2) [16 Texas Admin. Code § 3.14(b)(2)], which requires the commencement of plugging operations on each dry or inactive well within one year after drilling or operations cease, unless the operator is eligible for and obtains an extension of the plugging deadline under Statewide Rule 15 [16 Texas Admin. Code § 3.15]. Under Statewide Rule 14(c)(1) [16 Texas Admin. Code § 3.14(c)(1)], the entity designated as the operator of a well specifically identified on the most recent Commission approved operator designation form filed on or after September 1, 1997 is responsible for properly plugging the well in accordance with Statewide Rule 14 and all other applicable Commission rules and regulations concerning plugging of wells.

5. Respondent is in violation of Statewide Rule 14(b)(2). 16 Tex. Administrative Code § 3.14(b)(2).
6. 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 Resource Code § 81.0531(c).
7. Pursuant to Texas Natural Resource 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.
8. An assessed administrative penalty in the amount of **THIRTEEN THOUSAND SEVEN HUNDRED SEVENTEEN DOLLARS (\$13,717.00)** is justified considering the facts and violations at issue.

ORDERING PROVISIONS

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

1. Barj Oil Co. (Operator No. 049280) shall plug the Moss (8A-64148) Lease, Well Nos. 1, in compliance with Statewide Rule 14(b)(2) and otherwise place the subject leases in compliance with Statewide Rules 14(b)(2) and any other applicable Commission rules and statutes.
2. Barj Oil Co. (Operator No. 049280) shall pay to the Railroad Commission of Texas, for disposition as provided by law, an administrative penalty in the amount of **THIRTEEN THOUSAND SEVEN HUNDRED SEVENTEEN DOLLARS (\$13,717.00)**

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.

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

RAILROAD COMMISSION OF TEXAS

(Signatures affixed by Default Master Order
dated SEP 22 2020)

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