The Rocky Mountain

L·A·N·D·M·A·N

Volume 39 Issue 7 www.dapldenver.org February 2022

February Luncheon
February 16th—11:30am - 1pm

Speaker: AJ Yoakum - Oram & Houghton

Topic: Allocation Wells in Texas

With the increasing emphasis on horizontal drilling and longer laterals, many operators are turning to allocation wells to obtain permits from the Texas Railroad Commission ("RRC"). This presentation will define allocation wells, discuss the historical context behind the RRC recognizing these types of wells, and case law relevant to the allocation of production. Additional topics will include an overview of production sharing agreements, drafting concerns, and production calculation issues. The presentation will conclude with a discussion of legal grey areas affecting allocation wells, including the ongoing *Opiela* litigation, which calls into question the RRC's ability to permit these types of wells.

AJ Yoakum has experience writing drilling, acquisition, and division order title opinions in numerous jurisdictions. Prior to joining the firm, AJ worked for a boutique oil and gas firm in the Houston area, writing title opinions, advising clients on title matters, and drafting curative documents. AJ also has represented clients in mineral receiverships in Texas state courts. Additionally, AJ has experience working in commercial real estate, advising clients on acquisitions, divestitures, financing, development, and leasing of both improved and unimproved properties, and has represented clients in the formation and governance of various types of business entities.

AJ is admitted to practice law in Colorado, Montana, North Dakota, Texas, and New Mexico. He graduated summa cum laude from St. Mary's University School of Law in 2011, was admitted to the John H. Harlan Society, and was a member of the Editorial Board of the St. Mary's Law Journal while attending St. Mary's. AJ currently lives in Colorado Springs, Colorado, with his wife and two daughters.

CLICK HERE TO REGISTER
In Person and Virtual Option available
This luncheon has applied for 1 CE and 1 CLE

***In Person location is* The University Club (**1673 Sherman St. [Corner of 17th Ave and Sherman St])
$35.00 for DAPL members and $40.00 for non-members

Reminders:

- Energy Industry Happy Hour - Thursday, March 10th
- March Luncheon - Wednesday, March 16th
- DAPL Ski Day - Friday, April 1st
- April Luncheon - Wednesday, April 20th
- May Luncheon - Wednesday, May 18th

The Denver Association of Professional Landmen
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Denver, CO 80202
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E-Mail: dapl@dapldenver.org
Web Site: www.dapldenver.org

Office Hours
by appointment

The Denver Association of Professional Landmen is a non-profit organization operated by its membership for mutual benefit to further the knowledge and interests of Professional Landmen, and to better acquaint the public with the scope of the Landman's work.

The Rocky Mountain Landman is a publication of the Denver Association of Professional Landmen.

Tabatha Reed
DAPL Office Administrator
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Column Coordinators:

AAPL

Education	**Bresee Carlson** **Crosby Garrison**
Minutes	**Anna Morgan**
Legal	**Malinda Morain**
Community Service Spotlight	**Matt Hoppe**

Contributions from our readers are welcome. All suggestions and manuscripts should be emailed to the editor at the DAPL office. We reserve the right to edit all material according to standard practices.

Bylined and credited articles represent the view of the authors; publication neither implies approval of the opinions expressed nor accuracy of the facts stated.

ATTENTION AAPL LANDMEN IN NEED OF ASSISTANCE FROM THE COLORADO FIRES

The AAPL Educational Foundation, Inc. established the Disaster Relief Assistance program for members who have suffered financial loss due to natural disasters.

To apply for a grant, please complete the Disaster Relief Application https://lnkd.in/epj-nT_w).

Even if others outside of our industry may not realize or appreciate what we do; this is what we do - we provide resources to those in need.

100% of donations to the AAPL Educational Foundation for disaster relief go directly to assist AAPL members who have suffered devastating losses during this storm and future natural disasters. No deductions for administrative or operating fees will be assessed from these donations. For questions, please contact aapl@landman.org.

If you would like to contribute to this program and help your fellow members in need, please complete the Disaster Grant Donation form at landman.org, and a credit card payment option will follow.

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From a Legal Perspective

North Dakota Operators Can Suspend Royalty Payments Based on the Existence of a Title Dispute, a Successful Dispute is Not Required

On January 6, 2022, the North Dakota Supreme Court upheld an operator's right to suspend royalty payments pending resolution of the dispute, overturning a lower court's ruling that suspension of payments was only allowed if the dispute raised by the operator ended up being "successful." This decision should provide operators with greater certainty in suspending payments pending resolution of title disputes in North Dakota.

In *Vic Christensen Min. Tr. v. Enerplus Res. (USA) Corp., et al.*, Case No. 20210050, 2022 ND 8, (N.D. Jan 6, 2022), the North Dakota Supreme Court addressed the safe harbor provision of N.D.C.C. § 47-16-39.1 relating to an operator's right to suspend the payment of royalties under oil and gas leases where a title dispute exists, holding that the provision does not require a successful disputed title claim, but merely the existence of a title dispute in order for an operator to avail itself of the safe harbor provision and avoid penalties and interest for non-payment of royalties.

In this case, Victor Christensen owned lands in Dunn County. In 1952, he conveyed to Henry Roquette an undivided 5/128 royalty in all of the oil and gas produced from the subject lands. Christensen later conveyed his remaining interest in the subject lands to his wife, Mildred Christensen. Thereafter, in 1957, Mildred Christensen conveyed the subject lands to Joe Reed and Deryce Reed (the "Reeds"), reserving an undivided 4/5 mineral interest, which resulted in the Reeds owning an undivided 1/5 mineral interest. In 1968, Henry Roquette conveyed to Mildred Christensen the undivided 5/128 royalty interest.

The undivided 4/5 mineral interest previously owned by Mildred Christensen is now owned by the Vic Christensen Mineral Trust ("VCMT"). The undivided 1/5 mineral interest previously owned by the Reeds is now owned by the Meyer Family Mineral Trust, the Joann Deryce Struthers Trust, and the Steven J. Reed Living Trust (collectively the "Trust Defendants").

As the operator of wells on the subject lands, Enerplus Resources (USA) Corporation ("Enerplus") had an oil and gas attorney examine title to the subject lands and provide a drilling title opinion. In the opinion, the attorney stated that the undivided 5/128 royalty owned by VCMT burdens the undivided 1/5 mineral interest owned by the Trust Defendants. Additionally, the attorney identified a discrepancy in the acreage of the 1952 deed by which the royalty interest was created.

In 2017, Enerplus notified VCMT and the Trust Defendants of the title issues and required that they execute a stipulation of interest clarifying their interests in the subject lands. Enerplus suspended royalty payments to VCMT and the Trust Defendants pending such stipulation, which the parties did not enter into at that time.

Over a year later, in January 2019, VCMT sued the Trust Defendants to quiet title to the royalty interest on the undivided 1/5 mineral interest and alleged that, based on the 1952 deed, the royalty interest is larger than 5/128. The Trust Defendants counterclaimed to quiet title claim that their 1/5 mineral interest had no royalty burden. In April 2019, the Trust Defendants conceded any rights to the royalty interest and entered into a stipulation with VCMT to such effect. Enerplus then paid VCMT and the Trust Defendants their suspended royalty payments, but the Trust Defendants brought suit claiming statutory interest from Enerplus.

The district court granted summary judgment in favor of the Trust Defendants and held Enerplus liable for suspending royalty payments. The court held that the dispute of title between VCMT and the Trust Defendants was solely the result of the actions of Enerplus and its title attorney.

From a Legal Perspective cont'd.

In its appeal, Enerplus argued that the safe harbor provision of N.D.C.C. § 47-16-39.1 applies, regardless of what party "discovered" the dispute, and that the suspension of payments was lawful. Specifically, the safe harbor provision provides that the cancellation penalties and interest do not apply ". . . in the event of a dispute of title existing that would affect distribution of royalty payments. . ." but that the operator shall make royalty payments to the mineral interest owners whose title and ownership is not in dispute. Enerplus further argued that a dispute of title did, in fact, exist, that it informed VCMT and the Trust Defendants of the issues and required a stipulation of interest.

The North Dakota Supreme Court held that the suspension of royalty payments by Enerplus was lawful. The Court explained that the district court and the Trust Defendants chose to read a heightened standard into the safe harbor provision, requiring a *successful* title claim to be advanced by Enerplus. The Court referred to the Texas case of *Leavitt v. Ballard Expl. Co.*, 50 S.W.3d 167, 174 n.9 (Tex. App. 2017), which stated that the Texas statute did not require an evaluation of the legal merit of a dispute, rather only that such a dispute exists. The North Dakota Supreme Court further explained that even if Enerplus manufactured the title dispute or if the dispute was ultimately unsuccessful, VCMT and the Trust Defendants sued each other to quiet title, which is an undeniable dispute of title.

Lastly, the Court ruled that the district court erred in ruling that Enerplus was unjustified in suspending more than 5/128 of its payments to the Trust Defendants. The Court stated that N.D.C.C. § 47-16-39.1 provides that when there is a title dispute, "the operator shall make royalty payments to those mineral owners whose title and ownership interest is not in dispute." The Court further stated that the Trust Defendants are mineral owners whose title and ownership interest was in dispute. Therefore, under its plain language, Enerplus was permitted to suspend all royalty to the Trust Defendants from their undivided 1/5 mineral interest in the subject lands.

Estee A. Sanchez, Esq.
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SPONSORSHIP OPPORTUNITIES

INDUSTRY ORGANIZATION

$100

- Provides opportunity to have a booth at the event and be included in the 'BINGO' matrix
- Two complimentary tickets
- Logo on all social media and event page

CORPORATE PARTNER

$500

- Provides opportunity to have a booth at the event and be included in the 'BINGO' matrix
- Ten complimentary tickets
- Logo on all social media, event page, BINGO sheet, and scrolling at the event
- Company mention in post-event email recap

For more information please contact Gabby Richmond (*gabby@denverpetroleumclub.com*).

Officers Forum - Director

Hello DAPL Family & Friends!

As we embark on the two-year anniversary since the global pandemic became a reality, I find myself reflecting on the many challenges we've faced and managed to overcome with such resiliency.

For many, yoga and meditation have been a pillar of strength in maintaining mental fitness throughout not only the pandemic but the cyclical nature of our industry. Yoga provides an opportunity to be both physically and mentally present in the moment. This experience can be translated to life off the mat in confronting any adversity that comes your way, either professionally or personally. By focusing on the present moment, and what you can truly control, you're able to reduce your anxiety and stress and weather any storm.

Other tips for relieving stress:

Exercise regularly
Have a good laugh
Learn to tell people no
Listen to relaxing music
Massage therapy
Make time for hobbies
Talk about your problems
Go easy on yourself
Read a book (not work related!)

And when the going gets tough and feels unmanageable there a variety of other resources available including:

Colorado Crisis Center
https://coloradocrisisservices.org/
1-844-493-TALK

Take care of yourself and one another! We're all in this together.

All the best,

Jake Bakker
DAPL Director

Nominating Committee for the 2022-2023 DAPL Executive Board

Armando Trevino - Crowheart Energy

Tyler Aylor - Impact Land, LLC

Jake Bakker - PDC Energy, Inc.

Shelly Albrecht - Avant Natural Resources

2022 DAPL Calendar of Events

February 2022

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
		1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9 Board Meeting	10 Education Committee Meeting	11	12
13	14	15	16 Luncheon	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28					

March 2022

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
		1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9 Board Meeting	10 Education Committee Meeting	11	12
13	14	15	16 Luncheon	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28					

February 2022

9th-Board Meeting
10th-Education Committee Meeting
16th-Luncheon

March 2022

9th-Board Meeting
10th-Education Committee Meeting
16th-Luncheon

April 2022

1st-Ski Day
13th-Board Meeting
14th-Education Committee Meeting
20th-Luncheon

May 2022

11th-Board Meeting
12th-Education Committee Meeting
18th-Luncheon

Field Landman Question of the Month

A DAPL Member has asked: Have any Rocky Mountain states provided incentives to the oil and gas industry to provide or use natural gas or natural gas liquids as a fuel to power cryptocurrency mining or other on-site natural gas use, which could also reduce the volumes of flared or vented natural gas?

Wyoming

Wyoming passed a law in 2021 that provides a tax incentive for oil and gas operators to utilize equipment at the wellsite that reduces flaring of natural gas. By using such equipment, an operator may receive relief from the state severance tax levied on mineral production.

House Bill 0189, signed into law on April 14, 2021, with an effective date of January 1, 2022, amended Wyoming's Statutes to clarify and refine what situations allow for natural gas produced and consumed onsite to be exempt from the Wyoming mineral severance tax.

The amendment provides a new exemption from severance tax liability for natural gas that is consumed on the production site, is certified by the WOGCC to have originated from a "qualifying well," and which would have otherwise been vented or flared under the authority of the WOGCC.

A "qualifying well" is defined as one where either: (1) a well site is already connected to a pipeline, but the pipeline lacks takeaway capacity; (2) a producer's well is not connected to an existing pipeline, but the producer's lands are dedicated to a pipeline operator; or (3) a producer's well is not connected to an existing pipeline and is not contractually dedicated, and the producer files an attestation to that fact.

For purposes of the mineral severance tax and its exemptions, the definition of natural gas includes products separated from the natural gas stream during processing, including but not limited to condensate, natural gas liquids, and sulfur.

While the amendment has a somewhat broad applicability to a variety of possible technologies, and does not specifically use the terms "cryptocurrency mining" or "digital flare mitigation," Wyoming lawmakers have acknowledged that the intent of the amendment was to provide an incentive for, among others, those types of wellsite operations.

North Dakota

North Dakota passed a law in 2021 that provides a temporary tax incentive for implementing flare mitigation systems. Operators may receive a tax credit against the North Dakota oil extraction tax by implementing an "onsite flare mitigation system" as defined by the new law; the tax incentive expires July 1, 2023.

An "onsite flare mitigation system" is one that intakes gas and natural gas liquids from a well, separating and collecting or utilizing over 50% of the propane and heavier hydrocarbons, to achieve a reduction of flared thermal intensity through beneficial consumption by one of the following methods: (1) compressing or liquifying gas for use as fuel or transport to a processing facility; (2) production of petrochemicals or fertilizer; (3) conversion to liquid fuels; (4) conversion to electricity for onsite use or supply to the electrical grid; (5) conversion to computational power; or (6) other value-added processes as approved by the North Dakota Industrial Commission. The "conversion to electricity" or "conversion to computational power" would allow for the implementation of onsite cryptocurrency mining or other computing functions.

Under North Dakota's new law, the associated well(s) must be "qualifying well(s)." A "qualifying well" is defined as a well that either: (1) is located at a well site already connected to a pipeline, but the pipeline lacks takeaway capacity; (2) is not connected to an existing pipeline, but the producer's lands are dedicated to a pipeline operator; or (3) is not connected to an existing pipeline and is not contractually dedicated. In each case, the producer (and pipeline operator, if applicable) must file with the North Dakota Industrial Commission an attestation to the applicable facts.

Field Landman Question of the Month cont'd.

The onsite flare mitigation system must have been installed on or after July 1, 2021, and the North Dakota Industrial Commission must certify the associated wells as qualifying wells. The tax credit is calculated as 75 cents per million Btus of flare mitigation resulting from operation of a conforming mitigation system. The tax credit may be claimed for up to twelve months per well, and the credit amount may not exceed $6,000 per well, per month.

This tax credit is separate from the oil extraction tax exemption provided by N.D.C.C. 57-51.1-02.1, which provides that liquids produced from certain permitted equipment utilizing absorption, adsorption, or refrigeration are exempt from the oil extraction tax for a period of 2 years and 30 days from the date of first production. The subject tax credit applies only to the oil extraction tax; the separate gross production tax on oil and on natural gas has certain older exemptions, which also incentivize the mitigation of flaring.

John R. Chadd
Steptoe & Johnson PLLC

Do you have a land issue you would like discussed? Do you need supporting documentation to win a bet with a colleague? Is there a question you are too embarrassed to ask your boss? If so, the DAPL would like to hear from you! Please submit your question to joe.martin@highwestresources.com. Each month, we will publish a question chosen from those submitted, along with a Steptoe & Johnson PLLC attorney's discussion of the issue. The foregoing article discusses general legal principles and laws applied to a generic fact situation, is not intended to constitute legal advice or create any attorney-client relationship, and no representation or warranty of accuracy or applicability regarding the same is made by the author or Steptoe & Johnson PLLC. The content of and views expressed in the foregoing article are those of the author, and are not the views of the DAPL.

DAPL December Board Meeting Minutes

12/8/2021

In attendance:
In person: Thomas Porter, Jake Bakker, James Culbertson, Crosby Garrison, Gil Guethlein, Anna Morgan, Tabatha Reed, Janet Rost, Laurie Wizeman, Phil Cortese, Pam Cortese

On Phone: Shelly Albrecht, Tyler Aylor, Armando Trevino, Scott McDaniel, Ed Doka, Allie Huizenga, James Hubert, Hannah Eastwood

Pres. Thomas Porter called the meeting to order at 11:33 AM MT

Approval of Minutes. Anna motioned to approve November minutes. Jake seconded. APPROVED.

Membership. Reported by Janet. No new membership applications submitted this month. Membership ahead of last year. 41 1-year applications and 40 3-year renewals were submitted in 2021.

December 2021 Board Meeting	
Dec-21	**Dec-20**
Total Number of Members - 1279	Total Number of Members - 1301
Renewals for 2021/22 Year - 266	Current for 2020/21(+) Year - 557
2021/22 3 Year Renewals - 75	2020/21 3 Year Renewals - 45
Current (not expired) - 536	

Treasurers Report. Reported by Laurie.

All banking accounts now at PNC.

	1 Month Difference	Last Year Balances	1 Year Difference	
December 2021 Balance	November 2021 Balance	December 2020 Balance	December 2021 vs December 2020	
$249,972.98	$239,142.82	$211,773.75	$38,199.23	Pending Checks $10,094.67
$10,003.42	$10,003.34	$83,401.67	-$73,398.25	
$259,976.40	$249,146.16	$295,175.42		
Beginning Balance	*Fees	Gain/Loss	Total Account	
$76,416.17	$ -	$ (1,008.95)	$75,407.22	
$75,000.00	-$700.13	$407.22	$75,407.22	
$335,383.62	$10,830.24	$295,175.42	$40,208.20	
$6,520.43	$5,822.38	$8,563.89	-$2,043.46	
$15,480.83	$15,480.71	$12,479.65	$3,001.18	
$8,206.99	$8,206.99	$8,206.99	$0.00	
$3,175.57	$3,230.00	$2,215.00	$960.57	
$33,383.82	$32,740.08	$31,465.53	$1,918.29	
	$ 559.35	Still pending from Last month		
	$ 8,700.32	Still pending from Last month		
	$ 210.00			
	$ 625.00			
Total:				
	$ 10,094.67			

Tabatha would like to begin formally using Kyle at Tag Team for website support. Annual cost will be roughly $1300/10-hour block. Thomas would like to reach out to Brett, but he moved and has not had any communication with DAPL. Thomas will put a list together of options possible nominees for an IT Committee Chairman. Thomas and Tabatha will schedule a call with Kyle to explore options to provide content to members via the DAPL website. Current website will likely need to be revamped in next 2-3 years. Tyler recommends looking into StarChapter – he will set up a meeting with Thomas and Tabatha.

President's Report. Reported by Thomas.

Leadership: Scholarship Fund Director Position – per Bylaws, we need to appoint a Scholarship Fund Director. Thomas moved to appoint Allie Huizenga as director, Scholarship Ink Board. Jake Seconded. APPROVED. Thomas, Tyler, Laurie, Armando and Allie are current directors.

Thank you to all for wonderful holiday lunch and congratulations to all award winners.

Special thank you to Tabatha and Happy Birthday on behalf of DAPL. Thomas presented Tabatha with a cake and gift card.

Thomas presented Phil Cortese with his award for Committee Member of the Year.

Focus going forward will be on Corporate Sponsorships and company outreach.

Corporate Sponsorship: Laurie and Jake met to review Google Doc of all contacts. Thomas, Jake and Armando met separately and identified certain companies to engage. Looked at all operators in Rockies and came up with comprehensive list. Also reviewed membership and current activity vs. historical. Plan to have candid conversations with companies regarding needs and expectations from DAPL, then approach sponsorships. 127 total, 50 E&P companies in area, 25 ID'd as sponsor targets. Armando will come up with talking points, opportunities to get involved, what would you like to see, and then reach out to land managers and/or decision makers. Complete Sponsorship form and provide Logo for use by DAPL. Big opportunity to grow list with renewable companies.
Thomas went through contact list and assigned board members to reach out. Have updates by January meeting.

Education Committee. Reported by Crosby. Looking into allowing companies to buy Lunch Packs. Jan – May meetings will be in-person only. Matt Anderson, CEO Acoma Energy is the scheduled speaker for January 19, 2022 luncheon. Looking into speakers for 2022 to address fundamentals and basic land skills. Would like to get some new committee members. Survey Monkey will be sent out to determine interest in speakers, etc.

Ski day. Reported by Courtney & Ed. Vail resorts last 2 years – Winter Park this year. Couldn't get good answers from Copper regarding Covid protocols. Reaching out to Victoria regarding having WSU students participate. Checking prices for ~75 tickets. Needs 1-2 volunteers. Planning for Spring skiing on April 1, which is after spring break, but before Easter. Possible partnership with RMAG, but let them come to us.

Golf Tournament. Reported by Armando. Scheduled for mid-July at Keystone. Discussed when to open up registration. Need to fill 36 holes. Tabatha needs pricing. Possible partner with AAPL for education component? Will discuss going forward.

Marketing Committee. Laurie is heading and continues to do a great job. Phil Cortese & Melanie Adams have agreed to help with this committee as well.

John L. Hunt Mentoring Committee. Reported by Scott McDaniel and Hannah Eastwood. Scheduling Happy Hour 1/12/22 at Los Chingones for participants. Discovery Land Services is sponsoring event.

Gil will plan a Corporate Sponsor appreciation event in late January.

Pres. Thomas Porter adjourned the meeting at 12:56 PM MT

Marketing Committee. Laurie is heading and continues to do a great job. Phil Cortese & Melanie Adams have agreed to help with this committee as well.

Holiday Lunch. Will be held 12/7 at the University Club. The venue is limited to 100 people, so please make your reservations asap. The lunch will be in-person only.

Education Committee. Reported by Crosby and Bresee.

The November luncheon will be pre-recorded for webinar option. It will be held 11/17 from 11:00am-1:00pm, speaker will be Terri Donze discussing Climate Realism. Currently working on speaker lineup for Q1 2022 luncheon meetings. Also continuing to work with University Club on contract for 2022 luncheons. Goal is to execute contract for 2022 by end of year.

FLI interesting lineup. Good turnout and great event. Finalizing CLE credits.

Rockies Bash Recap – Reported by Phil Cortese. It was a good event - well attended and a good venue. They were able to keep the tab open all night and had good food due to sponsors. Working on final accounting. Thomas met with a student group from Mesa, and it resulted in 30 students attending the Bash. Mel and the group provided trivia & photo booth & bourbon tasting. Sponsorships were slow to come in, but turned out to be very good. Lots of new faces were also brought in from LinkedIn & other social media posts.

Pres. Thomas Porter adjourned the meeting at 12:17 PM MT

2021-2022 DAPL OFFICERS, DIRECTORS AND STANDING COMMITTEE CHAIRS

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