



PLANO

Professional Landmen's Association of New Orleans

MARCH, 2006

www.planoweb.org

PLANO BULLETIN #039

PLANO EVENTS

- Mar. 13 PLANO Luncheon**
Andrea's Restaurant, Metairie, LA
- Mar. 15 PLANO OCS Lease 198 Breakfast**
N.O. Hilton Riverside & Towers
- April 10 PLANO Luncheon**
Arnaud's, French Quarter, New Orleans, LA
- May 9 PLANO Luncheon**
(Tues.) Galatoire's, French Quarter, New Orleans, LA
- May 15 PLANO's Spring Golf Tournament**
Money Hill Golf and Country Club

OTHER ACTIVITIES

- Mar. 17** St. Patrick's Day
- Mar. 15 MMS OCS Lease Sale 198 – Central GOM**
N.O. Hilton Riverside & Towers,
Napoleon Ballroom
- April 14** Good Friday
- May 29** Memorial Day
- June 21-24 AAPL Annual Meeting**
San Diego, CA

PLANO LUNCHEON

ANDREA'S RESTAURANT

3100 19TH STREET AT RIDGELAKE, METAIRIE, LA 70002

MONDAY, MARCH 13, 2006, 11:30 A.M.

TOPIC: "The Harry Truman, The Santa Barbara Oil Spill, Billion Dollar Judgments, and Governor Blanco's Warning Shot - An Overview of the Federal-State Relationship Regarding Offshore Oil and Gas Leasing"

Jonathan A. Hunter is a shareholder in the New Orleans office of Liskow & Lewis, where he practices in the firm's oil and gas and energy litigation sections. He received his bachelor's degree from Yale University and his law degree from Louisiana State University Law Center, where he was editor-in-chief of the Louisiana Law Review and a member of the Order of the Coif. He is an adjunct lecturer in law at Tulane Law School, where he teaches basic oil and gas law and a seminar on federal offshore oil and gas law. As head of the firm's offshore oil and gas practice, he advises federal lessees with regard to all aspects of their relationship with the Minerals Management Service. Mr. Hunter has represented federal lessees in defending and resolving more than one hundred admin-



istrative appeals of MMS orders to pay royalties, orders to pay civil penalties, and operational orders. He has also represented federal lessees in numerous judicial proceedings, including actions for judicial review of final Interior Department decisions requiring payment of royalties, challenges to Interior's offshore regulations, and actions to obtain immediate injunctive relief. Mr. Hunter routinely advises offshore federal lessees in connection with lease maintenance issues, unitization, qualification to own and operate leases, obtaining approval of assignments, and bonding requirements. He also has extensive experience in energy-related litigation in state and federal courts.

MESSAGE FROM THE PLANO PRESIDENT 2005-2006



Like many individuals, businesses, and organizations in Southeast Louisiana, PLANO did not escape the effects of Hurricane Katrina. With the exception of our Christmas Social, all PLANO events from September, 2005, through January, 2006, were cancelled. However, PLANO's sponsoring firms and companies have responded profoundly and participation in our 2006 Sponsorship Program is as strong as ever. The continued support of PLANO from these companies, firms, and individuals will allow us to continue "business as usual" in the post-Katrina era. PLANO's Board would like to extend its gratitude for this support and looks forward to the upcoming year.

Because of the cancellation of many PLANO events in the second half of 2005, PLANO had fewer expenditures than expected. In keeping with our mission, PLANO's Board approved several one-time expenditures. First, PLANO made a \$10,000 donation to a fund set up and administered by the AAPL to provide aid to landmen from the hurricane-impacted areas. Second, on December 16, 2005, PLANO hosted its annual Christmas Social at Andrea's free of charge to its members. Over 110 people were in attendance at this event, which afforded the first opportunity for us to get together in a social setting since the storm. Third, PLANO will be making a donation to an organization that benefits New Orleans Police Officers and Firemen affected by the hurricane. The services that these men and women provide are integral to the holding of events such as Mardi Gras, with which our Executive Night is closely intertwined, and to the rebuilding of New Orleans in general. Finally, PLANO has waived 2006 dues for any member who is undergoing severe hardships because of the hurricane. Although dues are nominal, this is a symbolic gesture of support to our members. We wish each of our individual and company members the best for 2006.

PLANO's Executive Night on Thursday, February 23, 2006, was an unqualified success. All of us were afforded the opportunity to get together as a united group, and this, followed by the facts as revealed by our own Colonel Thomas E. Beron on what actually happened in New Orleans following Hurricane Katrina, caught everyone's attention. It was an evening to remember, and I feel sure Executive Night 2006 will go down as one of the best events ever given by PLANO. My thanks and great appreciation to all of those who worked so diligently on it.

David V. Dufour, PLANO President



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PLANO LUNCHES

REMINDER – What’s a ghost? Well, when an event reservation is made but not used, PLANO is left with a “ghost” on the reservation list. Three (3) working days, i.e. 72 hours, prior to events, PLANO is required to guarantee the number of attendees, thus establishing the cost involved. This is a standard procedure in the catering world. Persons who do not show up, or cancel after the guaranteed number has been issued, are regarded as “ghosts” for they cost PLANO just as much as actual attendees. PLANO has to pay, and over the course of a year, this can add up to quite an expense.

So, please help us out. If you’ve made a reservation for an event, that’s great. We look forward to seeing you there. If things get busy and you can’t make it, we’ll miss you, but please make a call as soon as you know and let the event organizer know that you won’t be there. Calling after the guarantee has been issued will only serve to notify us you will not be there, but we will still have to pay, and, in turn, we will have to bill you. Rarely, if ever, can adjustments be made to the orders.

PLANO MEMBERSHIP

The purpose of **PLANO** is... *“To promote and advance the art and science of the profession of Petroleum Landman.”* With that in mind, we urge all of our members to each bring in at least one new member between now and the end of this year. A membership form is available on the PLANO Web Site - www.planoweb.org - so be sure to ask any and all potential new members to **join PLANO NOW.**

LANDMEN’S MONTHLY BREAKFAST MEETINGS

Ed Dewailly has made arrangements to have these meetings at the McMoran Cafeteria, 1615 Poydras Street, New Orleans, LA. Tentative plan is to hold the meetings on the **last Friday** of each month, beginning Friday, March 31, 7:30 a.m. Breakfast (paid by each attendee) will begin at 7:45 a.m. The meeting will end at about 9:00 a.m.

Interested parties are asked to contact Ed Dewailly at 504-582-2201 (office), cell 504-352-7283, or e-mail to eld@fenstermaker.com



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LOUISIANA LEGAL UPDATE OIL & GAS LAW DEVELOPMENTS CASES OF INTEREST

*Presented by J. Patrick Morris
Liskow & Lewis, New Orleans, Louisiana
1-504-581-7979*

The Louisiana Second Circuit Court of Appeal recently delivered a noteworthy opinion that underscores the need to timely record oil and gas title instruments and illustrates a potential pitfall for those who unduly delay in doing so.

In *Pinnacle Operating Company, Inc. v. ETTCO Enterprises, Inc.*, No. 40,367-CA, 914 So.2d 1144 (La. App. 2 Cir. 10/26/2005), White & Ellis obtained a farmout from all but one of the working interest owners of three mineral leases (collectively, the "Leases") in Sabine Parish, Louisiana (the "Farmout"). The working interest owner who did not execute the farmout was Everett. White & Ellis, as the farmee, drilled a well, earning the right to receive from the farmors assignments of an interest in the James Lime Formation. However, White & Ellis never received (or recorded) the executed assignments to which it was entitled. White & Ellis operated the well and paid both the farmors and Everett, who did not execute the Farmout, overriding royalties due under the Farmout.

Following the completion of the well, Everett acquired and recorded assignments of all "right, title and interest" in the Leases from his co-working interest owners (farmors) over several years (collectively, the "Everett Assignments"). None of the Everett Assignments were made "subject to" the Farmout or expressly "less and excepted" the James Lime Formation. Later, White & Ellis assigned its interest in the Leases to ETTCO who continued to operate and pay overriding royalties over several years and Everett assigned all of his interests in the Leases to Pinnacle, who applied for a drilling permit to drill a well to the James Lime Formation. The permit was denied and Pinnacle sued ETTCO for possession of the mineral leasehold interests and the well producing from the James Lime Formation. ETTCO filed a third party demand against Everett contending that Everett had assumed the farmors' obligations to deliver the original assignments due under the Farmouts. By partial summary judgment, Pinnacle was found to own the leases, by

virtue of its assignment from Everett and its protection under Louisiana's public records doctrine. This judgment was not appealed.

Both the trial court and the court of appeal held that Everett did not assume the personal obligations of the farmors in the Farmout. The court did not accept ETTCO's argument that language in the assignments from the farmors to Everett by which he assumed general liabilities "associated with", "incident to", or "in connection with" the Leases made him personally responsible for the obligation in the Farmout to deliver assignments of the Leases to ETTCO and/or its predecessor. The court applied the rule that an assumption of an obligation must be expressly consented to by the assignee in writing. Although not directly at issue in the case, the court also mentioned, in dicta, the critical distinction between taking an assignment "subject to" another agreement and assuming the obligations in that agreement.

Because the Farmout was not recorded and because the assignments due under the Farmout were never executed and recorded, ETTCO lost its interest to Pinnacle, a third party who purchased the leasehold interests from the owner of the Leases as reflected in the public records. Under Louisiana's public records doctrine, Pinnacle was able to rely on the absence of the recordation of the Farmout in determining that its vendor

owned the Leases unencumbered and unburdened by the Farmout. Further, ETTCO was left without any recourse for its loss against Everett (Pinnacle's vendor) because he did not personally assume the Farmout obligation to assign the leasehold interests to the farmee. The case does not discuss whether ETTCO would have a claim against the original farmors who assigned their interests to Everett. ETTCO named these parties as third-party defendants, but apparently did not serve them.

This case serves as an excellent reminder of the importance of promptly recording farmout agreements and promptly obtaining and recording assignments due under farmouts or other agreements.

About the Author

J. Patrick Morris, Jr., a shareholder in the New Orleans office of Liskow & Lewis, practices in the firm's oil and gas and energy litigation sections. He received his bachelor's degree from Florida State University and his law degree from Louisiana State University, where he was an associate of the Louisiana Law Review. In energy and natural resource matters, Mr. Morris handles pipeline, oil and gas and property transactional issues. His practice background includes right-of-way and lease acquisitions, pipeline acquisitions, energy-related contracts and title examination for sales and purchases of property and for drilling of oil and gas wells. Additionally, Mr. Morris provides general advice and counsel on Louisiana mineral and property law.

His commercial litigation background includes royalty, mineral lease and general oil and gas contractual disputes. Among his additional practice capabilities are administrative and regulatory law cases involving onshore and offshore oil and gas operations.



GULF OF MEXICO - THE OFFSHORE 5-YEAR LEASING PROGRAM

*Submitted by J. Keith Couvillion
Land Manager GOM Deepwater Exploration &
Production, Chevron U.S.A. Inc., Houston, TX.*

The Minerals Management Service (MMS) has spent the last few months contemplating what the new 2007-2012 Five (5) Year Offshore Leasing Program (5 Year Plan) should look like. Since it takes a minimum of two (2) years to develop a comprehensive plan, starting the dialogue early is always the best approach. Even though the existing plan (2002-2007) will not expire until the end of June in 2007, due to the extensive time it takes to work through the necessary steps to create a new plan, starting now increases the possibility a new leasing program will be in place before the existing program expires. Implementing and maintaining a 5 Year Plan is the first step the federal government must take if it plans to continue to offer offshore federal lands for lease. Without an approved 5 Year Plan, there is no mechanism to allow the leasing of offshore lands.

As MMS begins development of the new leasing program process, under the direction of the Secretary of the Interior (Secretary), the debate over whether or not to allow offshore exploration and development in areas currently subject to moratoria is growing both in Washington, DC and along many coastal states. Offshore drilling continues to be an emotional topic where passions run high on both sides of the debate and where posturing to influence the direction this country will take on energy issues is at its finest.

As the debate heats up on the 5 Year Plan, it is timely to remind those of us working in offshore why and how the 5 Year Plan works, and to give those not familiar with offshore a better understanding of the process MMS must follow in creating the next 5 Year Plan. Below is a summary of the legislative mandates and implementing regulations and procedures that create the foundation for the 5 Year Planning process.

Under Title 43, Chapter 29, Subchapter III, Section 1344 of the United States Code, the Secretary is mandated to "prepare and periodically revise, and maintain an oil and gas leasing program to implement the policies of this subchapter."

The leasing program shall consist of a schedule of proposed lease sales indicating, as precisely as possible, the size, timing, and location of leasing activity which he (or she) determines will best meet national energy needs for the five-year period following its approval or re-approval. Such leasing program shall be prepared and maintained in a manner consistent with the following principles:

(1) Management of the Outer Continental Shelf shall be conducted in a manner which considers economic, social, and environmental values of the renewable and non-renewable resources contained in the Outer Continental Shelf, and the potential impact of oil and gas exploration on other resource values of the Outer Continental Shelf and the marine, coastal, and human environments.

(2) Timing and location of exploration, development, and production of oil and gas among the oil and gas bearing physiographic regions of the Outer Continental Shelf shall be based on a consideration of—

(a) existing information concerning the geographical, geological, and ecological characteristics of such regions;

(b) an equitable sharing of developmental benefits and environmental risks among the various regions;

(c) the location of such regions with respect to, and the relative needs of, regional and national energy markets;

(d) the location of such regions with respect to other uses of the sea and seabed, including fisheries, navigation, existing or proposed sea lanes, potential

sites of deepwater ports, and other anticipated uses of the resources and space of the Outer Continental Shelf;

(e) the interest of potential oil and gas producers in the development of oil and gas resources as indicated by exploration or nomination;

(f) laws, goals, and policies of affected States which have been specifically identified by the Governors of such States as relevant matters for the Secretary's consideration;

About the Author

J. Keith Couvillion is the Land Manager GOM Deepwater Exploration and Production with Chevron U.S.A. Inc., Houston, TX. Prior to the merger between Texaco and Chevron, Keith was Texaco's Offshore Land Manager for the Gulf of Mexico. Besides his Chevron Corporation responsibilities, Keith is active in various industry associations, including API, AAPL, NOIA and others. He has been involved in the oil and gas industry for 26 years, working the last 19 years offshore.



GULF OF MEXICO (continued)

(g) the relative environmental sensitivity and marine productivity of different areas of the outer Continental Shelf; and

(h) relevant environmental and predictive information for different areas of the Outer Continental Shelf.

(3) The Secretary shall select the timing and location of leasing, to the maximum extent practicable, so as to obtain a proper balance between the potential for environmental damage, the potential for the discovery of oil and gas, and the potential for adverse impact on the coastal zone.

(4) Leasing activities shall be conducted to assure receipt of fair market value for the lands leased and the rights conveyed by the Federal Government.”

To ensure the Secretary complies with the guiding principles mandated by law in developing the 5 Year Plan, the Secretary has established a procedure that MMS must follow in the creation, review, modification and ultimate approval of the 5 Year Plan. This procedure starts with the solicitation of interest from interested parties as to whether or not any of the 26 offshore planning areas offsetting the coasts of the continental U.S. and Alaska should be included in the Plan. Lease sales are normally conducted covering only one planning area. Occasionally the Secretary will combine planning areas for a single lease sale, but this is the exception not the rule. As part of the solicitation of interest process, the Secretary actively seeks input not only from the public but also from members of Congress, the White House, other federal government agencies and State and local governments. State governments are especially important and will be consulted numerous times during the planning process. In addition to gathering comments from all interested stakeholders, the Secretary is required to conduct a comprehensive study of the areas or regions to be included in the Plan to assess the “environmental impacts on the human, marine, and coastal environments of the Outer Continental Shelf and the coastal areas which may be affected by oil and gas or other mineral development in such area or region.” The Secretary has put in place procedures which direct MMS to conduct these environment assessments and the preparation of Environment Impact Statements (EIS) as necessary. Gathering comments from stakeholders, and assessing the environmental impact of oil and gas activity offshore, are

important elements to ensure compliance with the guiding principles described above.

During each major step in the 5 Year Planning process MMS publishes a notice in the Federal Register soliciting comments. Below is a general outline regarding the anticipated timing for these notices for the new 5 Year Planning process:

- Request for Comments and Information – 45 day period (Winter/Spring 2005)
- Draft Proposed Program – 60 day period (Summer 2005)
- Proposed Program and Draft EIS – 90 day period (Summer 2006)
- Proposed Final Program and Final EIS – 60 day period (Late 2006)
- Program Approval (Early 2007)
- Current Program Ends and New Program Begins (July 1, 2007)

As stated above, the whole process of creating a new 5 Year Leasing Program takes approximately two years if there are no major interruptions in the schedule. Should an issue arise that causes the process to significantly slow down or stop, lease sales scheduled in the beginning of a new Plan period (2007-2012) could be postponed

Currently only about 11% of the 1.76 billion offshore acres under U.S. jurisdiction offsetting the lower 48 states and Alaska are available for leasing. Most of the restrictions placed on this acreage are due to Congressional or Presidential moratoria, or administrative deferrals created by the Secretary. As MMS begins advertising its intent to prepare a new 5 Year Plan, members of Congress have begun lobbying Secretary Norton to consider including or excluding moratoria, or deferred areas, from the MMS’ analysis of the lands to be considered for future leasing. The Secretary has already received comments promoting a large comprehensive program as opposed to other comments suggesting a very restrictive program. The battle lines are being drawn throughout Washington on offshore leasing. It is apparent as the energy discussion continues in Washington, offshore exploration and development will be a topic of heated debate.

For those of us who are interested in engaging in the debate and voicing our opinions to the Secretary as she directs the 5 Year leasing program process, we should take the time to follow the process and express our opinions when appropriate.

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The Professional Landmen's Association of New Orleans would like to thank the following parties for their participation in PLANO's sponsorship program.

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