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DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

MICHAEL R. STYLER
Executive Director

Division of Oil, Gas and Mining

JOHN R. BAZA
Division Director

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Notice to Oil & Gas and Disposal Facility Operators

Re: Drilling Mud

It is the overall regulatory stance of the Division of Oil, Gas and Mining (Division) that all drilling mud and other by-products from the drilling process that are normally present in the reserve pit after drilling should remain and be mitigated in place. The practice of hauling reserve pit materials to an off-site disposal facility is fraught with problems. The liberal interpretation of drilling mud has resulted in fluids being taken to facilities and applied to land-farm areas or evaporation pits inappropriately. These facilities were not designed nor intended for such use. The normal and accepted practice for closing reserve pits is to allow them to dry and then backfill or treat and backfill as appropriate to meet cleanup standards. They should not contain anything that is not RCRA exempt and conducive to mitigation in place.

In the future no drilling mud, sludge, or any other wet non-water materials from reserve pits and the drilling process will be allowed at land-farms or other disposal facilities. If it is the intent for a disposal facility to take such material, the Division will require that the facility be designed and permitted specifically for remediation (not storage) of such material. Operators with a special circumstance that needs to be addressed should contact the Division and it will be handled on a case-by-case basis.

Sincerely,

Gil Hunt
Associate Director, Oil & Gas

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