

STATE OF LOUISIANA

DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY

IN THE MATTER OF:

MERIT ENERGY COMPANY

AI # 31550

PROCEEDINGS UNDER THE LOUISIANA  
ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY ACT  
LA. R.S. 30:2001, ET SEQ.

\* Settlement Tracking No.  
\* SA-AE-12-0020  
\*  
\* Enforcement Tracking No.  
\* AE-PP-10-00581  
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SETTLEMENT

The following Settlement is hereby agreed to between Merit Energy Company, LLC (“Respondent”) and the Department of Environmental Quality (“DEQ” or “the Department”), under authority granted by the Louisiana Environmental Quality Act, La. R.S. 30:2001, et seq. (“the Act”).

I

Respondent is a corporation that owns and/or operates a well facility located northwest of Longacre in Beauregard Parish, Louisiana (“the Facility”).

II

On July 29, 2010, the Department issued to Respondent a Notice of Potential Penalty, Enforcement No. AE-PP-10-00581, which was based upon the following findings of fact:

On or about December 9, 2009, an inspection of the Arabie 22 #1 Well Facility, owned and/or operated by Merit Energy Company, LLC (Respondent), was performed to determine the degree of compliance with the Louisiana Environmental Quality Act (the Act) and the Air Quality Regulations. The facility is located on Austin Arabie Road, approximately four miles northwest of Longacre in Beauregard Parish, Louisiana.

On or about April 19, 2010, a file review of the facility was also conducted.

The following violation was noted during the course of the inspection and subsequent file review:

On or about December 9, 2009, the Department received a citizen complaint alleging that the facility was emitting "heavy black smoke". An inspector for the Department observed the pit flare was producing smoke with opacity between 90% and 100%. Further, the inspector observed and photographed uncombusted and burning liquids coming from the pit flare and burned vegetation in the flare pit and along the levee area. It was stated by the facility that the increased emissions of the pit flare was due to a malfunction of the High Pressure Separator. This failure to maintain opacity below twenty percent is in violation of State Air Permit 0320-00038-03 and LAC 33:III.501.C.4. The failure to maintain air pollution control facilities is a violation of LAC 33:III.905.

### III

Respondent denies it committed any violations or that it is liable for any fines, forfeitures and/or penalties.

### IV

Nonetheless, Respondent, without making any admission of liability under state or federal statute or regulation, agrees to pay, and the Department agrees to accept, a payment in the amount of SEVEN THOUSAND AND NO/100 DOLLARS (\$7,000.00), of which Two Hundred Ninety-Four and 10/100 Dollars (\$294.10) represents the Department's enforcement costs, in settlement of the claims set forth in this agreement. The total amount of money expended by Respondent on cash payments to the Department as described above, shall be considered a civil penalty for tax purposes, as required by La. R.S. 30:2050.7(E)(1).

### V

Respondent further agrees that the Department may consider the permit record(s), the Notice of Potential Penalty and this Settlement for the purpose of determining compliance

history in connection with any future enforcement or permitting action by the Department against Respondent, and in any such action Respondent shall be estopped from objecting to the above-referenced documents being considered as proving the violations alleged herein for the sole purpose of determining Respondent's compliance history.

## VI

This agreement shall be considered a final order of the Secretary for all purposes, including, but not limited to, enforcement under La. R.S. 30:2025(G)(2), and Respondent hereby waives any right to administrative or judicial review of the terms of this agreement, except such review as may be required for interpretation of this agreement in any action by the Department to enforce this agreement.

## VII

This settlement is being made in the interest of settling the state's claims and avoiding for both parties the expense and effort involved in litigation or an adjudicatory hearing. In agreeing to the compromise and settlement, the Department considered the factors for issuing civil penalties set forth in La. R. S. 30:2025(E) of the Act.

## VIII

The Respondent has caused a public notice advertisement to be placed in the official journal of the parish governing authority in Beauregard Parish, Louisiana. The advertisement, in form, wording, and size approved by the Department, announced the availability of this settlement for public view and comment and the opportunity for a public hearing. Respondent has submitted an original proof-of-publication affidavit and an original public notice from the newspaper to the Department and, as of the date this Settlement is executed on behalf of the Department, more than forty-five (45) days have elapsed since publication of the notice.

IX

Payment is to be made within ten (10) days from notice of the Secretary's signature. If payment is not received within that time, this Agreement is voidable at the option of the Department. Payments are to be made by check, payable to the Department of Environmental Quality, and mailed or delivered to the attention of Accountant Administrator, Financial Services Division, Department of Environmental Quality, Post Office Box 4303, Baton Rouge, Louisiana, 70821-4303. Each payment shall be accompanied by a completed Settlement Payment Form (Exhibit A).

X

In consideration of the above, any claims for penalties are hereby compromised and settled in accordance with the terms of this Settlement.

XI

Each undersigned representative of the parties certifies that he or she is fully authorized to execute this Settlement Agreement on behalf of his or her respective party, and to legally bind such party to its terms and conditions.

**MERIT ENERGY COMPANY**

BY: \_\_\_\_\_  
(Signature)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Printed)

TITLE: \_\_\_\_\_

THUS DONE AND SIGNED in duplicate original before me this \_\_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, 20 \_\_\_\_\_, at \_\_\_\_\_.

\_\_\_\_\_  
NOTARY PUBLIC (ID # \_\_\_\_\_)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(stamped or printed)

**LOUISIANA DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY**  
Peggy M. Hatch Secretary

BY: \_\_\_\_\_  
Cheryl Sonnier Nolan, Assistant Secretary  
Office of Environmental Compliance

THUS DONE AND SIGNED in duplicate original before me this \_\_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, 20 \_\_\_\_\_, at Baton Rouge, Louisiana.

\_\_\_\_\_  
NOTARY PUBLIC (ID # \_\_\_\_\_)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(stamped or printed)

Approved:  \_\_\_\_\_  
Cheryl Sonnier Nolan, Assistant Secretary