I. Introduction

The State Oil and Gas Supervisor (Supervisor), acting through the Division of Oil, Gas, and Geothermal Resources (Division), may order the plugging and abandonment of a well or the decommissioning of a production facility that has been deserted, whether or not any damage is occurring, or threatened, by reason of that deserted well. (Pub. Resources Code [PRC], § 3237, subd. (a).) A rebuttable presumption of desertion arises when the operator has failed to comply with an order of the Supervisor within the time provided by the order or has failed to challenge the order on a timely basis.
(PRC, § 3237 subd. (a)(3)(C)). It is also a rebuttable presumption of desertion when the operator has failed to maintain the access road to a well or production facility site passable to oilfield and emergency vehicles. (PRC, § 3237 subd. (a)(3)(F))

Based on the Division’s records, Ample Resources, Inc. is the “operator” (Operator) (as defined in PRC section 3009) (See Exhibit A, incorporated herein) and is responsible (as specified in PRC section 3237, subd. (c)(1)), for the plugging and abandonment of the well(s) on Exhibit B (incorporated herein; the Well(s)), the decommissioning of the attendant production facilities (the Facilities), and the restoration of the well site. Herein, the Supervisor is ordering Operator to do so because the Supervisor has determined, based on information, belief, and the credible evidence detailed below, that Operator has deserted the Wells and Facilities.

Therefore, pursuant to PRC sections 3106, 3206, 3226, and 3237, and as set forth below, the Supervisor is ordering Operator to plug and abandon the Wells, decommission the Facilities, and restore the well site according to PRC sections 3208, 3228, 3229, and 3230, California Code of Regulations, title 14, sections 1722, 1723 through 1724.1, 1760, 1775, and 1776, (Cal. Code Regs. [Regulations], tit. 14, §§ 1722, 1723-1724.1, 1760, 1775, 1776), and the conditions included in any permit/approval the Division may issue pursuant to PRC section 3229.

II. Definitions

PRC section 3008, subdivision (a), defines “Well” to mean “any oil or gas well or well for the discovery of oil or gas; any well on lands producing or reasonably presumed to contain oil or gas,” among others.

PRC section 3009 defines “Operator” to mean “a person who, by virtue of ownership, or under the authority of a lease or any other agreement, has the right to drill, operate, maintain, or control a well or production facility.”

Regulations section 1760, subdivision (k), defines “Production facility” to mean “any equipment attendant to oil and gas production...including, but not limited to, tanks, flowlines, headers, gathering lines, wellheads, heater treaters, pumps, valves, compressors, injection equipment, production safety systems, separators, manifolds, and pipelines that are not under the jurisdiction of the State Fire Marshal pursuant to Section 51010 of the Government Code, excluding fire suppressant equipment.”
III. **State Oil and Gas Supervisor Authority**

**PRC section 3106** authorizes the Supervisor to supervise the drilling, operation, maintenance, and abandonment of oil and gas wells to “prevent, as far as possible, damage to life, health, property, and natural resources; damage to underground oil and gas deposits from infiltrating water and other causes; loss of oil, gas, or reservoir energy, and damage to underground and surface waters suitable for irrigation or domestic purposes by the infiltration of, or the addition of, detrimental substances.”

**PRC section 3206, subdivision (c),** states that “Failure to file, for any well, the fee required under this section shall be conclusive evidence of desertion of the well, permitting the supervisor to order the well abandoned pursuant to section 3237.”

**PRC section 3224** mandates that the Supervisor “order such tests or remedial work as in his judgment are necessary to prevent damage to life, health, property, and natural resources; to protect oil and gas deposits from damage by underground water; or to prevent the escape of water into underground formations, or to prevent the infiltration of detrimental substances into underground or surface water suitable for irrigation or domestic purposes, to the best interests of the neighboring property owners and the public.”

**PRC section 3226** authorizes the Supervisor, based on the Supervisor’s final or affirmed order, to appoint agents who may enter the well premises and perform necessary remedial work if the operator did not complete the remedial work as ordered. Any amount the Supervisor expends to complete the necessary remedial work (which may include penalties and interest) constitutes a lien against the operator’s real or personal property according to **PRC section 3423.**

**PRC section 3237, subdivision (a)(1)**, authorizes the Supervisor to “order the plugging and abandonment of a well…that has been deserted whether or not any damage is occurring or threatened by reason of that deserted well.” The Supervisor or district deputy “shall determine from credible evidence whether a well…is deserted.”

**PRC section 3237, subdivision (a)(2)**, states that “credible evidence” includes, but is not limited to, the operational history of the well or production facility, the response or lack of response of the operator to inquiries and requests from the Supervisor or district deputy, the extent of compliance by the operator...
with the requirements of this chapter, and other actions of the operator with regard to the well or
production facility.

PRC section 3237, subdivision (a)(3), states that a rebuttable presumption of desertion arises in
any of the following situations: (C) If an operator has failed to comply with an order of the Supervisor
within the time provided by the order or has failed to challenge the order on a timely basis[,] (F) If an
operator has failed to maintain the access road to a well or production facility site passable to oilfield and
emergency vehicles.

IV. Credible Evidence of Desertion

A. The Response or Lack of Response of the Operator to Inquiries and Requests from the Supervisor or
District Deputy and the Extent of Compliance by the Operator with the Requirements of this Chapter

Ample Resources has not responded to Order Numbers 1144 (Order to Plug and Abandon Wells),
1145 (Emergency Order to Perform Remedial Work), 1146 (Order to Perform Remedial Work), and 1147
(Order to Pay a Civil Penalty). (Exhibits C-1 through C-4, incorporated herein)

V. Rebuttable Presumption of Desertion

A. Failure to Comply with Order to Plug and Abandon Wells, Decommission Attendant Facilities and
Restore Well Site No. 1144

The Division’s records show that Order No. 1144 to Plug and Abandon Wells (Exhibit C-1) for failure
to pay idle well fees was issued to the operator on March 4, 2019. On April 5, 2019, Division staff
inspected to facility to assess the status of whether efforts have commenced to plug and abandon the wells
to discover that no effort to plug and abandon wells had commenced. Operator’s failure to comply with
the Order to Plug and Abandon Wells is credible evidence of desertion. (PRC, § 3237 subd. (a)(3)(C))

B. Failure to Comply with Order to Perform Remedial Work No. 1146

The Division’s records indicate that an Order to Perform Remedial Work No. 1146 was issued to
operator on March 4, 2019. No timely appeal was received, and the Order became final on March 19,
2019. On May 8, 2019, Division staff inspected the facility to assess compliance with the Order to Perform
Remedial Work No. 1146. The inspection revealed that there is either no change in the conditions where
remedial work was ordered or in some circumstances, the conditions have further degraded and are worse
than around approximately the same time last year. (Exhibit D- Comparison Photographs, Incorporated herein)

C. Failure to Maintain Access Roads to a Well or Production Facility

During inspections on or about May 22, 2018, May 25, 2018, November 6, 2018, and January 8, 2019 and as documented in Exhibit D, Division staff observed that the access road to wells on Snow and Hidden Leases (Snow 1A (API 111-04079), Snow 2(API 111-04080) and Hidden 1 (API 111-04076)) were in disrepair. Emergency vehicles and rigs or heavy equipment necessary for well work would be unable to navigate the road without driving on/over pipeline and/or timely access wells in the event of an emergency considering the existing road conditions.

VI. Operator’s Required Actions

For the reasons stated above, the Division has determined that Operator has deserted the Well(s) and Facilities. Therefore, IT IS HEREBY ORDERED that Operator plug and abandon the Well(s) and decommission the Facilities and restore the well site according to PRC sections 3208, 3228, 3229, 3230, and 3227, Regulations sections 1722, 1723 through 1724.1, 1760, 1775, and 1776, and the conditions included in any permit the Division may issue pursuant to PRC section 3229.

VII. Operator’s Appeal Rights

PRC section 3237, subdivision (b), entitles an operator to appeal a Supervisor’s order to plug and abandon a deserted well. A notice of appeal must be timely made, in writing, and filed with the Department of Conservation Director (Director). (See PRC beginning at PRC section 3350.) If this Order is mailed to you, the Director must receive the appeal within (15) days from the date the Supervisor mails the Order. To file an appeal, a written notice of appeal may be sent via U.S. mail to:

Department of Conservation
Director’s Office of Appeals
801 K Street, MS 24-03 (Legal Office, Chief Counsel)
Sacramento, California 95814-3530

If Operator does not file a timely written notice of appeal, this Order will become a final order and the Division may contract for performance of the work, pursuant to PRC section 3226, if, within 30 days of this Order, Operator has not, in good faith, commenced the work ordered. Any costs incurred by the
Supervisor to obtain compliance with this Order (which may include penalties and interest) will constitute a lien against Operator’s real or personal property per PRC section 3423.

If Operator submits a timely written notice of appeal, it, and interested parties, will receive notice of the appeal hearing date, time, and place. Following the hearing, Operator, and interested parties, will receive a written decision that affirms, sets aside, or modifies the appealed order.

VIII. Other Potential Actions to Enforce This Order

Failing to comply with Section VI (Operator’s Required Actions) of this Order could subject Operator to further enforcement action. For example, the Supervisor could deny approval of proposed well operations until compliance is achieved. (PRC, § 3203, subd. (c).)

In addition, PRC section 3236.5 authorizes the Supervisor to impose a civil penalty on a person who violates any provision in Chapter 1 of Division 3 of the PRC or any regulation that implements those statutes, and the Supervisor may in the future impose a civil penalty based on the acts and omissions underlying this Order.

Further, PRC section 3236 makes it a misdemeanor for any person who violates, fails, neglects, or refuses to comply with any of the provisions of the oil and gas law (statutes and regulations). The misdemeanor is punishable by a fine of not less than one hundred dollars ($100) nor more than one thousand dollars ($1,000), or by imprisonment not exceeding six months, or by both the fine and imprisonment for each separate offense. PRC section 3359 makes it a misdemeanor to fail or neglect to comply with an order of the Supervisor. Each day’s further failure, refusal, or neglect is a separate and distinct offense. (PRC, § 3359.)

DATED: May 20, 2019

Kenneth A. Harris, Jr.
State Oil and Gas Supervisor