ANTINA CATTLE COMPANY, LLC
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VIA ELECTRONIC MAIL (rulescoordinator@rrc.texas.gov)
Rules Coordinator
Office of General Counsel
Railroad Commission of Texas
P.O. Box 12967
Austin, Texas 78711-2967

Re: Proposed Amendments to 16 TAC §§3.15 and 3.58 (Senate Bill 1150, 89th Legislative Session, 2025)

To the Rules Coordinator:

Antina Cattle Company, LLC ("Antina") is a ranching business and a surface owner. The family behind Antina has ranched in West Texas for over 100 years, and the first oil and gas lease on its land dates to the 1920s. Since 2021, Antina has dealt directly with the Commission over leaking, deteriorating oil and gas wells that contaminated its land and its water.

Antina's principal assets are productive land and the water beneath it, and aging inactive wells put both at risk. Antina supports adoption of the amendments implementing Senate Bill 1150 and asks the Commission to strengthen them in four ways.

1. Idle wells put productive land and water at risk.

A 15/25 well has not produced, injected, or disposed of anything in more than 15 years, and it was completed more than 25 years ago. Whatever value it still holds for the mineral estate is a forecast. What remains is a real and current liability: an aging wellbore that runs through the groundwater beneath productive land, with a risk that grows as the casing and cement age. West Texas land supports cattle operations and, more and more, energy, industrial, and data center development, and all of it depends on usable water. When an idle well fails, it can contaminate that water for generations. That is waste in the plain meaning of the word.

Preventing this waste is the Commission's statutory duty. The Legislature has declared that protecting water and land against pollution is in the public interest. It has directed the Commission to require plugging that keeps oil, gas, and water in the strata where they are found, and has made it solely responsible for preventing water pollution from oil and gas activity. Antina asks the Commission to state in the adoption order that protecting the surface estate and groundwater is a purpose of this rule, and to give that purpose the same weight as conservation of the mineral estate in every extension decision.

2. Surface owners should receive notice of what happens on their land.

Antina has had operators enter its land and work on wells without any notice. A surface owner who is not told about the work cannot observe it and learns of a problem only when the problem reaches the

surface or the water. The new provisions for 15/25 wells never mention surface owners. Antina asks that the surface owner receive:

- the same three days' notice the district office receives before a fluid level or hydraulic pressure test under proposed §3.15(n)(1) and (o)(1), the opportunity to witness the test, and a copy of the results, following the model of the plugging rule, §3.14(a)(5), which gives surface owners advance notice of plugging and allows their representative to be present;
- notice of each 15/25 extension application and renewal, with 30 days to respond, and the affected-person status in hearings that current §3.15(g)(5) provides for other wells and the new hearing provision in §3.15(i)(3) leaves out;
- a copy of each transfer affirmation filed under proposed §3.58(a)(5); and
- written notice within three days of a failed test, with sampling of nearby water wells at the operator's expense, repair or plugging before any extension is granted or renewed, and cleanup of any contamination found.

3. Hazard denials need criteria.

Proposed §3.15(i)(2)(C) correctly requires denial of an extension for a well that poses potential hazards to public health, safety, or the environment, but it does not say what makes a well hazardous. Antina asks the Commission to list objective triggers drawn from Senate Bill 1150 and its own rules: sustained casing pressure; penetration of corrosive or over-pressured formations, or completion in zones containing hydrogen sulfide; a failed fluid level or hydraulic pressure test; a documented leak or release; and proximity to water wells or usable-quality groundwater. Surface owners are usually the first to see a change in their water or a leaking wellhead, and the rule should allow them to submit that evidence before an extension is granted or renewed.

4. Extensions should be exceptions.

Under Senate Bill 1150, the Commission "may" grant these extensions. Antina asks the Commission to use that discretion narrowly: define financial hardship with strict, measurable criteria that exclude the ordinary cost of plugging, and cap hardship renewals; count a well as restored to active operation only on sustained production in paying quantities; require operators to address the highest-risk wells first; require full-cost bonding that stays with the well through any change of operator; and publish extension applications, decisions, compliance plans, and test results in a form the public can search.

Senate Bill 1150 also requires the Commission to establish an administrative penalty for violations of these requirements, and the amendments do not set one. The rule should establish that penalty and should set a higher amount for a false or incomplete test report.

Texas conservation law rests on one principle: a valuable resource should not be wasted. Productive land and usable groundwater are valuable resources, and wells inactive for more than 15 years put them at risk while producing nothing. Antina asks the Commission to count land and water among the resources it conserves, and to give the owners of that land notice of what happens on their property.

Respectfully submitted,

ANTINA CATTLE COMPANY, LLC

By: 

Christie Clark
General Counsel