



UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY

REGION 6, 1445 ROSS AVENUE, DALLAS, TEXAS 75202-2733

EXPEDITED SPILL SETTLEMENT AGREEMENT

FILED

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REGIONAL HEARING CLERK  
EPA REGION VI

DOCKET NO. CWA-06-2017-4504

On July 18, 2016

At: Benchmark Oil & Gas, Orange County, TX (Respondent) discharged 80 barrels of crude oil in violation of Section 311(b)(3) of the Clean Water Act (the Act), as noted on the attached FINDINGS and ALLEGED CIVIL VIOLATIONS FORM (Form), which is hereby incorporated by reference.

The parties are authorized to enter into this Expedited Settlement under the authority vested in the Administrator of EPA by Section 311(b) (6) (B) (i) of the Act, 33 U.S.C. § 1321(b) (6) (B) (i), as amended by the Oil Pollution Act of 1990, and by 40 CFR § 22.13(b). The parties enter into this Expedited Settlement in order to settle the civil violations described in the Form for a penalty of \$5000.00.

This settlement is subject to the following terms and conditions:

EPA finds the Respondent's conduct is subject to the discharge prohibition of Section 311(b)(3) of the Act, as described in the statute and further described by 40 CFR § 110.3. The Respondent admits he/she is subject to Section 311(b)(3) and that EPA has jurisdiction over the Respondent and the Respondent's conduct as described in the Form. Respondent does not contest the Findings, and waives any objections it may have to EPA's jurisdiction. The Respondent consents to the assessment of the penalty stated above. Respondent certifies, subject to civil and criminal penalties for making a false submission to the United States Government, that it has investigated the cause of the spill, it has cleaned up the spill pursuant to the federal requirements, and it has taken corrective actions that will prevent future spills. The Respondent also verifies that it has sent a certified check for \$5000.00, payable to "Environmental Protection Agency," to: "USEPA, Fines & Penalties, P.O. Box 979077, St. Louis, MO 63197-9000" and Respondent has noted on the penalty payment check "Spill Fund-311" and the docket number of this case, "CWA-06-2017-4504."

Upon signing and returning this Expedited Settlement to EPA, Respondent waives the opportunity for a hearing or appeal pursuant to Section 311 of the Act, and consents to EPA's approval of the Expedited Settlement without further notice.

If Respondent does not sign and return this Expedited Settlement as presented within 30 days of the date of its receipt, the proposed Expedited Settlement is withdrawn without prejudice to EPA's ability to file any other enforcement action for the violations identified in the Form.

After this Expedited Settlement becomes effective, EPA will

take no further action against the Respondent for the violations of the Section 311(b)(3) of the Act described in the Form. However, EPA does not waive any rights to take any enforcement action for any other past, present, or future violations by the Respondent of Section 311(b)(3) of the Act or of any other federal statute or regulation. By its first signature, EPA ratifies the Inspection Findings and Alleged Violations set forth in the Form.

This Expedited Settlement is binding on the parties signing below, and is effective upon the Superfund Division Director's signature.

APPROVED BY EPA:

*J. Chris Petersen* Date: 10/27/16  
for Ronald D. Crossland  
Branch Chief  
Emergency Management Branch  
Superfund Division

APPROVED BY RESPONDENT:

Name (print): VICTORIA ALLEN  
Title (print): VICE PRESIDENT  
*Victoria Allen* Date: 11-3-2016  
Signature

The estimated cost of the clean-up and corrective action is \$518,000.00

IT IS SO ORDERED:

*Carl E. Edlund* Date: 11/15/16  
Carl E. Edlund, P.E.  
Director  
Superfund Division

## FINDINGS AND ALLEGED CIVIL VIOLATIONS

1. Benchmark Oil & Gas is a firm qualified to do business in the State of Texas with a place of business located in Houston, Texas. The Respondent is a person within the meaning of Section 311(a)(7) of the Act, 33 U.S.C. § 1321(a)(7).
2. Respondent is the owner/operator of an onshore facility within the meaning of Section 311(a)(10) of the Act, 33 U.S.C. § 1321(a)(10), an oil production facility, which is located in Orange County, TX (facility).
3. Section 311(b)(3) of the Act prohibits the discharge of oil into or upon the navigable waters of the United States or adjoining shorelines in such quantities that have been determined may be harmful to the public health or welfare or environment of the United States.
4. For purposes of Section 311(b)(3) and (b)(4) of the Act, 33 U.S.C. § 1321(b)(3) and (b)(4), discharges of oil into or upon the navigable waters of the United States in such quantities that have been determined may be harmful to the public health or welfare or environment of the United States are defined in 40 C.F.R. 110.3 to include discharges of oil that cause a film or a sheen upon or discoloration of the surface of the water or adjoining shorelines.
5. On July 18, 2016, Respondent discharged 80 barrels of oil as defined in Section 311(a)(1) of the Act, 33 U.S.C. § 1321(a)(1), and 40 C.F.R. 110.1, from its facility into or upon Cow Bayou and adjoining shorelines.
6. Cow Bayou enters Sabine Lake and is a navigable water of the United States as defined in Section 502(7) of the Act, 33 U.S.C. § 1362(7), and 40 C.F.R. 110.1.
7. Respondent's July 18, 2016, discharge of oil from its facility caused a sheen upon or discoloration of the surface of Cow Bayou and adjoining shorelines and therefore, was in a quantity that has been determined may be harmful under 40 C.F.R. 110.3, which implements Sections 311(b)(3) and (b)(4) of the Act.
8. Respondent's July 18, 2016, discharge of oil from its facility into or upon Cow Bayou and adjoining shorelines in a quantity that has been determined may be harmful under 40 C.F.R. 110.3 violated Section 311(b)(3) of the Act. Pursuant to Section 311(b)(6)(B)(i) of the Act, and 40 CFR 19.4, the Respondent is liable for civil penalties of up to \$16,000 per violation, up to a maximum of \$37,500.

Docket No. CWA-06-2017-4504

**CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE**

I certify that the original and one copy of the foregoing "Consent Agreement and Final Order," issued pursuant to 40 C.F.R. 22.13(b), was filed on November 17, 2016, with the Regional Hearing Clerk, U.S. EPA Region 6, 1445 Ross Avenue, Dallas, TX 75202-2733; and that on the same date a copy of the same was sent to the following, in the manner specified below:

NAME: Allen Cooke  
ADDRESS: Benchmark Oil & Gas  
6363 Wodway, Suite 1025  
Houston, Texas 77057

Frankie Markham  
Frankie Markham  
OPA Enforcement Administrative Assistant